Devon Hukill's Vegetable Garden Guide

Soil Preparation

- Incorporating organic matter is important for vegetable garden production. In sandy soils, adding organic matter increases water and nutrient holding capacity. In clay soils adding organic matter increases pore space, which improves soil drainage and rooting depth.
- Common soil amendments for the vegetable garden are plant-based compost, manure-based compost, fall leaves, straw, and peat moss. In using manure, it is important that the manure is composted and no longer "hot", which can burn the roots and leaves of your vegetables.
- When working the soil, it is important not to till when the soil is wet, this will only compact the soil. Apply a 1-2" layer of organic matter evenly over the garden area and mix thoroughly into the top 6-8" of soil.

Preparing Planting Beds

- Planting Beds should be no more than 4 feet wide, which will make it easy to reach from the walkways on both sides for planting, weeding, and harvesting.
- The walkways are dug down 2 feet wide with the excess soil placed on top of the planting bed.
- To keep the walkways from getting too muddy you can mulch with dry grass clippings, straw, or mulch. Never use hay in your vegetable garden. Remember, hay is for horses, it contains alfalfa and you'll never be able to get rid of it.

Mulching Your Vegetable Garden

- If weeds are a big problem, you can add a layer of mulch. Mulching your beds not only helps to control weeds, but also conserves soil moisture and regulates soil temperature.
- Apply mulch once your seeds have germinated, and your seedlings have started to grow. An affordable way to mulch your garden is to use grass clippings. Apply in thin layers up to 1" thick, allowing it to dry between applications. It's important to use lawn clippings free of weed killers, and pesticides.

Watering

- Watering needs will be less in the spring when crops are young and temperatures are cooler, and more when temperatures rise, and crops come into bloom. Windy weather will also increase water demand.
- There are several different methods of watering; by hand, sprinklers, soaker hose, and drip systems. Soaker hoses, and drip systems are much more efficient, and reduces the amount of plant diseases spread in the garden. They are a little more effort to set-up, but are relatively easy and inexpensive, and can be used year after year.
- It's important to water plants when they need it, too much water can be just as damaging as too little of water. As a general rule water when the top 2-4" of soil is dry. You can tell this by sticking your finger in the soil, or by using a small hand trowel digging down 2-4". If the soil is dry, then water, and if the soil is wet wait a day or two and test again.
- During the summer months, vegetables typically use 1/4 inch of water a day. If you are watering every 4 days apply 1" of water per time. You can measure this by placing several shallow cans throughout your garden and run your watering system for the length of time it takes to collect 1" of water in the bottom of the can.

Planting Your Crops

- Cool Season Vegetables
- These vegetables prefer a cool growing season and lose quality in the hot summer months.

Hardy Vegetables

- Broccoli:
    - Should be planted as plants into the garden 2-3 weeks before the last frost (mid-April).
    - Spacing should be 18-24".
    - Ready for harvest around 65 days.

- Onions
    - Plant as onion sets (small onion bulbs) in the spring as soon as soil conditions will allow.
    - Space 4-6" apart and 1-2" deep, with row spacing of 12-18"
    - Sort out large sets (larger than a dime) from the small sets.
    - Harvest large sets first, they don't store as well.
    - Ready for harvest in 60 days.

- Lettuce/Spinach
    - Should be sown as seeds 2-4 weeks before last frost (beginning to mid-April).
    - Seed depth 1/4", seed spacing 1", thin to 6-10", and with row spacing of 12-24".
    - Plant for a fall harvest mid to late summer.
    - Ready for harvest in 40-60 days.

- Peas
    - Sow as seed as early as possible (beginning April)
    - Seed depth 1", seed spacing of 2-4", with row spacing of 24-36"
    - Peas are a climbing vegetable, so you will need something for them to climb on. I recommend a teepee made from bamboo stakes. You could also use a tomato cage turned upside down with the legs tied together.
    - Ready for harvest in 65 days. o Harvest before seeds swell.
    - A fall crop can be seeded late July early August.

Semi-Hardy Vegetables

- Carrots
    - Sow as seed mid-April.
    - Seed depth 1/4", seed spacing h", thin to 3-4", with row spacing of 16-30”
    - Ready for harvest in 70 days.
    - Consistent soil moisture is a must for germination.

- Potatoes
    - Plant tubers in spring 2 weeks before last frost (late April)
    - Planting depth 4-6", with spacing of 12-15" all around.
    - Tubers should have at least 2-3 eyes and can be cut in half.

Warm Season Vegetables

Tender Vegetables

- Beans
  - Sow as seeds in mid to late May.
  - Seed depth 1", seed spacing 4", with row spacing 2-4'
  - Ready for harvest in 60 days.
  - Of all the vegetables, beans need the most amount of water, so keep an eye on them.
- Corn
  - Sow as seeds in mid to late May.
  - Seed depth 1", seed spacing 4", thin to 12" with row spacing of 30".
  - Ready for harvest in 60-90 days
- Cucumbers
  - Transplant as plants in garden late May.
  - Start indoors two weeks before transplanting.
  - Plant 3 plants per hill, hills 36" apart.
  - Ready for harvest 55-75 days.
- Zucchini/ Yellow Summer Squash
  - Transplant as plants in garden late May.
  - Start indoors two weeks before transplanting.
  - Plant 3 plants per hill, space hills 36-48" apart
  - Ready for harvest 50 days.

Very Tender Vegetables

- Peppers
  - Transplant as plants in the garden late May.
  - Plant spacing 15-18" apart.
  - Ready for harvest 70-100 days.
- Pumpkins
  - Transplant as plants in the garden late May.
  - Start indoors two weeks before transplanting.
  - Plant 3 plants per hill, space hills 60-72" apart.
  - Ready for harvest 90-100 days.
- Winter squash
  - Transplant as plants in the garden late May.
  - Start indoors two weeks before transplanting.
  - Plant 3 plants per hill, space hills 60-72" apart.
  - Ready for harvest 90-100 days.
- Tomatoes
  - Transplant as plants in the garden late May.
  - Plant spacing 24" with row spacing 36".
  - Needs to have a tomato cage ideal size 2' wide and 4-5' tall.

- Needs consistent and deep watering, avoid watering foliage due to disease spreading.
- Ready for harvest in 65+ days (really depends on variety)

Perennial Vegetables

- Asparagus
  - Harvesting last 4-6 weeks from May to mid-June.
  - Harvest only large spears, nothing the size of a pencil or smaller.
  - Let leaves (foliage) grow until fall or leave through the winter and cut back before new growth starts in the spring.
  - Fertilize in spring as growth starts and again in mid-summer after harvest.

- Rhubarb
  - Harvest oldest stalks first which allows for new stalks to grow.
  - Never remove more than % of the total number of stalks at one time.
  - Be sure to remove seed stalks, which if left would slow down the growth of new stalks.
  - Stop harvesting when temperatures are steadily above 85º.

Vegetable Planting Guide

Vegetable	Seeds or Transplant	Plant Spacing	Planting Depth	Row Spacing	Days to Germination	Typical Days to Harvest
Cool Season Crops						
Beets	Plant as seeds					
Broccoli	Transplants	18-24"	N/A	18-24"	N/A	65
Brussels Sprouts	Transplants	24"	N/A	36"	N/A	80-115
Cabbage	Transplants	24"	N/A	36"	N/A	75-100
Carrots	Plant as seeds	3-4"	1/4"	16-30"	10-17	70
Chard, Swiss	Plant as seeds	12"	1/2"	20-24"	5-10	50-60
Kale	Transplants	24"	N/A	36"	N/A	50-65
Lettuce	Plant as seeds	7-9"	1/4"	12-24"	4-10	60
Onions	Plant as onion sets	4-6"	1-2"	12-18"	N/A	N/A
Peas	Plant as seeds	2-4"	1"	24-36"	6-15	65
Potatoes	Plant potato tuber	12-15"	4-6"	12-15"	N/A	125
Radish	Plant as seeds	1-3"	1/2"	24-30"	4-12	30-35
Spinach	Plant as seeds	4-6"	1/2"	12-24"	6-14	40
Turnip	Plant as seeds	4-6"	1/4-1/2"	24"	5-15	45-65
Warm Season Crops						
Beans	Plant as seeds	4"	1 - 1 1/2"	2-4'	6-14	60
Corn	Plant as seeds	12"	1 - 1 1 2	30"	5-10	60-90
Cucumbers	Transplants/seeds	3/hill	1"	24-36"	6-10	55
Eggplant	Transplants	18-24"	N/A	36"	N/A	75-95
Leeks	Transplants	6"	N/A	24-30"	N/A	80-150
Melon/Watermelon	Transplants/seeds	3/hill	1"	72"	N A	75-100
Peppers	Transplants	15-18"	N/A	15-18"	N/A	70
Tomatoes/Tomatillos	Transplants	24"	N/A	36"	N A	65
Summer Squash	Transplants/seeds	3/hill	1"	36-48"	3-12	50
Winter Squash	Transplants/seeds	3/hill	1"	60-72"	6-10	100
Pumpkins	Transplants/seeds	3/hill	1"	60-72"	7-10	90-100