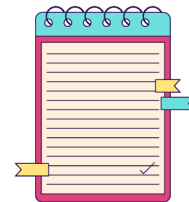


# Planning Your Vegetable Garden

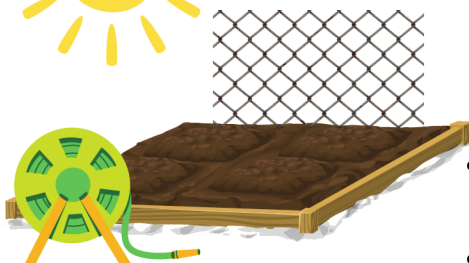


## Think about

- Why are you gardening? To feed yourself, your family, your community?
- Who will do the work? Will the garden be a group project, with family members or friends working willingly throughout the season? Or will it just be you?
- How much time do you have to spend gardening each week? Be realistic about how much time you and your family can devote to the garden.
- How much room do you have? Access to a large gardening area doesn't mean you need to grow a large garden. A small, weed-free garden produces more and will give you more pleasure than a large, weedy mess. Start small to give your plants the necessary care as you learn and gain experience. Expand when you are ready.
- Will you create an in-ground garden, make a raised bed, or grow in containers?



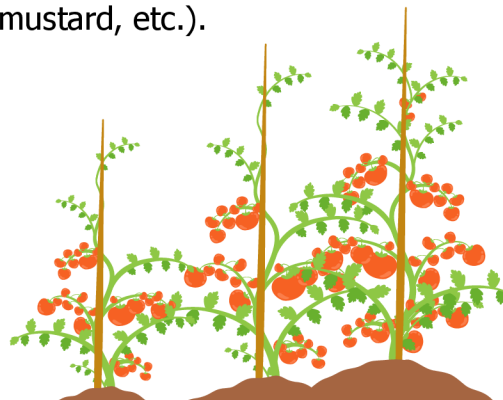
## Your Garden Spot



- Pick a sunny spot. Many popular crops—tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, eggplant, and beans—need 6-8 hours of direct sun each day. Lettuce, spinach, kale, radishes, and carrots need at least 4-6 hours of direct sun daily.
- The ground should be level with easy access to water to fill a watering can or attach a hose.
- If rabbits, deer, raccoons, or groundhogs are active in your neighborhood, fence your garden to protect it.

## Your Garden Plan

- Grow vegetables that you and your household like to eat and are expensive to buy. Some of the easiest vegetables are bush bean, tomato, cucumber, pepper, lettuce, summer squash, and leafy greens (Swiss chard, kale, mustard, etc.).
- Learn the size of the "footprint" of the vegetables you want to grow—the amount of space your plants will take up when fully grown. An 8-in. tall tomato transplant grown in a 4-in. pot will grow into a 6-ft. tall plant, taking up 2-3 ft. of space.





## Your Garden Plan

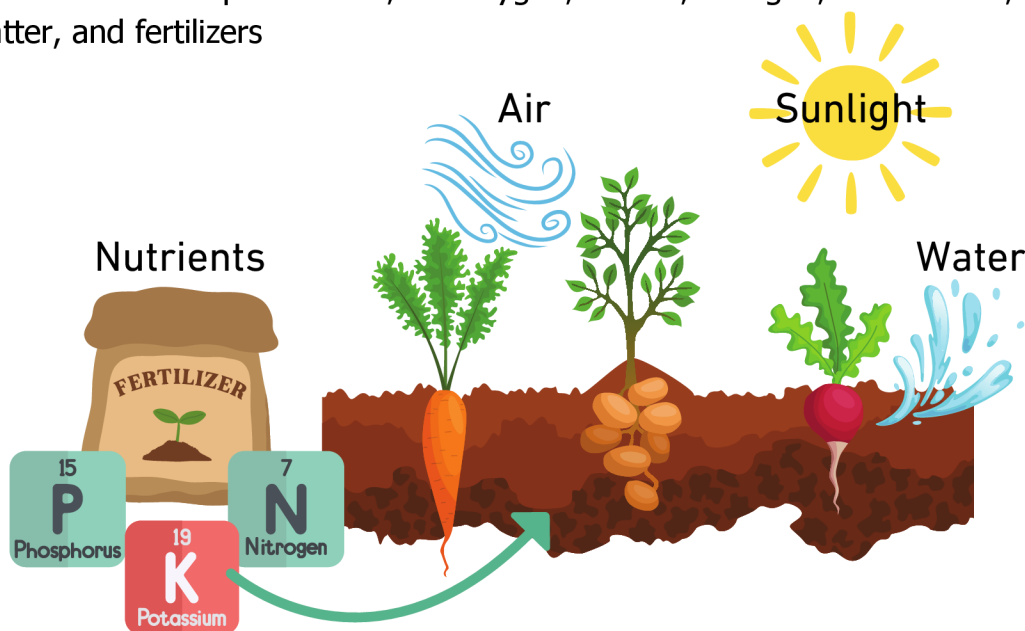
- Group plants by what season they grow in and how long they take to mature. For example, lettuce, radish, and spinach grow best in spring and fall and have a short harvest time. Tomato and pepper grow during the warm summer months and have a long harvest time.
- Place taller crops on the north and west sides so they will not shade shorter plants.

With planning, you can grow two or even three crops in the same gardening space! For example, after harvesting spring lettuce, remove the plants and plant bean, squash, or cucumber seeds.

## Give your plants what they need to thrive!

When gardening, put yourself in the plants' "shoes" and ask- "what do I need to grow well"?

- **Sunlight**- the main source of energy that enables plants to grow leaves, roots, and fruits
- **Water**- plant roots need a constant supply of moisture
- **Air**- provides the oxygen that roots need to grow (yes, there is air in the soil!); good air flow between leaves and plants reduces the chance of plant diseases
- **Soil or potting mix**- anchors the plant; it's where plant roots grow and find water and nutrients.
- **Nutrients**- elements that plants need, like oxygen, carbon, nitrogen, and calcium, come from soil, organic matter, and fertilizers



### Learn more:

Web pages- [go.umd.edu/FoodGardening](http://go.umd.edu/FoodGardening)

Blog articles- <https://marylandgrows.umd.edu/?s=vegetables>

Videos- <https://www.youtube.com/UMDHGIC>

Get answers to your gardening questions- [go.umd.edu/AskExtension](http://go.umd.edu/AskExtension)