

PLAN A VEGETABLE GARDEN



Plan before you plant!

What vegetables do your family like? What size garden do you want? What will grow well on your site? Make a sketch on paper to show where you will plant each crop. A garden can be any size from tiny to huge. A 3' X 6' plot will provide plenty of fresh salad all season!



Sunlight

Most vegetables need 6-8 hours of sunlight a day. Tomatoes, peppers and squash require a full day of sun, root vegetables such as carrots and beets need less. Lettuce and leafy greens can handle a little shade.

Seeds or Transplants?

Many plants grow well from **seed** as long as **soil and air temperatures favor their growth**. **Seedling transplants** offer a quick, easy way to establish a garden. Many **warm weather crops are transplanted as seedlings** because the growing season in Massachusetts is too short to seed them in the garden. Transplants of many varieties abound in garden centers in the spring!

→ See **Growing Tips 16** Starting Seeds Indoors + **Growing Tips 17** Caring for Seedlings.



Cool-weather Crops

Sow seeds of peas, carrots, lettuce, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, onion, and radishes about **two weeks prior to the last expected frost date** or as soon as the soil dries and warms enough to be loose and crumbly when turned. Seedling transplants that thrive in cooler weather (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, onions) allow you to get a jump on the season. These **cool-season plants tolerate light frosts**.



Warm-weather Crops

Plant seeds of snap beans, corn, cucumbers, melons and squash **when all danger of frost is past – daytime temperatures and the soil temperature warm to 60° - 65°F**. Likewise, **transplant** tomato, pepper, eggplant, or melon seedlings when the **weather becomes settled and warm**.

Plant perennials (which live for many years) such as *rhubarb, asparagus, and strawberries* along one side of the garden where they will not interfere with preparing the rest of the garden. **These plants need plenty of space.**

Starting a New Garden

Strip off any grass or sod that covers the garden site. Since **lawn grasses are perennial, they must be removed** so they won't become a chronic weed problem.

EASY START! Make a new small garden in your lawn: **1.** - Mow the area short. **2.** - Lay 5 or more layers of wet newspaper right over the grass. **3.** - Spread 6" – 8" of mixed compost and soil over the newspaper, which will decompose over time as it smothers the grass and weeds. **4.** - **Plant into the top layer.**



Prepare the Soil

Test the soil and spread limestone.

A standard soil test will tell you how much limestone to apply to the soil. **Collect a soil sample** from your garden plot and **send it to the soil test lab**. For information on how to sample, go to the UMass Soils Lab web site <http://www.umass.edu/soiltest/> **Spread ground limestone according to the soil test.**

Apply organic matter.

Apply compost, rotted manure or other organic matter to the soil surface. **Rule of thumb: a 2" deep layer of compost** worked into the top 6" of soil benefits your plants. Apply more organic matter if the soil is sandy or high in clay content. Avoid using wood chips, sawdust, or other organic materials that decompose too slowly.



Turn the soil - or till.

Turn the soil to **mix in the limestone and organic matter**. For a small garden, do this with a spade or spading fork. For larger sites, consider tilling with a machine.



www.mass.gov/agr/
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www.extension.umass.edu/landscape/