



## Basic Vegetable Gardening

Growing your own vegetables provides you with a great deal of joy, satisfaction, and the freshest produce! Follow these easy guidelines, and you're on your way to a great garden and tasty veggies!

### ***Getting Started***

**Choose Site:** Choose a site that gets six hours of direct sunlight and is not on a steep slope that will erode. Make sure that your site has adequate air circulation and good drainage, and plant your garden away from other trees and shrubs so that their roots will not compete for the same water supply.

**Plan Garden:** Decide what you would like to grow and then select the varieties that are hardy in this area. Next draw out on paper how you would like to arrange your garden. Lay out your plan so that the taller vegetables do not block out the sun light for the smaller ones.

**Seeds vs. Starter Plants:** Some vegetables grow best from seed, and of course you'll have more plants to harvest if you plant seeds. Other vegetables, such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and vine crops, are usually planted as transplants because of the yield per plant and the desirability of planting several different varieties.

**Prepare Soil:** Vegetables grow best in fertile, well drained soil. An ideal garden soil will contain at least 20% organic matter to improve aeration and drainage, as well as to hold nutrients until plants can use them. To test your soil for nutritional value use a soil test kit.

A good way to improve your soil before planting is with "**Johnson's Soil Recipe**":

- Three 2 cu. ft. bags **Cotton Burr Compost**
- 3.25 lbs. **Hi-Yield Bone Meal**
- 3.25 lbs. **ferti-lome Gardener's Special**
- 3.25 lbs. **Humic Granular Humic Acid**

Till these products into your soil (covers 100 sq. ft. area). Mix well to about 8-12" deep.

To prevent grassy weeds, sprinkle 1 lb. **Hi-Yield Herbicide Granules** containing Tre-flan and mix into the top 1-3" of soil. Before using, be sure to check the label for a list of seeds and transplants recommended for use.

**Plant:** Rake the prepared soil to make it level. To plant seeds, make a slight furrow with a hoe or the edge of your trowel and sow the seeds into the furrow, following the instructions on the seed packet regarding plant depth and spacing. When planting a starter plant be sure to carefully remove the plant from its cell and place it in the soil. Plant only after all danger of heavy frost has passed.

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## ***Maintaining the Garden***

**Water:** Vegetables need a constant water supply. The best time to water is in the morning so that the plant's leaves dry off quickly. The most efficient watering system is drip irrigation. It puts the water directly at the root zone where it is needed and keeps the leaves dry so there are fewer disease problems. You can also use water timers to take care of watering automatically.

**Fertilize:** Once seedlings are up, use a water soluble plant food like **ferti·lome Blooming & Rooting**. When plants are more established use **ferti·lome Gardener's Special** once a month. (This application can be supplemented weekly with **ferti·lome Blooming & Rooting**.)

**Thin:** When planting seeds, extra seeds should be sown since not all will come up. After the seeds sprout, the weaker seedlings should be removed to give the others enough room to grow. Some crops, such as onions and beets, can be partially harvested early to give the remaining ones more room.

**Insect & Disease Control:** Vegetable plants can be bothered by diseases and insects. A good defense is to keep your plants healthy by keeping the leaves dry. Water at the base of the plant and mulch to reduce splashing water. Monitor your plants for insects, and when you notice a problem use **Insecticidal Soap, Spinosad Soap** or **ferti·lome Triple Action**.

**Weed Control:** Weeds can be controlled by mulching between the rows with straw and cottonseed hulls. The mulch also minimizes splashing on the leaves, reducing disease. There are also granular pre emergents, like **Hi-Yield Herbicide Granules** containing Treflan and **Corn Gluten** that you can use to control weeds if you are transplanting. Do not use these if you are directly seeding.

**Harvest:** Days to harvest for individual vegetables are given on the seed packages. For higher yields and the best flavor, vegetables should be picked at their peak of maturity. Vegetables that are leaves or stems, such as cabbage and onions, can usually be harvested over a long period as they are needed. Vegetables that are the fruit of the plant, such as peas, beans, and tomatoes, should be picked every two or three days when they are first ripe. Overripe vegetables should be removed so growth goes into the developing vegetables.

## ***Planting Methods***

**Traditional Row:** If you sow seeds in traditional rows, the garden will be easier to work and you will be better able to distinguish between vegetable and weed seedlings. To set up a traditional row, use string and stakes to keep the rows straight.

**Wide Row:** Wide row planting is just what its name indicates, planting your vegetables in a 1-3 ft. wide band instead of a single row. Wide row planting can save space, reduce weeding and increase yield. Prepare the seed bed just as you would a traditional row, by using string and stakes. Broadcast the seeds along the band, then lightly rake to cover them over.

**Raised Bed:** In raised bed planting, the planting surface is raised 1-2 feet. The bed should be narrow enough so the center can be reached from the side. This type of bed provides better drainage because no one is walking on the dirt, packing it down. A raised bed also reduces bending and stretching as you work in your garden.

**Square Foot:** This type of garden is partitioned off in 1 ft. x 1 ft. blocks. A common arrangement is to block off sections that are 4 ft. x 4 ft. Within each section a different vegetable is grown. The yield is usually higher than a traditional single row planting method and takes up less space.