



Summer Gardening Basics

Here are the 5 key steps to keeping your garden happy, healthy, and productive throughout the hot summer months:

1. **Water:** If not already in place, install a drip irrigation system and an easy-to-program battery-operated timer. We water our raised beds daily at 7 am for 20 mins. We water our field gardens daily for 30 mins at 6 am. Avoid overhead watering because too much moisture on the leaves of your garden plants can make them susceptible to insect infestations and diseases. A consistent watering schedule will take a ton of stress off of yourself and your plants. The drip system we use and recommend can be purchased online from Drip Depot - [Row crop drip system](#)
2. **Mulch:** Add a thick layer of mulch 3-4" on top of your garden soil, and tuck in nicely under all the plants. Avoid burning drip tapes. Mulch should be placed under your irrigation system or it may clog your emitters. You should also add mulch to areas surrounding your raised beds, row crops, vines and fruit trees. Mulch is essential for keeping your soil temp cooler and regulated. It also helps in suppressing weeds and helps retain moisture. In addition, mulching will also condition your soil and break down as organic matter.
3. **Shade:** We use 50% shade cloth and recommend building a permanent, sturdy structure if possible. Keeping your plants shaded in the hot afternoons is critical to keep them alive throughout the hottest months of the year. Plants should be under 50% shade by 11am-noon at the latest. A local company to purchase from is the [Arizona Bag Company](#)
4. **Cover Crops:** Only plant heat loving crops during the summer. Keep it simple by choosing plants that easily spread and will cover crop your beds. We love using melons, sweet potatoes, winter squash, and buckwheat. Never leave your beds bare and/ or stop watering during the

summer because all of the microbes, worms, and other beneficial organisms that exist in your soil will die without that water.

5. **Companion Plant:** Plant heat loving herbs and flowers. Basil and marigolds are great companion plants to summer crops such as squash, melons, and peppers because they work as natural deterrents and keep harmful insects such as aphids and squash bugs away; they also act as pollinator attractors.

Other helpful tips:

1. Apply our microbial rich worm tea to all plants in your veggie gardens, flowers, shrubs, vines and fruit trees! It will help thicken the leaves and protect them from sunburn. Plus you get 50% when attending a class so take advantage! Use within 4 hours of purchase.
2. Set out a birdbath to keep the wildlife hydrated and off of your fruit.
3. Remove lower foliage on squash plants, peppers, and tomatoes. This helps increase air circulation and will help to remove hiding places for insects. It also directs energy into producing more fruit.
4. Grow vertically- we love using trellises for luffa, armenian cucumbers, pole beans and malabar spinach. This is a very effective way to increase space and keep plants healthier. It will also improve/ increase yield.
5. Try to be preventative in keeping pests away instead of waiting until an infestation has occurred. Improve soil health by adding worm castings, compost, and mulch before each new season. Healthy soil is key in keeping infestations away.
6. Spacing plants appropriately - at least 12" apart from one another - can help tremendously. Observe plants daily if possible.
7. Purchase a helpful insect identification book. It's very important to be able to identify beneficial insects vs. harmful insects. This book will also list organic methods in controlling bugs if the issue arises - [Vegetable Garden Pest Handbook](#)
8. In August, start planning your fall garden! Towards the very end of August and throughout the month of September, you can start planting your monsoon/ fall tomatoes, tomatillos, and peppers. We'll see you then!