



Grow Your Own Vegetables ~ It's Worth it!

Vegetables can be grown in containers on patios and rooftops, home yards, community garden lots, or large ranch areas — providing nutritious, fresh, delicious food. Benefits include:

- Growing varieties that you and your family like
- Growing enough to feed your neighborhood
- Exercise
- Knowing how and where your food is grown
- Reducing your carbon footprint by
 - eliminating the environmental costs of growing and shipping produce to your market
 - less vehicle travel to purchase produce
 - reducing or eliminating pesticide use

The Basics

Growing enough produce to feed your family or your neighborhood is possible, just follow these basics:

- Choose the best available site for your garden, preferably in a location that is easily accessible from your home. Select a site that receives 6 to 8 hours of full sun each day. It should be relatively level, well-drained, and near a water source. Avoid shaded locations.
- Plan your garden on paper before you begin so that you have vegetables all year round. See planting table, below.
- Before you plant, amend the soil with compost. Mulch and fertilize as needed.
- Plant only as large a garden as you can easily maintain. The size of your garden should be based on how much time you'll be able to give to it. Plan about 3-5 hours a week for a large garden.
- Plant vegetables that your family likes.
- Grow crops that produce the maximum amount of food in the space available. For example, growing corn or melons is probably not your best choice if you have a small space.
- Plant during the correct season for the crop you plan to grow (see Vegetable Classification, below).
- Plant disease-resistant varieties that are adapted to and recommended for your area. Ask your local UCCE master gardener.
- Fertilize according to directions. Too much is as bad as too little.
- Harvest vegetables several times a week and at the maturity you like best. Store them promptly and properly if they are not to be used immediately.

Culture

- Irrigate soil thoroughly before planting.
- Plant rows running north to south with tall plants bordering the garden on the north

- Consider planning on a grid for small spaces, small plants.
- Directly sow seeds into the soil, use transplants that you have started indoors, or buy the seedlings from a nursery.
- Transplant after the danger of frost is past, when the plant has only 2 or 3 true leaves. If there is a danger of frost, provide plant covers.
- Plant seeds at a depth of twice the diameter of the seed. Thin emerged plants according to directions on the seed packet.
- Do not crowd transplants. Space them according to directions.
- Drip irrigation encourages root growth, reduces weed invasion, and is the most efficient. Check the moisture in the root zone, not at the soil surface.
- Instead of trying to kill all insects, learn which ones are beneficial — plant a variety of plants to encourage beneficial insects.
- Use least toxic chemicals – water, insecticidal soap, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), or horticultural oils.
- Mulch to conserve water and prevent weed germination.
- Some vegetables benefit from frequent harvesting, e.g., okra, peppers, beans, peas.

Vegetable Classification

Most vegetables are classified as cool-season or warm-season crops.

Cool-Season Vegetables grow best and produce the best-quality crops when average temperatures are 55° to 75°F (13° to 24°C), and they usually tolerate slight frost when mature. The food value of cool-season vegetables is usually higher per pound and per square foot than that of warm-season vegetables, because the edible parts of the plant are the vegetative parts—such as roots, stems, leaves, or immature flower parts. Examples include:

- **root:** beet, carrot, parsnip, radish, turnip
- **stem:** asparagus, white potato
- **leaf:** cabbage, celery (fleshy petioles), lettuce, onion, spinach
- **immature flower parts:** broccoli, cauliflower, globe artichoke

Warm-Season Vegetables require long, hot days and warm soil to mature. They grow best and produce the best-quality crops when average temperatures are 65° to 95°F (18° to 35°C), and they are intolerant of prolonged freezing temperatures. Examples include:

California Master Gardener Tip Sheet

- **mature fruit:** cantaloupe, winter squash, tomato, watermelon

- **immature fruit:** sweet corn, snap and lima beans, summer squash

Vegetable	Recommended Planting Dates				General Planting Requirements	
	North and North Coast ^a	South Coast ^a	Interior Valleys ^a	Desert Valleys ^a	Crop Type ^b	Amount to Plant (4 people)
Beans, snap ^{1,2}	Jul; May-Jun	Mar-Aug	Apr-May; Jul-Aug	Jan-Mar; Aug	W	15-25 ft. row
Beets ^{1,2}	Feb-Aug	Jan-Sep	Feb-Apr; Aug	Sep-Jan	C	10-15 ft. row
Broccoli ^{1,2,3}	Feb-Apr; Aug-Sep	Jun-Jul; Jan-Feb	Dec-Feb; Jul	Sep	C	6-100 ft. row
Cantaloupes/ Other melons	May	Apr-May	Apr-Jun	Jan-Apr; Jul	W	5-10 hills
Carrots ^{1,2}	Jan-May; Jul-Aug	Jan-Sep	Aug-Sep; Feb-Apr	Sep-Dec	C	10-25 ft row
Chard ¹	Feb-May; Aug	Feb-May	Feb; Aug	Sep-Oct	C	3-4 plants
Chives ¹	Apr	Feb-Apr	Feb-Mar	Sep-Feb	C	1 clump
Corn, sweet ²	May-Jul	Mar-Jul	Mar-Jul	Feb-Mar	W	20-30 ft
Cucumbers	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jul	Feb-May	W	6 plants
Eggplant ^{1,3}	May	Apr-May	Apr-May	Feb-Apr	W	4-6 plants
Garlic ¹	Oct-Dec	Oct-Dec	Oct-Dec	Sep-Nov	C	10-20 ft row
Lettuce ^{1,2}	Feb-Aug	Aug-Apr	Aug; Nov-Mar	Sep-Dec	C	10-15 ft row or 5 ft row each month
Okra	May	Apr-May	May	Mar	W	10-20 ft row
Onions ^{1,4} (bulb)	Jan-Mar	Feb-Mar	Nov-Mar	Oct-Nov	C	30-40 ft. row
Onions ^{1,2,3} (green)	Apr-Jul	All year	Aug-Dec	Sep-Jan	C	---
Peas ^{1,2}	Jan-Apr; Sep-Oct	Aug; Dec-Mar	Sep-Jan	Sep-Oct; Jan-Feb	C	30-40 ft row
Peppers ^{1,3}	May	Apr-May	May	Mar	W	5-10 plants
Potatoes ³ , sweet	May	Apr-May	Apr-Jun	Feb-Jun	W	50-100 ft row
Potatoes, white	Early: Feb Late: Apr-May	Feb-May; Jun-Aug	Feb-Mar; Aug	Dec-Feb	C	50-100 ft row
Pumpkins	May	May-Jun	Apr-Jun	Mar-Jul	W	1-3 plants
Radish ^{1,2}	All year	All year	Sep-Apr	Oct-Mar	C	4 ft row
Spinach ¹	Aug-Feb	Aug-Mar	Sep-Jan	Sep-Nov	C	10-20 ft row
Squash, ¹ summer	May-Jul	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jul	Feb-Mar	W	2-4 plants
Squash, ¹ winter	May	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jun	Feb-Mar; Aug	W	2-4 plants
Tomatoes ^{1,3}	May	Apr-Jul 15	Apr-May	Dec-Mar	W	6-10 (if processing)
Turnips ¹	Jan; Aug	Jan; Aug-Oct	Feb, Aug	Oct-Feb	C	10-15 ft row
Watermelons	May-Jun	Apr-Jun	Apr-Jun	Jan-Mar	W	6 plants

^a North and North Coast = Monterey County north; South Coast = San Luis Obispo County south; Interior Valleys = Sacramento, San Joaquin, and similar valleys; Desert Valleys = Imperial, Coachella valleys. Planting dates are only approximate, as the climate may vary even in small regions of the state. Contact your local master gardeners and experiment on your own to find more precise dates.

^b C = cool season; W = warm season

¹ This crop is suitable for a small garden if compact varieties are grown.
² In a suitable climate, these crops can be planted more than once/year for a continuous harvest.

³ Transplants may be used for planting.

⁴ Onion varieties are daylight dependent. Short-day and intermediate-day varieties are autumn planted. Long-day varieties are planted in spring.



Please contact your local master gardener for more information <http://camastergardeners@ucdavis.edu>

We gratefully acknowledge support for this project from the Elvenia J. Slosson Research Endowment for Ornamental Horticulture.

- o Content for this publication was excerpted from: *California Master Gardener Handbook, Home Vegetable Gardening*, Dennis Pittenger, editor.
- o Project management: Pamela M. Geisel; Donna C. Seaver. Design and illustrations: Will Suckow Illustration.
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WARNING ON THE USE OF CHEMICALS

- Pesticides are poisonous. Always read and carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the container label. Store all chemicals in their original labeled containers in a locked cabinet or shed, away from foods or feeds, and out of the reach of children, unauthorized persons, pets, and livestock.
- Confine pesticides to the property being treated. Avoid drift onto neighboring properties or gardens containing fruits and/or vegetables ready to be picked.
- Dispose of empty containers carefully. Follow label instructions for disposal. Never reuse the containers. Make sure empty containers are not accessible to children or animals. Never dispose of containers where they may contaminate water supplies or natural waterways. Do not pour down sink or toilet. Consult your county agricultural commissioner for correct ways of disposing of excess pesticides. **Never burn pesticide containers.**
- PHYTOTOXICITY: Certain chemicals may cause plant injury if used at the wrong stage of plant development or when temperatures are too high. Injury may also result from excessive amounts or the wrong formulation or from mixing incompatible materials. Inert ingredients, such as wetters, spreaders, emulsifiers, diluents, and solvents, can cause plant injury. Since formulations are often changed by manufacturers, it is possible that plant injury may occur, even though no injury was noted in previous seasons.

