

51 Tips for Growing a Vegetable Garden

Growing vegetable gardens can be very rewarding. This ebook will give you some tips on growing some common fruits and vegetables.



SETTING UP YOUR GARDEN

1. Size

The first thing that you need to do is decide how much space you need to plant your garden. Depending on this space, figure out how many plants to plant.

2. Light

Vegetable gardens need plenty of sunlight. Generally speaking, the more sun the better. Don't plant your garden too close to trees or anything else that will shade it too much.

3. Raised Beds

Vegetables need good drainage when they grow, so it's a good idea to plant them in raised beds. You can make these out of cement blocks or wood. If you don't have these resources, you can plant on raised mounds of dirt.



TOMATOES

4. Preparation

There are so many varieties of tomatoes to choose from. It's a good idea to plant tomatoes when the soil is warm, after danger of frost is over.

5. Planting

If you're planting dwarf plants, place them 12 inches apart in the row. If you're planting staked plants, place them 15 to 24 inches apart.

6. Watering

Tomatoes need plenty of water, especially during dry summers. Water them thoroughly every couple of days. Tomatoes in containers may need daily or even more frequent watering.

7. Harvesting

You'll know when your tomatoes are ready when they're firm and fully colored. In hot summer weather, pick your tomatoes every day or two. Even after they're picked, they'll continue to ripen slowly over the next several weeks.



SWEET CORN

8. Preparation

Like tomatoes, there are lots of different varieties of corn. Sweet corn needs warm soil. You should plant corn just before the frost-free date.

9. Planting

Place the seeds 1/2 inch deep in cool, moist soil. Space the kernels 9 to 12 inches apart in the row. It's a good idea to plant two or more rows side by side to ensure good development. Allow 30 to 36 inches between rows.

10. Fertilizing

Fertilize around the tomato seeds right when you plant them. When your corn reaches almost 10 inches, fertilize again. Corn will be ready to harvest 3 weeks after the first silk appears.

11. Harvesting

Your corn will be ready to harvest in 60-85 days. To pick them, break the ear from the stalk close to the base so as not to damage the ear or the stalk.



RADISHES

12. Preparation

Radishes need a fine, well-prepared seed bed. It's a good idea to apply animal manure or compost about 6 weeks before planting. This helps build up the water-holding capacity of the soil, and it balances the nutrient supply.

13. Planting

Plant small radishes 1-2 inches apart, and larger varieties 6 inches apart. You can grow several rows of radishes in a bed as long as you keep your beds at least 2 feet apart.

14. Watering

Radishes need consistent moisture. If they dry out during their growth, they'll become bitter. Keep your radishes plenty moist throughout the growing season. You can use straw mulch to help retain moisture in your soil.

15. Harvesting

Most radish varieties mature in 25 to 35 days. They're only mature for a short time, so if left in the ground too long, they can become pithy and mealy. It's a good idea to watch them closely, and pick a radish every so often to determine their maturity.



CARROTS

16. Preparation

Carrots grow well in well drained, sandy soil. Make sure the soil is nice and loose down to 12 inches or more to allow for good root development. Make sure your soil doesn't have any rocks and twigs.

17. Planting

Carrots don't require much space. It all depends on how big the roots are at harvest time. If you're growing baby carrots, spacing them between $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch and 2 inches. If you want bigger carrots, thinning to a final spacing of 2 inches-4 inches is about right.

18. Watering

Carrots need a good moisture supply to become well established and to produce good root development. Carrots need at least 1 inch of water each week during the growing season. Remember to soak the soil thoroughly when watering.

19. Harvesting

Carrots are very easy to harvest. Simply pull up the plant by the tops (the green leafy part). You can basically harvest them any time, depending on the size you want. For baby carrots, harvest them at 4 to 5 inches. For bigger carrots, harvest them at $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches.



PEAS

20. Preparation

Peas need nutrient rich soil produce a good crop. Peas planted in early spring do well in raised beds that have good drainage. They can be started as soon as the soil can be worked.

21. Planting

Peas need to be planted 1 to 1 ½ inches apart in all directions. The rows should be 12 to 18 inches apart. If you are planting a large bed of peas, you can plant them in a zig-zag pattern with 12 to 18 inches between the plants.

22. Watering

Peas need lots of even moisture throughout the growing season. They like soil with good drainage and if they stay too wet, they will get root rot.

23. Harvesting

You know your peas are ready to harvest when their pods are plump but not bursting. Harvest them every 2-4 days to encourage them to keep growing.



GREEN BEANS

24. Preparation

Green beans are easy to grow, and will thrive in almost any soil. They need to have good drainage though, or the seeds will rot. To prepare the soil, break up large clods of dirt and rake the area smooth.

25. Planting

Plant your beans 1 to 1 ½ inches deep, and 2 inches apart within rows. Space the rows about 24 to 36 inches. If you want lots of beans, plant beans every two weeks, until a good month and a half before first expected frost date.

26. Watering

Peas need lots of moisture during germination. Water them deeply once a week, making sure the soil drains well. Once your peas have started to sprout, you don't need to irrigate them as much.

27. Harvesting

Fresh beans are usually ready for harvest about 8 to 10 days after flowering. They will be pencil thin, and the beans will be bright green. The bean pods will snap easily when bent. Pinch or cut the beans off rather than pulling them.



POTATOES

28. Preparation

Potatoes need well-drained soil. It's a good idea to mix compost into your bed to make sure there are plenty of nutrients in the soil.

29. Planting

Plant your potato seeds in early spring, about 3 weeks before the last frost. Space your potatoes between 6 and 12 inches apart, in shallow holes (about 3 inches deep). Make the rows between 30 and 36 inches.

30. Watering

Keep your potatoes evenly moist and water them deeply during dry spells. If you plant your potatoes in a hill, they will dry out quicker so watch the soil moisture carefully.

31. Harvesting

You'll know your potatoes are ready to harvest when their leaves die back. Some people prefer "new potatoes." These are immature potatoes that are picked several months after planting, but before the potato plants reach maturity. You can find these new potatoes when the potato plants blossom.



BELL PEPPERS

32. Preparation

Bell peppers need nutrient rich soil. They do best in well drained soil, and lots of sun. Raised beds are great for bell peppers, with good topsoil, compost, and rotted manure mixed in.

33. Planting

Your bell peppers grow into small bushes, and need lots of air circulation. Give them enough room by spacing them between 12 and 18 inches apart, and in rows at least 24 to 36 inches apart.

34. Watering

Bell peppers need lots of water during germination. You'll need to keep them moist but not soggy. If they don't get enough water, they'll have a bitter taste. You can use mulches to help keep the soil moist.

35. Harvesting

You'll know that your bell peppers are ready to harvest when they turn their final color. They can be red, orange, yellow, green, or purple depending on the variety. The more you harvest, the more will grow, so pick them regularly.



WATERMELON

36. Preparation

Plant your watermelon after the soil is warm and there's no danger of frost. Watermelons grow best on a sandy soil, and it's important to plant them on raised mounds.

37. Planting

Watermelon vines need lots of space. Plant seeds one inch deep in hills spaced 6 feet apart. Make your rows 7 to 10 feet apart. After the seedlings start sprouting, it's a good idea to thin them to about three plants per hill.

38. Watering

Watermelons have deep roots, so you seldom need to water them. In cooler areas, you can get floating row covers, drip irrigation and black plastic mulch to help produce a great crop in a short season.

39. Harvesting

Watermelons can be hard to tell when they're ripe. Here's a list of things to look for:

- Light green, curly tendrils on the stem
- Surface color of the fruit turns dull
- the skin is tough and resist the thumbnail
- The bottom turns a yellowish color.



PUMPKINS

40. Preparation

Pumpkins are sensitive to grow. The seeds need warm soil, and frost can really injure the seedlings. If you want pumpkins for Halloween, plant the seeds from late May in northern locations to early July in southern places.

41. Planting

Pumpkins need a minimum of 50 to 100 square feet per hill. Plant seeds one inch deep, and four or five seeds per hill. Allow 5 to 6 feet between hills, spaced in rows 10 to 15 feet apart. Once they have sprouted, thin each hill to the best two or three plants.

42. Watering

Pumpkin plants need to be kept weed-free by hoeing and shallow cultivation. They do okay with short periods of hot, dry weather.

43. Harvesting

You'll know when your pumpkins are ready to be harvested when they are a deep, solid orange, and the rind is hard. This will usually be in late September or early October, before heavy frosts. Cut the pumpkins carefully, using pruning shears or a sharp knife, and leave 3 to 4 inches of stem attached.



SUMMER SQUASH

44. Preparation

Summer squash needs warm, fertile, and aerated soil. They do well with soil that has compost or well-rotted manure added to it.

45. Planting

One way to grow summer squash is to plant them in a corner of the garden and train the vines to grow outside of the garden. Plant them about 2 feet apart and in rows that are 2 feet apart.

46. Watering

Summer squash need lots of water throughout the growing season. Water them deeply during dry spells. Only water the roots; not the foliage. Watering them early morning helps prevent mildew.

47. Harvesting

Summer squash are ready to harvest when they turn their mature color (usually green or yellow). Straightneck, crookneck, and zucchini summer squash are ready when they reach 1 ½ to 2 inches in diameter, while scallop summer squash are ideal at 3 to 4 inches in diameter.



STRAWBERRIES

48. Preparation

Plant your strawberries in the spring. If you're planting young plants, be sure that they're certified and disease free. Select plants with large crowns with healthy, light-colored roots. Prepare your soil with 1-2 inches of organic matter (like compost, or well rotted manure).

49. Planting

To plant your strawberry plants, make a hole big enough to spread the roots. Make the center of the hole into a hill, and place the crown at soil level. Spread the roots downward, and bury the strawberry plant so that the soil goes half way up the crown.

50. Watering

Your strawberries will need 1 to 2 inches of water per week. This is especially important during the formation of the strawberry, from early bloom until it's time to pick them.

51. Harvesting

Pick your strawberries when they're fully ripened. This means leaving the berries on the plant for a day or two after they are fully colored. To pick them, snap the stem directly above the berry, rather than pulling on the berry itself.