

Vegetable Gardening

The most important thing about vegetable gardening is to grow vegetables you like to eat or are excited to grow. If you grow what you love, you'll love growing it. A great way to set yourself up for success is starting off with plants that are fast-growing and well adapted to our climate. Remember that certain vegetables may need to be planted on a rotating schedule and have small harvest numbers while other vegetables are only planted once and can be harvested all season. You don't want to end up with 80 heads of lettuce now and none the rest of the growing season!

Learning to vegetable garden is an adventure. Even the most experienced gardeners run into trouble with pests, diseases, unbalanced soil nutrition, and the weather. There is no such thing as a perfect vegetable garden. As you gain experience, you will also gain confidence. Over time, you will find ways to incorporate plants and flowers that will make your vegetable garden both pleasing to the eye and edible. We have provided a list of edible flowers as well for you to try.

Steps for successful vegetable gardening

Choose the best varieties for the Pacific Northwest and a sunny location

Not all vegetable varieties grow well in all areas. There are varieties that are disease resistant to our area, as well as varieties that have a shorter harvest date.

Prepare soil properly before planting

Work in generous amounts of organic matter such as compost or composted manure. If you don't use composted manure, which already contains nitrogen, also work in a complete fertilizer.

Plant Properly

Sow seed at the proper depth and space, following directions on seed packets. Vegetables planted too closely together will produce poorly. If you're planting transplants, take care not to plant them too deeply or the stems may rot.

Water Consistently

Maintain even soil moisture so plants do not dry out, but don't over-water. Water deeply, then give the soil time to dry partially before watering again. Inconsistent watering will reduce yields in most vegetables and make others like cucumbers and lettuce taste bitter.

Fertilize regularly

Maintaining vigorous growth is important with almost all vegetables. Most should be fed with nitrogen fertilizer at least every 4 to 6 weeks. However, be careful not to over-fertilize, which can cause some vegetables, especially tomatoes, to produce less.

Mulch

A 2 to 3-inch layer of organic matter applied over the roots of your vegetable plants will cool the soil, reduce weeds, and help prevent soil moisture fluctuations ruining quality.

Eliminate Weeds

Weeds compete with vegetables for water, nutrients, and sunlight. This reduces yields. Pull weeds by hand and cultivate the soil frequently to keep them to a minimum.

Harvest Often

Many vegetables, especially beans, squash, peppers, and cucumbers, will stop producing if not harvested frequently. Pick every few days, find ways to freeze, can or give away to neighbors.

Control Insects

Many insects enjoy fresh vegetables as much as you do. Always keep an eye open for insect damage and take necessary steps to protect your plants.

Here are a few of the best vegetables for beginning gardeners:

Cool Crop Vegetables

- Carrots - Provide loose soil and give each plant enough space for an excellent harvest.
- Collards – Long season for harvest, tolerates cold temperatures, easy to harvest once ready
- Horseradish – a perennial vegetable, once planted you will never have to plant again, harvest after first cold snap in fall for best flavor, can be used fresh or dried.
- Kale - Hardy and adaptable, kale will thrive in almost any garden, you can harvest all winter.
- Leafy Greens - Lettuce, spinach, and mustard love our relatively cool spring & summers.
- Peas - Can be planted very early and produce a continuous harvest over a long period.
- Radishes - Seeds can germinate in three days, short time to harvest.
- Rhubarb – another perennial vegetable, likes protection from heat of the summer, harvest after the first season.
- Salad Mixes - Lettuce, spinach, and mustard love our relatively cool spring & summers, easily cut multiple times and will regrow.
- Strawberries – technically a berry, but a perennial favorite for summer snacking, divide plants when they get older and replant, everbearing and summer bearing varieties.
- Swiss Chard – Colorful, hardy and you can harvest most all winter.
- Turnips – quick and easy to seed and let grow plump in the ground.

Warm Vegetables

- Basil – lovely to start indoors early and then place on your patio so you can pick fresh daily for your dinner table. Continuous harvest all summer.
- Cherry tomatoes - Much more reliable in our cool climate than varieties with larger fruit, especially if you are not using a row cover or greenhouse to start the season earlier.
- Cucumbers – especially the pickling variety, plant after all danger of night frost and then reap the rewards, use for pickling or snacking.
- Green beans - Both climbing and bush varieties grow fast and produce abundantly.
- Pumpkins – plant in early summer for fall harvest.
- Squash and Zucchini – plant in May after all night frosts, endless producers and heavy crops.

Cool Crop Vegetables

Root / Brassica Vegetables

Artichokes - Globe	Carrots	Ginger *	Parsnips	Shallots
Artichokes - Jerusalem	Cauliflower	Horseradish *	Potatoes	Sunchokes *
Beets	Celeriac	Jicama	Radishes	Sweet Potatoes
Broccoli	Daikon	Kohlrabi	Rhubarb	Turmeric *
Brussel Sprouts *	Fennel	Leek	Rutabagas	Turnips
Cabbage	Garlic *	Onions	Salsify	Yams

Leafy Vegetables

Arugula	Chard *	Kale – Lacinato *	Mustard Greens	Tat Soi
Asian Greens	Chives	Lettuce	Parsley *	Cilantro
Broccoli Rabe	Collards *	Lettuce Mix	Peas	Watercress
Bok Choi	Endive	Mache	Radicchio	
Celery *	Kale - Curly & Flat *	Mizuna	Spicy Mix	

Edible Flowers

Calendula Flowers	Borage Flowers	Lavender Buds	Squash Blossoms
Allium Flowers	Chamomile Flowers	Marigold Petals	Thyme Flowers
Anise Hyssop Flowers	Chive Flowers	Mint Flowers	Tuberous Begonia Petals
Arugula Flowers	Cilantro	Nasturtium Flowers	Viola Flowers
Bachelor's Buttons Flowers	Daylilies Buds	Pansy Flowers	
Bee Balm Flowers	Honeysuckle Flowers	Rose Petals	

* Perennial Vegetable that can be harvested all year long

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