

Organic Gardening

What is Organic Gardening?

The term is used often in articles about gardening and in connection with food and gardening, but the issue of raising food organically is complex, with many sources of information.

For the home gardener, there are key basic concepts that need to be remembered. Growing a garden organically basically means growing in harmony with nature, protecting the ecosystem. Generally organic gardening means not using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Fortunately, the interest in growing food organically has resulted in a wide variety of gardening products, easily available in most garden centers.

Organic gardening is more complex than just using organic products. The goal of the home gardener is to use sustainable growing practices and techniques to restore and maintain the soil to its rich natural state, boosting the quality and yield of the garden harvest.

Crop Rotation

A crop rotation strategy is an essential technique that will improve soil quality, and reduce weed, pest, and disease problems. See <https://www.growveg.com/guides/crop-rotation-for-growing-vegetables/> for more information.

Succession Planting

“Sow little and often” is a practice which provide a endless supply of vegetables. The best ways to accomplish this goal are to make small plantings several weeks apart (cold-season crops are good candidates) or to plant several varieties including early, mid and late season vegetables (such as tomatoes) to extend the growing season. It is better to sow and plant frequently, so a few plants are ready to pick every week than all at once.

Soil Building and Compost

Keeping the garden soil rich and fertile is the key to successful gardening. Compost is the ideal way to achieve this goal. There are many ways to source compost, including developing your own compost as a nutrient source or buying at local garden centers. Many references on developing a compost source are available. See <https://learn.eartheasy.com/guides/composting> for more information.

Mulch and Cover Cropping

Mulch is a garden friend and helps to keep plants and productive. It helps to retain soil moisture, suppress weeds, protect plants from soil-borne diseases, insulate plants from temperature fluctuations and adds curb appeal. Organic choices include weed less straw, seaweed, grass clippings, wood chips, compost shredded leaves and pine needles.

Cover crops, or green manure, are planted in the fall and help lock in nutrients. In spring, the turning of the cover crops into the soil will aid in improving soil fertility.

Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) uses a combination of cultural, mechanical and biological controls to deal with pests and disease. Good gardening practices such as moisture control, mulch, watering, and selecting the right plants, and avoiding over fertilization go a long way to preventing pests. See <https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/integrated-pest-management-zmaz78jazbur> for additional information.

Additional References

Book: Kelly Orzel: ***The Backyard Gardener***, Lyons Press, CT, 2017

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<https://www.wellnessmama.com>

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