

## VEGETABLE GARDEN PLANNING

Some planning should go into your garden ahead of planting time to ensure that it will be a source of both food and enjoyment. First, consider the location. Select a sunny, open area with well-drained soil near a source of water and near the tool storage area. Avoid poorly drained low areas which are prone to late spring frosts.

Second, have the soil tested to determine what nutrients may be needed. This takes the guesswork out of fertilizing. Information for soil test kits and how to understand your soil test results is available at [msusoiltest.com](http://msusoiltest.com). Or talk to a Master Gardener at 1-888-678-3464 for details about this test.

Third, plan your garden on paper. Make a scale drawing of the garden plot and mark out on it the space for each of the crops. Remember, that when plants are crowded together, they not only compete for sunlight, water, and nutrients, but they are also more prone to disease and harder to harvest.

Space-saving ideas include growing vining plants up trellises, using bush type varieties, choosing determinate tomatoes, and planting in wide beds to eliminate spaces between rows. Three feet or less is a good width that allows you to easily reach across the bed from either direction. Planting quickly maturing crops such as lettuce, between later maturing plants, like tomatoes, is also space efficient.

Select plants and varieties that you and your family enjoy. If your garden is small, grow crops which are difficult to obtain in good quality and at a good price at stores. These might include tomatoes, asparagus, lettuces, fresh peas, sugar snap peas, Swiss chard, spinach, and sweet corn.

Three or four successive small plantings of green beans or lettuce ensures a continuous harvest. Using plant varieties which mature at different times will also spread out the harvest.

Place taller crops such as pole beans and corn on the north end of the garden so that they won't shade the shorter crops. Place perennial plants, like asparagus and rhubarb, at the edge of the garden so that they won't be disturbed by soil preparation in the spring.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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