

How to Grow a Good Vegetable Garden

Tips and Techniques Shared by the Gardeners of the Columbia Gardeners, Inc. Community Gardens.



This presentation aims to share some gardening tips and secrets that gardeners have shared with me, either verbally or by email. Others strategies are those I've observed and photographed while walking around the garden during the 17 years I've been a West Side gardener, the 13 years I've been site manager at West Side and my 20 years as a Howard County Master Gardener. Some others are things that have worked for me over time in my own garden.

For some of you newer or less experienced gardeners this presentation might be a "learn-how-to-garden-in-less-than-an-hour" experience.

For many other of our gardeners, a good number of these tips will be familiar and you'll probably find yourself nodding along as I go through them. (Or, you'll disagree vehemently: that is NOT how you plant a tomato!!!) But even for the most experienced gardeners, I hope you'll gain some new ideas or strategies you haven't thought of or might want to try.

No tips are fail-proof. Some things will work most years and then one year, suddenly not. Deer never bothered my plot for 15 years and this year some fawns got into my plot-- several times. And I've never been able to grow eggplant but this year the plants are 5' tall and prolific. Go figure. Every year has the potential to be an exception—that's the thrill of gardening.



These first slides show some of the beautiful, successful and productive gardens created by our community gardeners.



Many of our wonderful gardeners have
generously shared their tips.



Each of the 3 garden sites has plenty of terrific gardeners who shared their ideas with me.

Somewhat surprisingly, ALL of the tips that were shared with me came from gardeners who garden organically.

I used every single tip that I got.

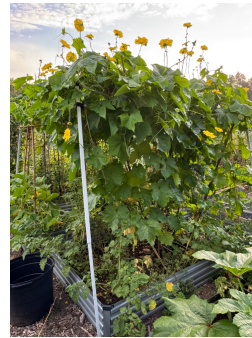
Every plot has the potential to become a gorgeous and productive garden. Hopefully this presentation will inspire you in your garden plot.

SETTING UP YOUR GARDEN SPACE

Garden infrastructure:

“Raised beds are a good way to manage growing space.”

---Hank, Long Reach 1



There are many approaches to beginning a garden. Traditionally, everyone tilled and grew crops in rows. These days, more and more gardeners seem to be turning to raised beds as they define the areas you need to plant and maintain.

Setting up your plot well and thoughtfully will take time but will absolutely save you time in the long run.

Hank S. from Long Reach 1 says:

“Raised beds are expensive, but they are a good way to manage growing space. Wooden beds don't last. The metal ones seem to last longer and run about \$70 apiece. Eight 4'x8' beds fit in a 20'x25' garden plot leaving space for access paths.”

Raised beds can be made of wooden boards or metal. In the past, pressure treated wood was not advised for use in raised beds in vegetable gardens. The chemicals the wood is treated with have changed and now pressure treated wood is fine to use, even for edibles. So wooden boards may hold up longer than in the past.

Garden infrastructure:
Raised beds



You can get creative with re-purposing other materials to create raised beds. Or you can just hill the soil.

Raised beds are a good way to deal with a plot with poor drainage.

Garden infrastructure:

“Landscape fabric is useful in keeping weeds in check in garden pathways. Cover the fabric with wood chips if available.”

---Hank, Long Reach 1



“Landscape fabric and ground staples are useful in keeping weeds in check in garden pathways. Cover the fabric with wood chips if they are available. Every couple of years harvest the rotted chips from the pathways and put them in your compost bin.” (Hank, Long Reach 1) Or, if they’re rotted enough, you can put them into your garden bed.

Other options for the paths are cover entirely with weed block.

Or use grass for your aisles and weed-whack regularly.

“But what if my newly assigned plot is a weedy, unruly mess?”

—New Gardener, Long Reach, Elkhorn and West Side



Some lucky new gardeners may be assigned tidy, formerly well-loved plots. Most however, end up with plots that were neglected and are weedy messes. Don't despair! This does not mean you can't create a beautiful and productive garden. It's just a little more work.

Cover and Smother

Mow or weed-whack the grass and weeds back close to the ground.



Decide where your beds will be and place cardboard or multiple sheets of newspaper on top of the cut grass.



Cover the raised bed areas with a mixture of soil and organic matter (compost, leafgro, or chopped up leaves).



Cover and Smother

Cover the areas which will be paths
with cardboard and woodchips.
(Or leave them uncovered and plan to
weed-whack regularly.)



Begin planting and mulching.



Later in the season...



Garden infrastructure:
Fences and critter proofing



We have pests, both 4-legged (mammals) and 6-legged (insects), at the garden.

Garden infrastructure:
Fences and critter-proofing

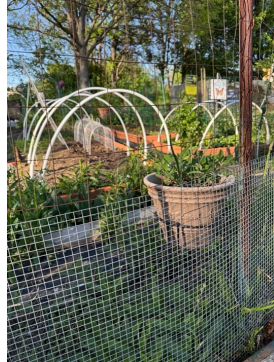


-Deer frequent the garden.

-Voles and other rodents can also be an issue, as shown by this potato that voles apparently greatly enjoyed.

Garden infrastructure:

Critter-proofing: Fences, hardware cloth, raise the height of the fence.



-Unless you garden in Elkhorn 2 or Long Reach 2, you will need a fence. Galvanized steel fencing holds up best. Plastic tends to get chewed up by weed-whackers.

-To help with vole and rabbit proofing, hardware cloth dug 4-6" deep along fence may help.

-Deer proofing: strings strung between poles, spaced about 12" apart, will raise the height of your fence. Try to avoid a second level of fencing as it rarely remains taut.

Garden infrastructure:

Critter-proofing: row cover and netting



-For smaller critters like bugs and insects: Row cover will protect young seedlings until they are bigger and better able to withstand an onslaught of insect pests.

-Netting (like tulle) or ultrafine garden mesh netting will protect vulnerable crops throughout the season.

-In addition to insects that plague the plants, there are also insects that are problematic for gardeners.

-Protect yourself from mosquitoes and ticks by wearing long sleeves and long pants—and tuck your pant legs into your socks if you're going to be crawling around on the ground. It's not a great fashion statement but it can help protect you from ticks.

-Consider wearing insect repellent.

-Make SURE to empty any standing water by overturning containers, lids, wheelbarrows--anything that can hold water. Mosquitoes can breed in just a tiny amount of water.

Garden infrastructure

Critter-proofing: Protect your allies!



- Toads eat insects.
- Snakes eat rodents (and sometimes toads).
- Be grateful if you find these critters in your garden.
- Really fine deer fencing is prohibited because it traps snakes.

Garden infrastructure:

Critter-proofing: Protect your allies!



-We need to encourage the predators we want to help us.

-At West Side we have hawks that help keep down our rodent population, and we have newly installed hawk perches that encourage the hawks to keep an eye on our gardens.

-Therefore, the use of poison to control rodent pests is strictly prohibited as it travels up the food chain.

Garden infrastructure

Maximize garden space: GROW UP!



Besides fences, there are other garden structures that can be important or helpful.

-Some plants, like squash, sweet potatoes and beans are very well-suited for vertical gardening.

-A 16 ft. x 50 in. (or narrower) Max 50 Feedlot 10-Line Galvanized Cattle Fence Panel : Tractor Supply <https://www.tractorsupply.com/tsc/product/feedlot-panel-cattle-16-ft-l-x-50-in-h> can provide good support and make a graceful arch.

-But our gardeners use all kinds of different supports for vertical growing.

Garden infrastructure
GROW UP!



-You can re-purpose an old tent structure.

-Bamboo is much beloved for providing support for vertical growing.

Thinking outside the garden bed



"We started using large pots to deal with a poor soil drainage issue....In those areas, everything in the ground rotted and died. The pots solved that problem.

We also used the pots to put some extra plants in the walking aisles temporarily, thus expanding our growing area. With the pots you can also move plants around as spaces open up, and other areas get crowded.

You do have to stay on top of watering them, perhaps a bit more than if they were in the ground.

Weeding in and around the pots is super easy. Especially since we used new/sterile potting soil the first year. Regular garden soil does not drain well in a pot.

I use the same soil in the pot for about 3 years by taking out 1/3 and mixing in new potting soil to refresh the soil each year. After about 3 years, I usually mix the older potting soil into one of the raised beds to add organic matter." --Cheryl, West Side

Gardeners have found additional ways to expand their growing space and solve issues.

**GOOD GARDEN
PRACTICES**

Good practices

**“Be reasonable with your expectations...
and expect to put time into your plot.”** –Bill, West Side

“Be willing, and have the time and ability, to do whatever is needed
to keep up with all the chores involved in a successful garden:
weeding, feeding, watering, pest management,
critter deterrence, etc.

Limit what you plant to what you have time to tend.” –Bill, West Side

“Every week, I dedicate a little time to garden maintenance, applying compost
manure and improving the space.” –Mohan, Long Reach

Some tips, including this one from Bill are from one of West Side’s best (and, sadly, former) gardeners. When Bill left the garden, I could have auctioned off his plot to the highest bidder—and made a ton of money....

Good practices

Protect your soil and control your weeds with mulch



Mulch your beds to keep down weeds. You can use straw, leaves, compost, shredded newspaper or even (weed-free) grass clippings. Don't overdo it! Avoid using woodchips as they'll leach nitrogen from your soil.

Many weed seeds generally need light to germinate. So, if you cover them before they've germinated with a mulch or weed block, or plant your plants densely to shade them out, then they won't germinate. Note this only applies to plants that haven't germinated. If they're already growing then putting newspaper or even plastic tarp on top won't keep them from growing— except if they're cut short and then you heap on mulch on top of the paper to smother them. Straw is popular but can provide a home for voles.

Good practices

Control your weeds with paper or landscape fabric

“Black landscaping cloth or newspapers covered with straw helps keep the weeds down.”

--Diane, Elkhorn

“One thing that has saved us recently: paper weedblock in our raised beds. I actually just lay down and cut holes and plant - and don't even mulch!” --Christine, West Side



Christine: The one thing that has saved us recently - paper weedblock in our raised beds, put down early in the season. We use a brand called WeedguardPlus which is often sold by Gardener's Supply Company, and is organic - there are others. It really helps! I weed and clean the bed and just lay down the paper and cut holes and plant - and don't even mulch!

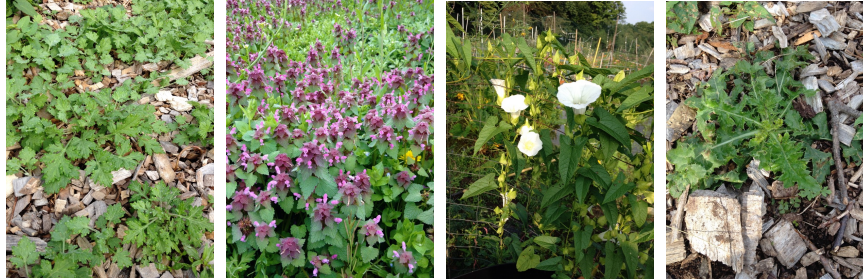
One thing I found to be useful is to use black landscaping cloth or newspapers covered with straw to help keep the weeds down. Prior to doing this, I would spend roughly 5 - 8 hours on most weekends pulling weeds. Although some really tough weeds still grow through the landscaping cloth, I have to spend far less time on weeds.--Diane

Good practices

Weeding and insects

“When you get to the garden, weed first. Get the hardest jobs done first.”

—Bill, West Side



From left: Mugwort, Henbit, Field bindweed, Canada thistle

For more information on weeds and how to deal with them see:

<https://www.columbiagardeners.com/know%20your%20enemy%20with%20notes.pdf>

Good practices

Weeding and insects

“Use Integrated Pest Management (picking insect eggs and bugs off plants) to protect them whenever possible. It takes time but avoids the side effects of chemicals on the plants and soil.”
--Bill, West Side



It's important to know who you're looking for. Clockwise from top left: Harlequin bug, Harlequin bug eggs, Mexican bean beetle, Mexican bean beetle larvae, Squash bug nymphs, Squash bug.

For more information on insects and how to deal with them see:
<https://www.columbiagardeners.com/know%20your%20enemy%20with%20notes.pdf>

Good practices
“Compost!”

--Whitney, Long Reach gardener and Food Bank volunteer

“Add compost to improve your soil. Compost adds essential nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium to the soil, which are vital for plant growth.

It also helps conserve water.

Leaf Gro is one type that is available at garden supply stores. Mushroom compost is ordered by many gardeners in Long Reach.”

--Sue, Long Reach 2



“COMPOST!” was the one-word answer from Long Reach gardener and Food bank volunteer Whitney when I asked for his tips for good gardening. Many gardeners call compost “black gold” because it is such a valuable soil amendment.

“If compost is back gold, vermicompost is black platinum”. Susan, West Side

You can also add composted manure. Note: IT MUST BE COMPOSTED before you bring it to the garden. Fresh manure is not permitted.

Good practices

Improve and protect your soil

“Get soil tests from time to time.” --Bill, West Side

“Do not walk or dig when the soil is wet/saturated. It compacts the soil, thus damaging it. Wait until the soil is crumbly and does not form a ball when you squeeze some in your hand.” --Sue, Long Reach 2

“Use only organic materials and no chemical derivatives when amending the soil.”
--Bill, West Side

“I use natural fertilizer that is only water and nitrogen/potassium-based vegetables. The liquid produced from it helps to keep our plants nourished.

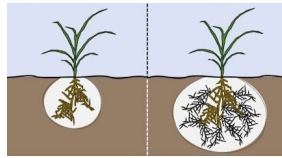
“We use bone meal before transferring any plants to the soil by digging the hole, adding bone meal into the hole, then water, then the seedling. We try to fertilize once a week.” --Tocarra, Long Reach

UMD extension has a list of recommended soil testing labs:
<https://extension.umd.edu/resource/soil-testing-and-soil-testing-labs/>

Good practices

Additives

“Use mycorrhizal inoculants. This is a product containing beneficial mycorrhizal fungi that are introduced to the soil to enhance plant growth and health. These fungi form a symbiotic relationship with plant roots, extending the root system's reach and improving nutrient and water uptake. This can lead to increased plant resilience, better yields, and reduced reliance on fertilizers and water. It is sold at Amazon, Walmart, Home Depot and various garden centers.” --Sue, Long Reach 2:

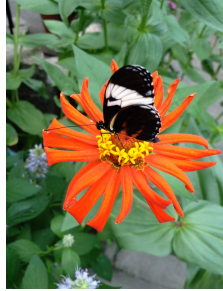


Good practices

Plant flowers

“Pollinator flowers are great to have in the garden to attract bees to all of your plants.”

--Sue, Long Reach



Good practices

Plant flowers to attract pollinators to your plants



Good practices

Watering

“Water deeply. Shallow watering only moistens the top of the soil and then the roots reach for the water instead of growing deeper.” –Sue, Long Reach 2

“Water thoroughly – at the base of the plant – NOT from above on the leaves as this can increase risk of fungal diseases and wastes water.” –Cleve, Long Reach

“Always remember that watering washes away plant nutrients. Replace nutrients regularly. Be mindful of rain in the weather forecast.” –Andre, Long Reach

“Create a depression in the soil when planting sweet potato slips, tomato plants, and similar crops. This allows for rain to percolate slowly to the roots while also conserving water.” –Sue, Long Reach 2



This applies whether water with a hose or watering can.

Good practices

Sources of information

“Whenever I need help or have questions, I ask our garden manager, or seek advice from experienced gardeners nearby. They are always helpful.” –Mohan, Long Reach

“When searching the internet for garden and plant information, include something in the search terms which will direct you to reliable sources of information (“extension service” or “.edu”).” –Bill, West Side

Ask Extension <https://www.extension.umd.edu/ask-extension/>

Your garden neighbors are generally more than happy to share advice on what you should be doing!

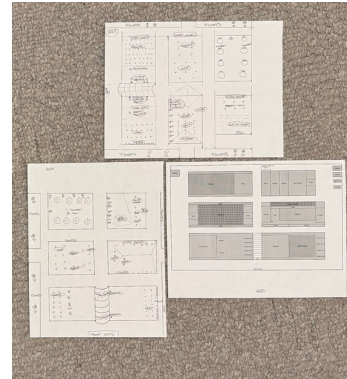
When searching the internet for garden and plant information, include something in the search terms which will direct you to reliable sources of information (“extension service” or “.edu”). Many sources are just ads for a particular product. Make sure the source you use gives information involved in the timing for planting or harvesting for our area of gardening (our gardening zone) and not for different climate conditions.

Just because the internet says it, it’s not necessarily good advice. One gardener read online about using gasoline to kill weeds. SUPER bad idea in a veggie garden—and a community garden at that!

Good practices
Journaling

“I plant my spinach on the 26th of September.” –Barb, West Side

“It is very helpful to keep a record of what you do so you can know when plants need to be fed, how to water, when to expect harvesting, etc. It is also helpful to summarize the results at the end of the season to capitalize on what works and avoid what doesn't.” – Bill, West Side



Journaling—so you know when you planted what and how it did.

It's also important so you know where you planted what each year so you remember to rotate your crops.

Good practices

Fall garden clean-up

“The more prep work you do in the fall, the less you have to do in the spring.”

“Preparing beds for winter, I would remove any weeds and cover the bed with a few inches of mulch. It made getting the bed ready for planting easier in the spring.

It was easy to remove any weeds which sprouted over the winter and to turn the mulch into the soil.” --Bill, West Side, Sue at Long Reach



Clean up your garden and cover with a layer of leaves in the fall (the year I didn't do this, a gardener asked me in the spring how many years my garden had been neglected and un-gardened.)

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

SEEDS AND SEED-
STARTING

Tools and supplies

Hori-hori



Carrot Design
Cape Cod
Weeder



Hula or
Scuffle
hoe



Tubtrugs



Besides standard garden tools like a shovel, trowel and garden fork, our gardeners have some other favorites.

A horihori is a Japanese garden knife. I use it for weeding, planting bulbs (there are depth markers on the blade), cutting back overgrown plants. It's my favorite tool.

Try a "Carrot Design Cape Cod Weeder". It's good for reaching runner weeds that grow along raised beds and fences.- Hank, Long Reach 1

A weeder like a hula or scuffle hoe reduces the amount that you need to bend during weeding. The motion is more of a raking style motion. -Susan, Long Reach

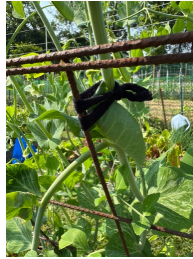
Tubtrugs are good for hauling weeds, dirt, wood chips, mulch, water and produce. They come in several sizes with 40 qt being the most common. Look for the ones with the thicker heavy-duty handles.—Hank, Long Reach 1

Tools and supplies

Victorinox
harvesting
knife



Cut-up
stockings



Fiskars herb
snips



Stockings cut up to tie plants to supports

Seeds and Seed-starting

Start with good quality seeds.



"We purchase good quality seeds from Mlgardener.com. Mlgardener has a high germination rate of almost 100%; all our seeds from them germinated and produced crops.

We go to Southern States and purchase our chitted potato pieces for our potato crops. They grow very well!

We prefer to purchase our silver queen corn and fork hook beans from Southern States as well."

--Tocarra, Long Reach

Many gardeners prefer to start their plants from seeds to have the largest variety possible. Every gardener probably has a pile of seed catalogues. Some are particularly helpful and will give you good growing instructions.

Other gardeners have their favorite places to buy seeds or seedlings. Franks is a favorite of many Columbia Gardeners.

Seeds and Seed-starting

Start seedlings under fluorescent lights—there's no need for grow lights.
Keep the lights very close to the plants to prevent stretching and raise the lights as
necessary.

Harden off the seedlings before planting.



Seeds and Seed-starting

Winter sowing: Start seedlings in milk jugs and let them spend the winter outside.



Cut milk jugs in half, horizontally. Drill drainage holes in the bottom of the milk jug. Put about 4"-6" of potting soil in the bottom half of the milk jug. Moisten the soil well. Sprinkle seeds like spinach, kale, onions, leeks and lettuce and cover with a very thin layer of soil. Water gently and seal the jug back up with duct tape. Make sure to label it with what's inside! Leave it outside for the winter, in a protected but bright spot.

In the spring, you can carefully and gently transplant the seedlings and you'll get your garden off to an earlier start.

For a more detailed explanation and powerpoint see:

<https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-12/All%20the%20Dirt%20on%20Winter%20Sowing%20Power%20Point.pdf>

Seeds and Seed-starting

"I always plant my spinach seeds on the 26th of September." –Barb, West Side

Plant under row cover for spring harvesting.



You can plant seeds for spring harvest late in the season and cover them with row cover to help them overwinter. It can be elaborate like these examples or you can just float the row cover on the ground and anchor the sides down.

INDIVIDUAL
CROPS

Individual crops

Tomatoes: Cleve's method

"Dig a deep round hole.

Place vegetable plant in the hole.

Put some compost at the bottom of the hole and mix dirt with compost.

Strew small amount of blood meal or other fertilizer around the plant.

Fill the hole and water thoroughly – at the base of the plant.



In time, the hole will become less defined but you can redefine it with a small hand shovel so the water goes over the root and doesn't run off. This ensures that the water goes to the roots of the plant and you're not encouraging weeds by watering the dirt around the plant."—Cleve, Long Reach

Not surprisingly, everyone has an opinion and tip about how to best plant tomatoes. I'll share a number of gardeners' strategies.

This can apply to other vegetables as well as tomatoes.

Individual crops

Tomatoes

“Put a bit of Epson salts and either crushed eggs shells or a shovelful of lime in the planting hole to add essential minerals and calcium to avoid blossom end rot.”

—Mary, West Side

“I plant tomato plants very deep.

I heard that each of the fuzzy projections along the stem of a tomato is a potential root. So, I remove the lowest level or two of leaves on the young tomato and plant it so that the remaining leaves are just an inch or two above ground level. (I remove these lower leaves as well as the plant grows.)

The bottom of the plant may be 6 to 8 inches into the ground. The plant has a deep, sturdy foundation which seems to set the tomato off to a good start.

Only drawback, it's harder to remove the deeply rooted plant at the end of the season.” —Carole, Elkhorn

Same idea, but lay the plant in the hole horizontally except for the top several inches. It'll straighten up as it reaches for the sun. Bob Nixon

Individual crops
Tomatoes

Make sturdy, long-lasting tomato cages from concrete reinforcing mesh.



You can buy the concrete reinforcement meshing on a roll or as sheets that are about 8' long.

You can let other plants, such as peas, grow up the tomato cages before the tomatoes get big. When the vines of the peas begin to die back, cut them off but leave the roots in the soil since peas are legumes and fix nitrogen.

Individual crops
Tomatoes

Harvest tomatoes before they are ripe. Pick them as soon as the color begins to “break”.
They will ripen perfectly happily on your kitchen counter
—without the risk of being snacked on by pests or birds or splitting if it rains hard.



Individual crops

Eggplant

Cover eggplants to protect them from flea beetles.
Uncover them when they begin to bloom.



“When I was growing eggplants under row cover, I was still getting **flea beetles**. But I could use diatomaceous earth because pollinators were protected from it by the row cover.”
--Julie, West Side

Diatomaceous earth (DE) is a fine, white powder composed of the fossilized remains of microscopic aquatic organisms called diatoms. It works as a natural insecticide by damaging the exoskeletons of insects, including ants, bedbugs, cockroaches, etc., thus causing them to dehydrate and die.

Individual crops

Overwintering Eggplant and Peppers

Spring #1

- Prepare a planter with:
 - Good quality compost - 60%
 - Coco coir/peat moss - 20%
 - Perlite 10%
 - Vermiculite 10%
 - Organic fertilizer (I use Espoma Garden Tone)
- Use self watering planters (20" for eggplants; 16" for peppers).
- Transplant eggplant/peppers into planters.
- Feed plants with good quality organic fertilizer (top dress or use liquid fertilizer).



This tips is from Amod of Elkhorn. He overwinters his eggplants and peppers to get a jump start on the following year.

Individual crops

Overwintering Eggplant and Peppers

In the fall and winter

- Bring planters into a greenhouse which has good quality grow lights with a timer.
- Set the lights to turn on at 7 AM and turn off at 6 PM.
- Through the winter, water the plants every 2-3 days.
- They won't grow much and will have small leaves. The leaves tend to be pale green/yellow due to inability to uptake potassium at lower temperatures
- Use insecticidal soap and spray both the top and bottom of leaves to keep **white flies**, **mealy bugs**, **spider mites**, etc. under control. I have not had any luck with other pyrethroid family of insecticides.



(When out on vacation I didn't water the plants for a week and although they lost some leaves, they survived)

Individual crops

Overwintering Eggplant and Peppers

Spring #2

-Move plants out when night time temperatures are above 50°.

-Wash the leaves by spraying with water to remove any insecticidal soap, etc.

-After the plants have had time to acclimatize to the sun and the leaves firm up, replace bottom 1/3 of the soil with compost and organic fertilizer.

--Amod, Elkhorn



Individual crops
Kale and Broccoli

Grow kale and broccoli under cover to protect them from **cabbage white butterflies** and **harlequin bugs**.



Individual crops
Kale and Broccoli



“Harlequin beetles love broccoli. They are even snacking on mine through the row covers where they can.

But horseradish is an excellent trap crop for attracting the beetles. And it is easy to vacuum the beetles off the horseradish leaves with a cordless, bagless, handheld vacuum. You can then dump the beetles directly in soapy water and clear an infestation in just a few minutes. You can also vacuum them off the row covers.”

--Julie, West Side

Julie notes that the vacuum is “also great to clean up after small children”.

Individual crops
Squash



“I am growing ... butterkin squash, which is yummy but also acts as a trap crop for **squash bugs**.

The squash bugs prefer it over the zucchini and pumpkin.... I can then just focus on checking it for squash bugs.

I use the hose to drive the adult squash bugs up the stem, which I smoosh by hand. And I remove eggs with packing tape, folding the tape over and smooshing them like bubble wrap when I am done.

I really only had to monitor the one plant, which has also done well and has been prolific.” --Julie, West Side

Julie mentions that: “butterkin ... is a pumpkin butternut hybrid. Really delicious. Can be used for any recipe calling for pumpkin or winter squash. Silky smooth roasted puree and makes excellent filling for squash lasagna or squash ravioli.”

The plant is a REALLY robust grower. Julie states that it “grew to be a monster”

Individual crops

Squash



"I've struggled a lot with **squash bugs** decimating my zucchini plants.

I've tried a bunch of strategies, removing eggs with duct tape, hand picking the bugs, planting them later, etc. But to no avail. Plants always completely destroyed, sometimes before I even get a single zucchini!

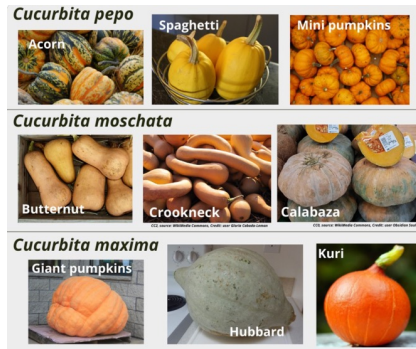
This year I decided to work smarter not harder and looked for some other varieties of squash that are similar to zucchini but squash bug resistant. I found Zucchini Rampicante, which is also known as tromboncino squash. It's grown prolifically up a trellis and ...no issues at all with squash bugs or any other pests! Doesn't taste exactly like zucchini, but it works for me!

So, I guess my tip is: If you're really struggling with a pest or disease that you just can't seem to beat...look for a resistant variety!"

--Jenn, West Side

Looking for a resistant variety is a good tip for almost all plants, not just squash!
A cautionary note about tromboncino: it's a robust grower and it needs attention and disciplining. Otherwise, it may take over your garden—and your neighbor's too! Do NOT try to grow it on a fence!

Individual crops
Squash



“Squash vine borers don't seem to attack Cucurbita moschata varieties. Every single plant in our plot that was c. pepo or c. maxima would be destroyed by borers, but the moschatas would be untouched.

Plus, there are a lot of moschatas out there, and they are delicious :)”

—Alice, Elkhorn

Cucurbita pepo includes (among others): zucchini, delicata, yellow squash, pattypan and acorn squash.

Cucurbita moschata includes: butternut squash, tromboncino, calabza and others.

Cucurbita maxima includes: hubbard, buttercup, kabocha, giant pumpkins and others.

Individual crops
Beans



"Unlike pole beans, bush beans can self-pollinate. I put them under a row cover to protect them from **bean beetles**."

--Julie, West Side

Individual crops
Potatoes

"This year we used the No Dig method to grow our potatoes and we got great results.

-Remove weeds.

-Fertilize the ground with horse or cow manure, soil conditioner, and *liquid fertilizer. Turn ground over so it's soft to touch. Don't touch ground for one week.

-After one week, rake and level the ground.

-Place chitted potatoes with chitted side up on top of the soil only, spacing them 10-12" apart. Then cover the chitted potatoes with 10-12" of straw. It looks like a lot but the straw will decompress a lot and still shield the potatoes from any direct sunlight.

-Leave for for 3-4 months. Fertilize once or twice a month with liquid fertilizer. Pour it over the straw then water slightly to encourage fertilizer to go downward.

-To harvest, simply rake the straw away. Be careful because your potato harvest is just underneath the straw. --Tocarra, Long Reach 1

* The liquid fertilizer we used for our potatoes crop was potato juice; potato skins soaked a lot of water for a few days. Some people blend potatoes in a blender with a little bit of water, then transfer it to a 5-gallon bucket and fill it with water to make a potato juice fertilizer.)

I learned that "chitted" means "sprouted",

Individual crops
Potatoes

Harvesting
No Dig Potatoes
from their bed
of straw.



Individual crops
Potatoes

“We started using grow bags for potatoes last year because I did not want to have to dig up potatoes. Instead to harvest, we dump the bag into a wheelbarrow and then easily pull the potatoes out. It has worked out well.

My only tip is you need to make sure you water very regularly as bags can dry out. As well as making sure you keep mounding dirt at base. I used potting soil and leafgro. I planted... about 1/2 down in bags and then put additional soil on them to about 3/4 filled.

With regular potatoes you need to pile additional soil around base [as the potatoes grow] so keep room for that.” --Lynn, West Side



Lynn notes that she also grew sweet potatoes in grow bags and it worked out well.

Individual crops
Herbs

Tocara at Long Reach
direct sowed herbs from seed and fertilized
with liquid fertilizer once a week.
“We planted four rows of herbs (parsley,
basil, dill, and thyme).
All came up and look great.”



Don't wait for basil to start flowering to
harvest. Harvest regularly. By cutting or
pinching it back often, you'll encourage
bushier growth.



Most gardeners start many their herbs from seed indoors. Dill can easily be direct sowed.

Individual crops

Garlic

“Garlic can be planted in October or November and is usually ready for harvest in late June/ early July. 1/3 to 1/2 of the garlic leaves should be brown when you harvest.” --Sue at Long Reach

Hardneck garlic produces scapes before the heads are ready to be harvested. Cut them off when they curl like a pig’s tail. They’re delicious sautéed!



Individual crops

Corn



"Wrap your ears of corn with duct tape to prevent pilfering by racoons."

--Kathy, West Side



Mother Earth News suggests using filament tape rather than duct tape.

Individual crops

Don't plant trouble!!

Some plants like mint, Jerusalem artichoke and horseradish may become invasive and come back to haunt you.



Plant mint only in a container!

Why garden in a community garden?

"Gardening has given me organic vegetables, helped me save money, stay active, and feel refreshed. I also enjoy the beautiful flowers and the chance to connect with a diverse group of people in our community." —Mohan, Long Reach





Wishing you all happy productive and flourishing gardens!