

Successful Strategies for Vegetable Gardeners

Denise Palmer



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What Should I Grow to Maximize Space, Time and Maintenance

- Best Economic Value – Home Grown Vegetables
 - Beans, Beets, Broccoli, Carrots, Cucumbers, Leaf Lettuce
 - Peppers, Summer Squash, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes
 - Herbs – Parsley, Basil, Rosemary, Thyme
- Vegetables which need space and are inexpensive to buy
 - Onion, Irish potatoes
- Vegetables which are better home grown but special care requirements may mean smaller yields
 - Cauliflower, Celery, Head Lettuce
- Is space or time a concern?
 - Choose vegetables which are the most expensive in the grocery store
 - Grow herbs in pots or containers to conserve space



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Where Can I Grow Vegetables?

- Containers
- Raised beds
- Ornamental Beds – “Edible Landscaping”
- Community garden spaces
- In-ground or plot of land



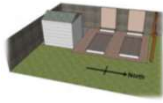
Various Methods of Vegetable Gardening

- Kitchen or Potager
 - *small section set apart by fences or other structures; can include ornamentals*
- Row gardening – traditional method for larger spaces
- Intensive, Vertical, Square Foot – methods which work well for small spaces
- Succession, Interplanting – methods which maximize available space to grow as many crops as possible

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Location is Everything!

- **Close to the house**
- **Direct sun exposure**
 - 8 hours for fruiting vegetables
 - 6 hours for leafy greens, onions, carrots, cucumbers
 - Orientation of the garden bed is best at North/South but not necessary because of our heat
 - Observe and monitor area for sun exposure
 - Do trees or other structures shade the site during the spring and summer?
 - Some shade in July or August is not necessarily a bad thing in central NC
- **Soil**
 - Maintain a pH of 6.0 to 6.5 for vegetables
 - Soil test every 2-3 years
- **Black Walnut or other large trees should be 60 ft away from garden beds**



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Location is Everything!

- **Good soil drainage is necessary**
 - Plants do not like be waterlogged
 - Slopes will allow water to drain quickly to the bottom; runoff
 - Consider raised beds if soil drainage is an issue
- **Space considerations**
 - If New – Start Small! Expand as you gain experience
- **Source of water nearby**
- **Wildlife, Wildlife, Wildlife – Oh my!**
 - Install fencing or consider how you will keep them at bay



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Now is the Time to Plan!

- **List out what you want to grow**
 - What will your family eat? Consider how much time, space and effort with what you have planned
- **Design your garden space**
 - Draw out garden beds
 - Write in where varieties will be grown
 - If doing succession planting for spring, summer or fall, make note of where each of these will be grown.
 - Planting Calendar at [NC State Extension Garden Planting Calendar for Annual Vegetables, Fruits, and Herbs in North Carolina](#) ([ncsu.edu](#))
 - Plant spacing, consider taller vegetables shading short vegetables
 - Use an online garden planner
 - Do not plan to plant your garden at one time
 - Spring vegetables are usually planted in late February to March while summer vegetables are planted late April thru May and June but check with your local Cooperative Extension office
 - Fall vegetables are planted in August and September
- **Don't forget to include companion plants**

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Vegetables – Cool or Warm Season

Suggested planting dates for plant hardiness zone 7b. Zone 8a means that vegetables can be planted sooner than is listed below. Contact your local Extension Master Gardener Volunteer unit for localized dates. Also search "NCSU Vegetable Planting Calendars." Click on Central North Carolina and find references for all vegetables.

SPRING VEGETABLES	SUMMER VEGETABLES	FALL VEGETABLES
March 1st Planting Date* · Spring Peas - S · Leaf Lettuce/Spinach-S · Radishes-S · Cabbages/Broccoli-T · Irish Potatoes-TU · Beets - S · Swiss Chard – S, T	April 15th Planting Date · Sweet Corn - S · Pole Beans - S May 1st Planting Date · Cucumbers – S,T · Tomatoes - T · Sumer Squash- S,T · Watermelon – S,T · Okra - S · Peppers - T · Eggplant - T	August 1st –September 15th · Collards-S,T · Beets – S · Broccoli – T · Kohlrabi-S,T · Onions (Bulb) –S · Radish-S · Garlic – BU – October 15th

S* = SEED
T = TRANSPLANT
BU = BULB
TU = TUBER

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Seed and Plant Selection

- Types or classes of seeds and/or plants available for vegetables
 - Hybrid, Open-Pollinated or Heirloom
- Buying seeds
- What is on a seed packet?
 - Plant description
 - Days to maturity, planting requirements, date packaged, spacing
- Seeds are usually good for more than a year
 - General rule is 3-5 years when kept in a cool and dark location; below 50 degrees
- Some vegetables can go into the garden as a seed, and some must go in as transplants
 - Transplants – If buying, pick short, compact plants which are dark green in color
 - Check leaves for insects or signs of disease
 - Pinch off blooms or fruit when planting into the garden
- If buying summer vegetables as transplants do not set out in the garden until frost days are over
 - Be ready to cover if frost does appear again

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Seed Packet

Common name and Latin name of plant

Planting depth, seed and row spacing, days until plants emerge, and thinning recommendations

Number of plants per seed packet

When to sow outside or inside

Genetically Modified Organism labeling

Sell by date

BROCK WILLIAMS
FIGURE 16-1 NCSU EXTENSION GARDENER HANDBOOK

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What is Soil?

- Is it soil or dirt?
 - *Soil is alive; dirt is dead*
- Which one to use and when
 - *Garden soil*
 - *Compost*
 - *Top soil*
 - *Potting soil*
- What is organic matter?
 - *Dead matter, living parts of plants, living microbes and soil animals*



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Soil is Everything!

- Starting a new in-ground vegetable garden
 - *What is there now? Sod, Contaminates, Trees, Ornamentals, Rocks, Sand*
 - *The best option maybe raised beds*
 - *Cement block, bricks, mounded soil, rocks recycled plastic lumber, cedar, preserved lumber*
 - *Avoid CCA preserved lumber, creosote treated lumber (railroad ties & telephone poles)*
- Soil requires annual amendments of organic matter to maintain health of the soil and plants
 - *Compost is most common*
 - *Green manures or cover crops are used in different ways*
 - *Animal manures should only be incorporated in the fall*
- Know the pH of your soil – Range should be 6.0 to 6.5
 - *Soil test kits from the Extension office; free from April – November*
 - *Adding amendments to raise or lower soil pH should be done in the Fall*
- Growing vegetables will need additional fertilization
 - *Read and follow label instructions with a vegetable specific labeled fertilizer*



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Practical Advice About Soil

- Don't walk on the soil where you plant
 - *Make beds no wider than 3-4 feet across*
 - *Put in stepping stones to move from one area to the next*
- Don't work the soil when it is wet
- Low and no-till practices preserve the structure of your soil and the living microbes in the soil
- Use an organic mulch so that your soil is never bare
- Add organic matter every year (more if you live on a sandpit as I do)



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• Reference

- Search "NC Extension Gardener Handbook"
- Browse thru the "Table of Contents" to find more complete information about vegetables and other areas of the landscape

Thank you
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