



MASTER GARDENER

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Year Round Gardening

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Starting a Vegetable Garden

If you have decided to start growing your own vegetables this year, here are some tips to help you get started.

Choose the right location for your vegetable garden. The garden should be in full sun with easy access to water and good soil. Soil quality is critical; you want fertile soil that drains well. Avoid planting too close to large trees and shrubs as they will compete with your vegetables.

Start small. Only plant the amount of space that you can manage joyfully. Gardening should be fun, not burdensome. Be practical, select vegetables that your family likes to eat. If space is limited, concentrate on vegetables that yield the greatest return for the effort, such as pole beans, tomatoes, root crops, and leafy greens.

Vegetables are started from seed or transplants. Generally, seed can be sown directly into the garden soil for beans, beets, carrots, cucumbers, lettuce, melons, onions, peas, pumpkin, radish, spinach, squash, and corn. Vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes are most commonly transplanted.



By careful selection of the proper varieties known to do well in your area, you can grow vegetables that are disease-resistant, and good yielders of high-quality, nutritious produce. For greatest success, do not use seed more than one year old, seeds lose viability with age. When purchasing transplants look for healthy, stocky, medium-sized, disease-free, and insect-free plants with good roots. Avoid using plants that are tender, yellow, spindly, or too large. Do not use plants with spots on the leaves, brown lesions on the stems, or knots on the roots.

When to plant depends on the hardiness of the vegetables and the climate in your area. Certain vegetables can withstand frost while others cannot.

Early spring and early fall – These are cool-season annuals. They are cold-hardy and thrive in spring and fall when temperatures are below 70°F. These include: beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onions, peas, potatoes, radishes, rutabagas, spinach, Swiss chard, and turnips. Cool-season crops will bolt as the days lengthen and temperatures rise.

After the last spring frost – Warm-season annuals should be planted when soils have warmed up. They are frost sensitive, thrive in summer when temperatures are above 70°F, and will grow until the first fall frosts. These are: beans, cantaloupes, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, okra, peppers, pumpkins, southern peas, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and watermelons.

Plan to water and weed your garden consistently during the growing season. Weed control is important because weeds compete with the vegetables for water, nutrients and light and they can harbor insects and diseases.

Vegetables can be harvested from your garden throughout the summer, making your time and effort all worthwhile. For more information go to:

<http://planttalk.colostate.edu/topics/vegetables/1811-planning-vegetable-garden/>

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. Get answers to your horticulture questions by visiting ask.extension.org any time day or night. Follow the El Paso County Master Gardeners on www.facebook.com/ColoradoMasterGardeners.EPC/