

Planning a Vegetable Garden

(Alison Limoges) Alameda Backyard Growers March 10, 2014

Why Plant a Vegetable Garden?

- To grow your own Fresh Food
- It's Therapeutic
- To get Vitamin D from the sun
- To Reduce food waste
- Perhaps to Grow a Row and Give Away a row - to the Alameda Food Bank!

Planning your Garden Site

1. **Sun/Shade:** Veggies and herbs need at least 6 hours of sun/day. 8 hours is better. Greens need 4 hours Most edible, and cut, flowers require as much sun as fruiting veggies. Fruiting trees need full sun in summer. Shade changes as the seasons change. Watch where and when the sun covers your yard during each season.
2. **Water Source:** Water should be close: hose, irrigation or sprinkler –test radius, depth of watering (Need a minimum of a depth of 6”-1’ of watering for leafy veggies and more for larger plants, trees)
3. **Proximity:** Garden should be close to your home-for ease of care and use
4. **Soil condition:** Consider possible contaminants, the need for raised beds or containers
5. **Pests** - pests, moles, amount of space
6. **Neighboring tree/plants/invasives:** Be mindful of your plantings and theirs—to avoid invasives, problems

Planting Plan

Consider using a Planting Guide (graph paper) to show space and sun needed for each plant Plant what you will need/eat, not much more. READ SEED PACKETS and notes on Plant Starts. Take and keep Notes on what you planted when, and how much you sowed/when. Also successes, problems.

Prepare your Garden Soil

It's all about good soil! Good Soil = clay, sand, silt in the right balance. Do not remove soil. It can be improved! Is it clean? Safe? Loose? Workable? Remove large rocks, debris. For info about lead:

<http://acmg.ucdavis.edu/files/50347.pdf>

Compost

Amend your soil before planting with good, finished compost, worm castings and/or other organic matter. Add 3-5” of compost (or 30% of volume) and work into the top 6” - 12” of your soil. Add compost again later as “booster shot” for plants.

Fertilize:

Initially at planting time water and then fertilize. 2-2-2 **NPK (Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium)** is good, so is liquid fish and kelp. More is NOT better. READ the PACKAGE. Nitrogen is for green plant growth. Most CA soils have plenty of **K** (potassium) which helps increase the size of veggies and helps promote disease resistance. Phosphorus is for root formation and flowers.

Organic fertilizers are renewable and biodegradable. They improve the soil structure and provide slow-release of nutrients. They are bulkier and it's harder to over fertilize with them.

Kinds of Organic Fertilizers:

Animal Based: blood, bone, feather meals fish products, bat guano, manures - cow, chicken bat and seabird

Plant-based: alfalfa, cottonseed, soybean meals, kelp, seaweed. READ the LABEL.

Mulching:

Covering the soil around your plants prevents weeds, reduces water evaporation, buffers the soil temperature (Ex: compost, yard clippings, unseeded straw and wood chips. Put 2-6” on top of soil)

When to Plant:

Spring is the time to plant cool season crops.

Indoor from seeds, some outdoors from seeds, or outdoor plant starts: Follow the Seed Packet directions.

Seeds: wait till ground is warm enough (and not too wet) for seeds to germinate outdoors. Or plant seeds indoors first, possibly using a heat pad and/or grow lights. Some seeds can be sown now directly into the soil: mostly root vegetables and greens: lettuce, peas, carrots, radish, turnips, beets and parsnips.

Warm season crops can be planted between late March and Early May—depending on your microclimate.

Local Plant Hardiness Zones:

West Alameda (to Webster St.) is Hardiness Zone 10A.

East Alameda and Bay Farm Island are Hardiness Zone 9B.

Orient your beds East to West, leave space between plants for growth and for walking/working.

RECORD YOUR RESULTS to learn what works best in YOUR Garden.

Recommended Readings:

Bay-Friendly Gardening (Stopwaste.org)

Good Neighbors: Companion Planting For Gardeners by Anna Carr

Carrots Love Tomatoes—Secrets of Companion Planting for Successful Gardening by Louise Riotte

Sunset Western Garden Book of Edibles

Sunset Western Garden Book

The Garden Primer

Golden Gate Gardening by Pam Peirce

The Beautiful Edible Garden by Bennett and Bittner

Grow Great Grub by Gayla Trail

Edible Landscaping by Rosalind Creasy

Websites:

Plangarden.com

Dog Island Farm --Companion Plant Chart

Peaceful Valley Farms

Renee's Garden Seeds

Pollinate Farm and Garden

UC Davis ANR Catalog

StopWaste.org

“California Gardening Advice to Grow By” <http://cagardenweb.ucdavis.edu>

Handouts:

Graph paper, Notes, Dog Island Farm Companion Planting Chart, AC Master Gardeners' “Vegetable and Herb Planting Recommendations” and “Composting is Good for Your Garden & the Environment”

An Alameda County Resource:

Alameda County Master Gardener (ACMG) program Website: <http://acmg.ucdavis.edu/>

<http://acmg.ucanr.edu/files/134095.pdf> How to Grow Start a Vegetable Garden By Birgitt Evans

Plant Doctor Helpline 510.639.1371

Speakers and Private Consults

Lake Merritt Trials Garden (Wednesdays & Saturdays 11-1. Workshops usually 2nd Sats. in summer)

East Bay Farmer's Markets

Alameda County Fair

Quarry Lakes Park in Fremont