

How to Plant Your Garden

(A Year At-a-Glance Using the Natural Garden Pyramid's 12 Principles)

Mulching Tips

Spring* (when soil temp. is above 50°)

Important: At least 2-3 weeks before planting seeds/starts (Step 4), do the following 3 Steps:

1. Turn under any *cover crop* that may have been planted last fall
2. Add 2-3" *compost* or other *organic matter* to soil
3. Add appropriate amount of *natural fertilizers* and mix into soil well
4. *Plant seeds & starts* of choice
 - A. Use highest quality hybrid or open-pollinated varieties (regional & native species, tolerance to adverse conditions, & easy storage of harvest are key factors to consider)
 - B. Plant crops in different location in bed than last year (*crop rotation*)
 - C. *Companion plant* so that different types of plants can help each other
5. Keep young seeds/starts *moist & protected* until established
6. Establish *compost system* if one is not in place

*Note: If you don't know your soil's pH level (i.e. its acid-alkaline make-up), now is a good time to test it. You can do so yourself with the Hellige-Truog soil pH kit from Nasco.

Summer

1. *Weed* unwanted plants/vegetation before they go to seed
2. *Water* deeply & regularly (at least 1" weekly or more if dry & windy)
3. *Mulch* around plants to control weeds & to keep soil moist
4. Add *natural fertilizer* mix as side-dressing around plants for nutrient boost, as needed
5. Create & maintain *wildlife habitat* to attract birds, butterflies, bees, frogs & other small critters
6. Create vegetation that attracts *beneficial insects* for pest control
7. Keep making *compost*

Fall & Winter

1. *Harvest plants & seeds* to use, store & save; plant overwintering crops
2. Garden clean-up & *sanitation*
3. Plant *cover crops*
4. *Mulch* beds with straw/leaves to prevent excessive leaching of nutrients due to rain & snow
5. *Make compost*
6. *Review & reflect* on your gardening efforts; plan for next season!

Tips for Garden Site & Bed Design

Best Location: Minimum sunlight (6-8+ hrs), good soil drainage & air circulation, reasonable protection from frost & wind, good security, fencing, etc., reflected sunlight from wall, side of house or fence is an asset. DO NOT choose a location within 8' (2 meters) of trunks of shrubs or trees

Bed Design: If you live in an area with heavy soil, lots of rainfall, or you have a small amount of space, raised beds (with frames) or mounded beds (without frames) are ideal. *Advantages:* improved drainage, easier maintenance (especially weeding), permits intensive planting, and improved plant root growth & vigor yields 4-10 times more production than other methods (raised beds are also better on your back & knees and look good, too!)

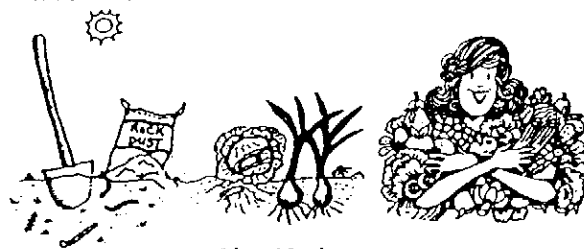
Construction & Filling: see page 9 insert



- Straw mulch keeps vine crops like squash, strawberries & tomatoes from rotting where they contact wet soil
- A 6-8" mulch of shredded leaves/straw placed over root crops once the tops die back can allow "in the ground" storage through the winter
- Mulch paths between beds with a live mulch, or use wood chips. In a pinch, for weed control, use old carpet scraps, cardboard, or wetted newspaper
- Apply feeding mulches, such as compost & leaves, up to 3-in thick
- Apply seed-free mulches, such as straw & hay, 6-8 inches deep
- Apply stones/wood chips 2-4" thick
- Always put some mulch on your beds over winter
- A nutritious living mulch of white clover or a soft mulch under fruit trees will save water, keep down weeds, & prevent falling fruit from bruising

* YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT *

From Soil . . . to Plant . . . to Person



Soil Needs

Organic matter
Sunlight
Moisture & Air
Trace minerals
Macronutrients
Microlife

Plant Needs

Soil & Minerals
Natural fertilizers
Moisture
Sunlight (for photosynthesis)
Carbon, Hydrogen, Oxygen
Insects

* RECYCLE NUTRIENTS *

The 4 Rules of Composting

- Rule 1: Use quality Materials & Activators that are either all mixed together or well-layered, alternating fresh & dry ingredients.
- Rule 2: Make a pile of adequate Volume that is at least 3x3x3 ft for it to adequately heat up and retain that heat
- Rule 3: Keep a consistent Moisture level like the consistency of a damp sponge
- Rule 4: Have good Air Circulation in a well-vented and covered bin

DO COMPOST . . .

"Green" for Nitrogen

- chicken manure
- humus (soil)
- food scraps
- grass clippings
- weeds & stalks
- rotted manure
- fruit wastes

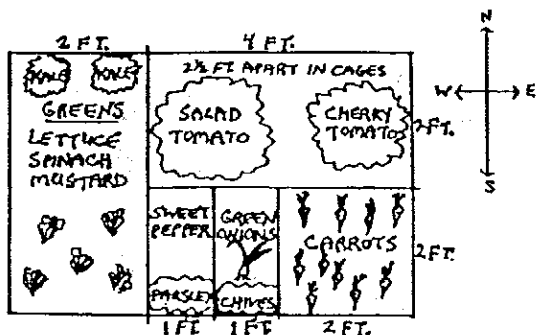
"Brown" for Carbon

- leaves or leaf mulch
- In moderation use:
straw
sawdust
wood chips

DON'T COMPOST . . .

- weeds going to seed
- excessively soggy materials
- meat, dairy, bones, fat
- cat, dog, human solid waste
- diseased vegetation or manure
- wood chunks, wood ash, lime, or too much sawdust
- inorganic materials like plastic

The High Nutrition Salad Garden



* A GOOD AND EASY START *