

## Planning and Enjoying a Vegetable Garden

**Sit down with fam and make a list of what veggies you like and what you would be willing to try.**

**Decide how big of a project you want this to be.**

To feed each person in the fam for the summer with very few veggie purchases you need 100 sqft per person. So for a family of 4, 400 sq. ft. are needed to grow a good crop of summer vegetables.

**How would that look? Make a line drawing for your plot plan.**

- You have already chosen an area on your property that is in mostly full sun, has good drainage, isn't on ledge, and water is accessible to the site.
- Sun map. Dig around, tap with a rock bar, any wetland plants?
- You may want a rectangular plot that would be 18x22 (396 sqft) or a square at 20x20.
- Whatever you choose, as the soil warms, measure and stake it out with twine and stakes.

**You may want to install raised beds.**

- Most raised bed are 4 feet wide so you can reach the middle of the bed without stepping on the soil. The length is up to you as is the height. 4x10 gives you 40 square feet.
- You can start with a few because of the extra cost of materials for the boxes and gradually increase the number of raised beds or do both: in-ground growing with several raised beds within.
- Use two inch thick hemlock from a lumber mill. The boards should be at least 12 inches wide. Screw boards together. Find a source for rich composted topsoil. Apply amendments and turn in.

**On your plot plan write in where you will put the crops you intend to plant.**

- If you do a mixed garden (ground and boxes) things like peas, tomatoes, carrots, beets and potatoes do well directly in the ground.
- Leafy greens like kale, Swiss chard, lettuce, do well in both as do eggplant and peppers, garlic, onions and leeks. So mix it up!
- Plant placement can be by type of plant, ie. Brassicas, allium, nightshades (easiest for crop rotation)
- Or you can plant a row with staggered crops as in root crop, leafy green, fruiting plant (ex. Beet, lettuce, pepper) with a repeat pattern. Rows by height: tomato, celery, carrot.
- Companion planting: peas, cucumber, beets, dill
- Blocks of plants
- Successive planting

**Order seeds** if starting yourself/plant/under grow lights/keep moist or consider purchasing sets of plants from the nursery.

**Tools you will need:** spade, steel rake, edger, garden fork, long-handled claw, spring rake. Hand trowel, hand rake – rigid, hori-hori knife

**When you start to prep your planting areas remove sod by hand or with a sod cutter.**

Move the sod directly to a compost area you have chosen and lay grass side down in a 3x3 foot area. Keep piling it up. In between the layers of sod (pile up to a foot of sod) apply some straw or dried leaves that you might have on hand. Compost requires green (n) and dried carbon materials. We layer

them and add some lime and soil in between the layers. This keeps it sweet and encourages the growth of aerobic bacteria.

### **Double dig the garden (can prep in stages)**

- Rake out paths
- Use soil to elevate beds
- Add amendments and till in
- Rake smooth. Ready to plan
- Coat the paths with straw or salt hay to keep the weeding to a minimum.

### **Reference your plan.**

- Designate which crops you are planting by seed and which from plant starts.
- Date anticipated plantings.
- **Who goes in when?**
  1. As soon as ground is workable:  
Seeds: peas, kale, lettuce, carrots, beets, mustard and other greens
  2. After danger of frost:  
Seeds: beans, spinach, herbs, edible flowers, parsnips  
Seed potato tubers  
Slips of sweet potatoes  
Starts: tomato, pepper, eggplant, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, onions, shallots, leeks  
Permaculture: asparagus (year 3 normal harvest)  
Rhubarb

### **As soon as plants are in, you need to start tending the beds.**

Weeding: a small long-handled rotary cultivator works great on weeds.

Hand weeding is meditative-get the roots out

Staking: as plants need support create fencing and tipis of bamboo where needed. Tomatoes will need a lot of support as the season goes on. Prepare for that. Cages, 8 ft stakes with twine, suspension systems. Use soft material on plant stems for tying.

### **Controlling pests**

- Large animals such as deer can be deterred by fencing.
- Smaller animals – woodchucks, voles, chipmunks-- can be deterred by predatory animal urines.
- Insects: control first by hand-picking and putting in a jar of soapy water with a bit of cooking oil
  - Bt can be used for beetle and moth larva.
  - Yellow sticky traps for moths, gnats and flies
  - Diatomaceous earth for larva including tomato horn worm
  - Use trap plants away from crop plants such as dill and fennel to attract pests
  - beer traps for slugs
- Identifying insects: (Pat has a slide presentation)

Away from class, research the common insect beneficials and pests of your crops. Look up the genus and species name on the internet and know your insect eggs and larva. For example, google “Ladybug scientific name” to get “Coccinellidae” – a beneficial insect. You’ll be able to see pictures of the larvae, eggs and adults so you don’t accidentally kill them.

- Blights/molds/mildews/fungus – use copper spray, baking soda and water

**Watch your plants and harvest things as they look like the produce you purchase.**

i.e. Heads of broccoli, heads of lettuce, small zucchini.

- All plants will keep trying to produce seed which means they will push the harvest beyond edibility if you just leave it on the plant.
- Root crops will start to push above the ground a bit so you can assess how big the beet, carrot or onion actually is. Poke around with your fingers to determine the size.
- All vegetables have their own harvest time because they all have their own set growing time. If you purchase seeds this information is on the seed packet.

**At the end of the season**

- Make sure to remove all spent plants,
- Rake out the beds and
- Cover them with salt hay or straw. This will prevent erosion during the winter months.
- And it is easy to rake the beds clean in the spring and add more amendments to start next year’s crop!

Questions can come to [gardensofthegoddess@gmail.com](mailto:gardensofthegoddess@gmail.com)

PAT PARKINS  
GARDENS OF THE GODDESS

PLANNING AND ENJOYING A VEGETABLE GARDEN  
WARD'S NURSERY, 600 MAIN STREET, GREAT BARRINGTON, MA 01230, 413-528-0166  
MARCH 21, 2020

TALK AND SLIDE PRESENTATION