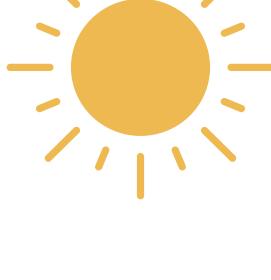


MY FIRST GARDEN

The 8 essentials to a successful garden



SUN

When choosing a location, pick a place that is very sunny, has easy access to water, and isn't in the way of other uses of the yard. Most garden veggies and fruits need 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day. But some veggies, such as lettuce and spinach, will do well with less sun.



SOIL

Adding organic matter (compost, shredded leaves, rotted manure) is one of the best things you can do to improve your soil. Don't select a location where water pools and sits on the surface.



WATER

Fruit and vegetable plants will definitely need a drink of water at some point, so it's important to place your garden close to a water source such as a spigot or a rain barrel. Use (or make!) a rain gauge and water your garden if you don't get at least 1" of rain that week.



FERTILIZER

Vegetables use a lot of nutrients to produce tasty things. Replenish the soil's fertility with fertilizer and compost. Follow directions on the package.



SIZE

Don't start too big. It's better to start with a small space, and really enjoy spending time in it, rather than have a garden that's too big and so much work to maintain that it becomes a chore. Start with a few containers, or for an in-ground garden: 6x6', 8x8' or 10x10' is plenty for a beginner.



PLAN A LAYOUT

Plant tall crops on the north side, short crops on the south side so all plants have good sun exposure.

The two common methods are to organize in rows 18-24" apart. This is easy to plan and easy to weed, but is a less efficient use of space. Intensive (or square foot gardening) is more work, but a more efficient use of space.



PREPARE FOR PESTS

Weeds: mulch and pull weeds when they're tiny so they don't compete with the veggies for nutrients and water

Animals: a fence must be 8' tall to keep out deer. Fencing must be buried 6" to keep animals from digging under it. Electric fences are an alternative.

Insects: small infestations of caterpillars and other large bugs - pick off by hand and drown in soapy water. Big infestations - insecticidal soap. Follow manufacturers directions.

Disease: avoid fungal diseases by watering the soil, not on plant leaves, or water in the morning so leaves can dry before cool nighttime temperatures. Don't compost diseased plant material.

Practice crop rotation.



GROW YOUR FAVORITES

Most importantly—grow foods you and your family will eat!