

PLANT • GROW  
SHARE A ROW



UN RANG POUR  
CEUX QUI ONT FAIM

Grow Your  
Veggie Garden  
**GUIDE**



THE ONTARIO  
TRILLIUM  
FOUNDATION



LA FONDATION  
TRILLIUM  
DE L'ONTARIO



NUTRIENTS  
FOR LIFE



**MUNICIPAL  
WORLD**  
WE SHARE YOUR STORIES

# This veggie gardening “how to” guide has been a labour of love, written and illustrated with the passionate belief in the power of veggie gardening to provide solutions to many issues of our time.

A handful of seeds, a bit of space – whether in a front or backyard, in a container on a balcony, a plot in a community garden or space where once was a lawn --- and the involvement of children, families, neighbours and friends are the ingredients to a harvest of possibilities, ranging from home-grown food for the family and those in need, an appreciation of Mother Nature and a learning network that will last a lifetime.

Nothing compares with a season of gardening experience. And to kick it off, this guide is designed to be a companion in the garden, full of tips and suggestions that help you dig in to the joys of veggie gardening.

Special thanks are extended to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for their tremendous support and care. As well, many garden writers, environmental and community advocates have generously contributed to the content of this workbook.

Wishing you a bounty of veggie gardening success!

**The Team at The Compost Council of Canada and Plant • Grow • Share a Row**

## What is Plant • Row • Share a Row?

**Plant • Grow • Share a Row** is a people-helping-people program encouraging gardeners to plant an extra row of veggies and to share the harvest with those in need. The program is spearheaded by The Compost Council of Canada and the Garden Writers Association, with support from local food banks.

**For more information visit [www.growarow.org](http://www.growarow.org) or call 1-877-571-GROW(4769)**

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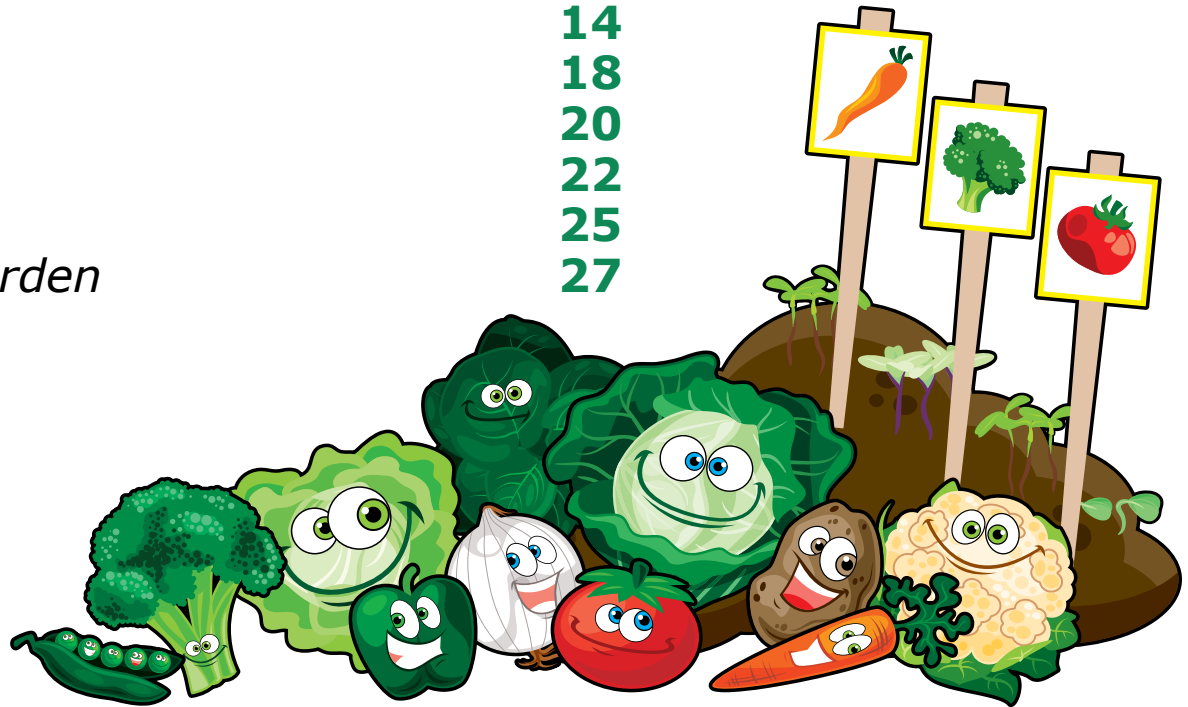
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# Planning Your Garden

Like anything, spending time at the beginning to develop a plan for your garden will help serve as a guidepost as you set about creating your garden dream.

## Among the things to consider in your plan are:

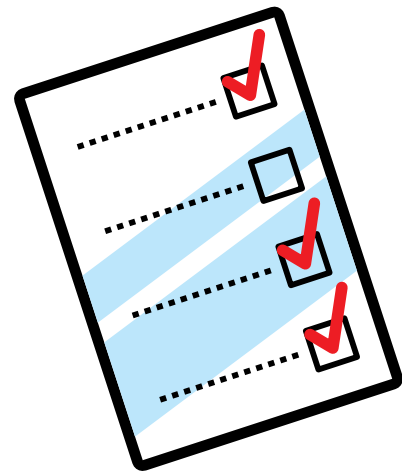
**Where's the sun?** You need lots of sun for a vegetable garden (at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day). Before you finalize your location choice, take a couple of days to observe how the sun "visits" your space during the day and make sure there's enough sunlight to help your veggies grow.

**Where are you going to get the water?** Rainy days take on new meaning as they help with the watering needs of your garden. It's likely, though, that you will need to supplement Mother Nature's watering efforts with some of your own. Setting up your garden close to an accessible source of water will provide an extra measure of convenience for you as the season progresses.

**How much space do you need?** Even the smallest of spaces can become a great place for the start of your veggie gardening "career." Growing in containers is a good option for those who live in apartments, and growing veggies such as beans and peas that can climb upwards on walls can help you squeeze lots of gardening into a small area.

And if you have a lot of available space, you might want to think about a "more than one year" plan for how your garden will develop over time.

**What's the quality of your soil?** Much of the success of your gardening efforts will depend on your soil's quality. A simple way to figure out the type of soil that you have in your garden is to scoop a handful of soil and give it a squeeze. If you have sandy soil, it will be crumbly and won't hold its shape in your hand; sandy soils don't retain much moisture. If you have clay soil, it will form a lump when you squeeze it; clay soils get sticky when wet and turn very hard when dry. Loam, the ideal garden soil, will form into a ball when you squeeze it but will break apart easily. To improve any soil – sand, clay or loam – add compost. Compost is food for the critters of the soil, responsible for improved soil structure and helping to enhance soil health and productivity.

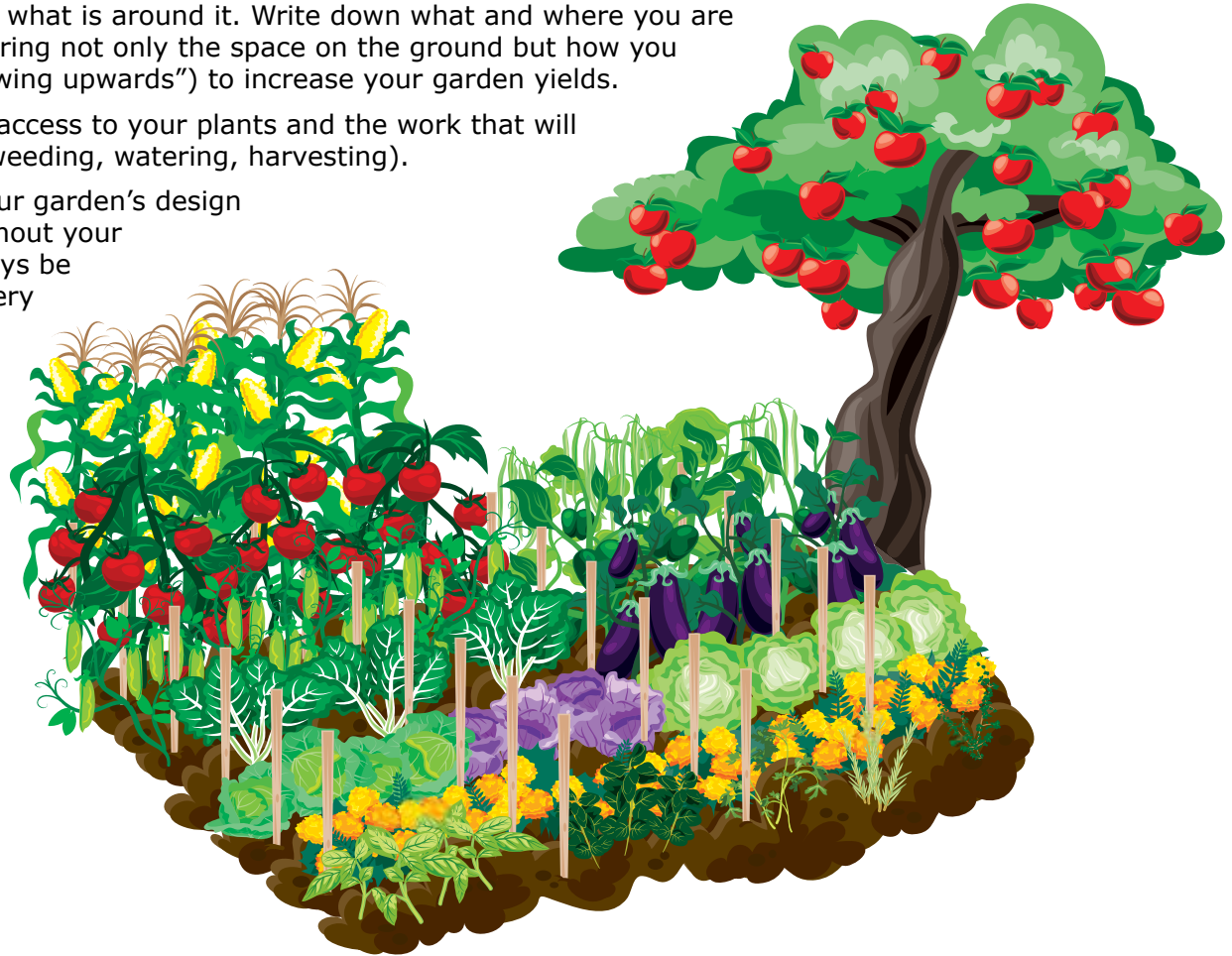
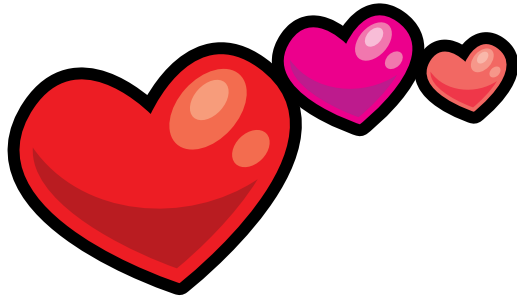


# Designing Your Garden

Map out such things as the space available and what is around it. Write down what and where you are going to plant your various vegetables, considering not only the space on the ground but how you can take advantage of vertical gardening (“growing upwards”) to increase your garden yields.

Plan for spaces between the rows to allow you access to your plants and the work that will have to be done throughout the season (e.g., weeding, watering, harvesting).

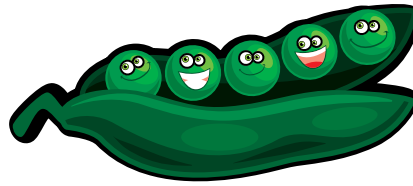
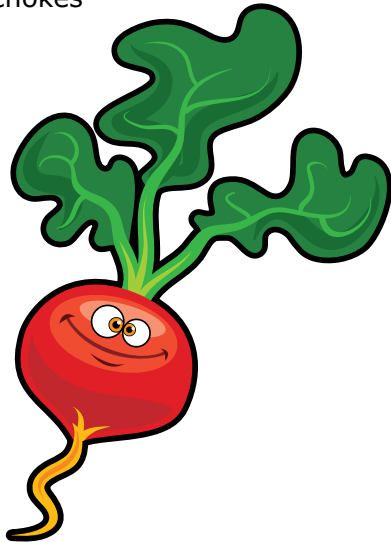
As one year follows another, remember that your garden’s design will need to reflect the rotation of crops throughout your garden’s space. The same crop should not always be planted in the same location in your garden every year. Rotating crops will help renew the soil, keeping it healthy and preventing diseases and pest infestations.



## Plants to Grow with Kids

The following plants are very easy to grow—ideal for planting with kids:

Radishes  
Basil  
Dill  
Parsley  
Kale  
Potatoes  
Sunflowers  
Jerusalem artichokes  
Pumpkins  
Zucchini  
Watermelon



## Plants That Tolerate Part Shade

Although most vegetables require full sun, the following food plants will tolerate part shade:

Arugula  
Beets  
Kale  
Lettuce  
Parsnips  
Spinach  
Radishes  
Garlic  
Peas  
Parsley  
Rhubarb



## Every Vegetable Garden Should Include:

By all means experiment, but the following food plants are very easy to grow and are great for the novice gardener:

Tomatoes  
Beans  
Peas  
Lettuce  
Basil  
Carrots  
Garlic



## Herb Hints

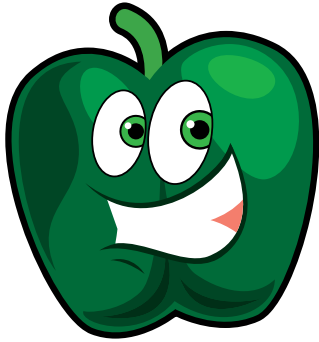
- Pinch off the flowers as they start to form. This will direct the herb's energy into the leaves.
- Some herbs tolerate drought and are good choices to grow in dry areas: oregano, thyme, rosemary, chervil.

## Vegetables that can be started from seed planted directly in your garden bed:

Beans  
Peas  
Lettuce  
Carrots  
Spinach

## Vegetables that should be started as seedlings indoors or purchased from a garden centre as Seedlings:

Tomatoes  
Broccoli  
Cabbage  
Eggplant  
Squash  
Peppers



## Edible Flowers

Many ornamental plants have deliciously edible flowers that can be planted in your vegetable garden to provide colour and beauty—and a tasty treat:

Nasturtiums  
Marigolds  
Violets  
Borage  
Bachelor's Buttons  
Daylilies  
Hyssop  
Lemon Verbena

## Warm-season Crops

The following vegetables thrive in heat and should be planted when the soil warms up—that is, late in the spring.

Tomatoes  
Okra  
Peppers  
Eggplant  
Squash  
Basil

## Cool-season Crops

The following vegetables do best before it gets really warm in summer. They should be planted in the early spring.

Peas  
Radishes  
Lettuce  
Spinach  
Arugula





# Planting a Seed

Your role is to get the seed started, which means planting it so that it can grow.

Seeds can last for many years in their original condition, provided that they are kept cool and dry. To spark germination, seeds need to be put into the right medium and environment.

If you have received seeds from a friend who might have dried and saved them from last year's harvest, you should also get their advice on how to get the seeds started.

Seeds purchased from the garden centre will usually have directions right on the package. Read the instructions carefully, paying attention to when and how to plant the seeds, and the spacing needed between them.

Some seeds can be planted right into the ground during spring once the last frost has passed.

Other seeds can be started earlier by planting them indoors.

To figure out when to start planting indoors, you must know when you will be able to take your seedlings outside and plant them in the garden. This timing is based on when your area will be frost-free--that is, when temperatures stay above freezing. Working backwards from there, you will then need to count the number of days needed for their growth from seed to seedling to ultimately being planted in the garden.

Some seeds need to be soaked in water, put in the fridge or scarified (which means gently loosening the shell with something like a nail file or sandpaper) before being planted. Again, check the instructions on your seed package for these details, as well as for planting depth and spacing.





## Container Planting



Seeds can be planted in many different kinds of containers. Special trays or flats can be purchased or you can look around your home to find something suitable like egg cartons, plastic containers or cut-off milk containers.

The container needs to have a depth that will allow room for roots to develop. Look for something that is at least 5 to 8 cm deep. There needs to be some kind of drainage at the bottom of the container. If you are using a plastic container, make sure that there is a hole in the bottom to allow water to drain. Placing your container on a saucer or tray will help to catch any water that flows through.

After years of gardening, you might decide to save pots or containers from one year to use for the next season. If you go this route, pay particular attention to making sure that they are clean before using them to plant again. Clean them with hot water and soap, making sure to rinse and dry them well before adding soil.

Your garden centre should have a variety of soil-less planting mediums that can be used for your planting (usually sold in bags labelled "potting mix"). Try not to use garden soil as your starter as it might contain diseases, weeds or bugs.

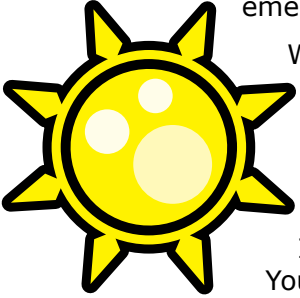
Before putting your soil in containers, water it. It shouldn't be too sopping but just wet enough to be moist. Once you have added water, grab a handful of soil and squeeze it. If water drips out, it's too wet. Just add more soil till the water is absorbed.

Fill your containers with soil and place seeds on top of the soil. Sprinkle a thin layer of soil to cover the seeds. Then water the soil.



## Caring for your seedlings indoors

Put the containers where they can get heat and light. The top of your fridge is often a good spot to use for warmth. Once the seedlings emerge, you should relocate them to a sunny location – a south- or west-facing window is helpful.



Warm (not hot) water can be used for watering during the first couple of days. After that, use water that is slightly above room temperature. A spray pump or mister is a good way to soak the soil.

Once your seedlings have grown to the point where they are showing a couple of leaves, you need to transplant them to give each of them more space. Be gentle! The seedlings are very delicate --- don't handle them by their stems.

If there are too many seedlings, you will need to thin them so that there is enough space for continued growth. You can do this when they are still in their original container, clipping the weaker seedlings at the surface of the soil by using a pair of scissors or your fingers. It's not necessary to pull out the roots that remain - they will decompose in the soil.

Approximately two weeks before the seedlings are to be planted in the garden, you can start to get them accustomed to their outdoor life through a process called "hardening off." Basically, you set the seedlings outside in a sunny spot that is protected from the wind and elements for a couple of hours each day. The amount of time can be lengthened every day.

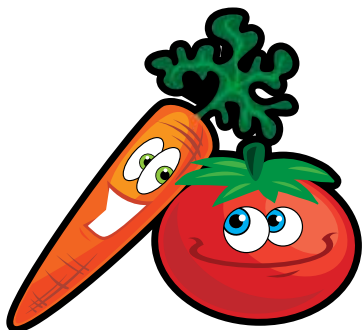


When you are transplanting your seedlings to the garden, gently remove each seedling (water them in advance to help loosen the soil), being careful not to squeeze the stems or hurt the roots.

Place each seedling in a hole allowing enough room for its roots. Generally, the hole should be slightly deeper and wider than the plant's root ball. Place the seedling somewhat lower in the hole than the depth at which it was growing in its container.

Fill in the space with soil and pat the soil around the seedling to firm up the area and support the plant. Add water immediately after planting each seedling.





Space the seedlings according to their planting directions. Avoid planting them too close together. What looks like a lot of space between them at the beginning of the season will quickly be filled in with their growth in the weeks and months ahead.

While your plants will grow up and out, the location of your plant's growth is dependent on where you first place it in the garden. To get your rows straight, you can use your hoe to mark out a path. A string tied at both ends of the garden or a long piece of wood can help guide you.

It is important to keep the soil moist until the seedlings are established. When the seedlings have emerged and developed their second or third set of true leaves, thin them as needed so that you keep the strongest plants, leaving the remaining ones spaced as directed on the seed package. It is best to thin seedlings while they are still small, so that you aren't disturbing the roots of the plants which will remain.

### Direct Planting in the Garden

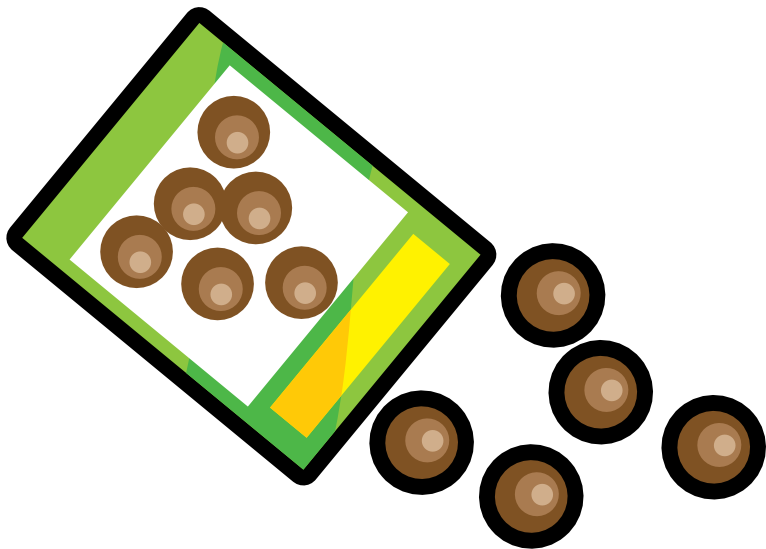
Many seeds can simply be planted directly in the ground once the danger of frost is gone. Again, follow the directions on the seed package to guide your planting.

Sometimes the seeds are so small that it is hard to place them individually in the ground. You might want to just keep them in the opened package and carefully tap the package, allowing a couple of seeds to fall at a time.

Cover the seeds with a thin layer of soil (avoiding clumps and rocks).

A thorough spray of water needs to be done before your work is complete (be gentle so that the seeds remain covered).

Besides starting from seed, you can buy also already-started vegetable plants at garden centres during the spring. If you go this route, inspect each plant carefully to make sure that it is healthy and free of disease and insects. Select those that have good root growth and sturdy, well-developed leaves.



# Tools of the Trade

Garden tools help make gardening easier.



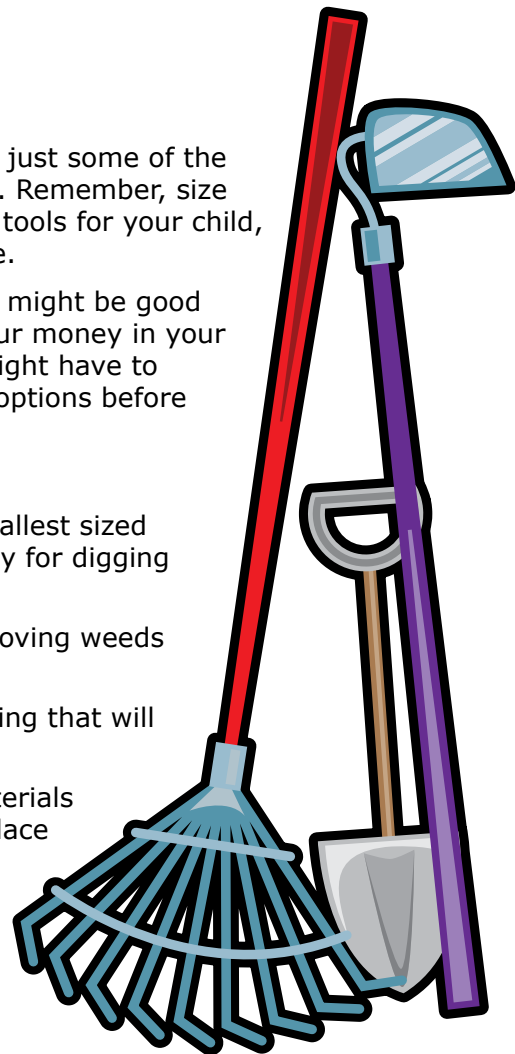
Comfort, durability, and ease of handling are just some of the attributes of a quality, functional garden tool. Remember, size does matter. If you are getting some garden tools for your child, make sure that the tools are size-appropriate.

Garage sales, auction sales and flea markets might be good places to start your search and help keep your money in your pockets. For child-specific equipment, you might have to spend a lot of time searching through these options before finding what you need.

For the very basics, you will want to get a:

- Spade ... to dig and loosen the soil (the smallest sized spade is called a trowel; it is extremely handy for digging small holes for your plantings);
- Hoe ... to move the soil around plants, removing weeds and creating furrows for planting;
- Watering can ... for the all-important watering that will be needed throughout the season;
- Bucket or container ... to carry all your materials back and forth from your garden, and as a place to store your tools between visits.

But most importantly, get some well-fitting garden gloves ... to keep your hands clean and dry and to help protect them from scrapes and scratches.



As your days in the garden lengthen, keep a lookout for good deals on shovels, rakes, brooms and wheelbarrows to add to your equipment collection.

And remember, your garden tools are an investment. If you put them away clean and dry after each use, it will prevent rust and keep them sharp and ready for your next trip to “the patch.”

## Handy and Helpful Extras to Make Gardening Easier

As a gardener, you are going to find that you will start to collect things for a rainy-day or not-so-rainy-day to use in your garden. Often things that might otherwise be destined for the garbage bin can be saved for use in the garden. One person’s trash can become a fabulous garden treasure.

- CDs can be strung in the garden to serve as a modern-day scarecrow to ward off unwanted feathered and furry visitors.
- String can be used to gently tie-up growing plants.
- Wire Clothes Hangers can, with a little imagination and determination, be fashioned into wire cages for tomatoes or as stakes for climbing plants such as beans and peas.
- Pantyhose can help as garden ties as well as being used as an insert in pots to contain the soil and help with drainage.



# The Real Dirt On Soil

Many of us take soil for granted. More often than not, we call it “dirt,” and we don’t think of it as anything more than the ground we walk on, and the place in which our plants grow.

The real secret to having a great garden is to pay attention to the quality of the soil. For a plant, it’s the soil in which it lives that most strongly affects its life and growing abilities.

Paying attention to the quality of your soil will pay off when your garden yields a bountiful harvest. So let’s dig into the soil and learn more about the properties and how to improve it for your plants.

## What is Soil?

**Soil is a combination of many materials including:**

- particles of rocks and minerals;
- decaying and decomposed (humus or compost) organic matter;
- living organisms including microscopic bacteria and fungi as well as larger creatures such as earthworms;
- air and water.

A good quality soil is a balanced combination of all of the above materials.

## Soil Texture

Soils contain a mixture of different-sized mineral and rock particles. The texture and physical properties of a soil are affected by the size of its rock and mineral particles.

The soil’s description is based on the most abundant sized particles present. Sandy soil is composed of large particles which allow for lots of space between them. Water drains very quickly through sandy soils, often taking valuable nutrients with it.



Clay soil is composed of very small particles with very small spaces between them. Clay has the ability to hold water and nutrients but air cannot penetrate between these spaces, especially when they are filled with water. Poor drainage and aeration are characteristics of clay soils. Wet clay soil is difficult to work while dry clay is very hard.

Silt is composed of particles sized between those found in sand and clay. Silt particles are small enough that they can cause drainage problems. Wet silt is difficult to work, and unlike clay soil, silt tends to be dusty and powdery when dry.

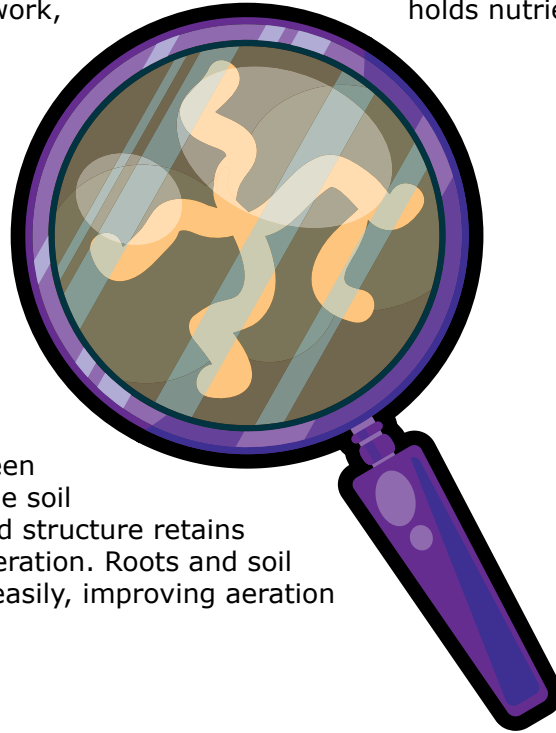
Loam is the ideal blend of particle sizes. It is a balance of sand, clay and silt. Loam has the ability to hold water while still allowing excess water to drain away, allowing air into the soil in order to provide the necessary oxygen to the roots and to the organisms found in the soil. Loam is easy to work, holds nutrients, has good aeration and good water-retention capacity.

The easiest way to improve a soil's texture is to add compost. Compost improves water- and nutrient-retention in sandy soils, and improves drainage and aeration in clay soils and silt.

## Soil Structure

A soil's structure reflects how its' particles hold together. Soil structure is described by words such as crumbly, clumpy and loose.

Good soil structure means that the soil has a loose, crumbly appearance. The spaces between the clumps allow water to be absorbed into the soil and any excess to drain away. Soil with a good structure retains water and nutrients while allowing for good aeration. Roots and soil organisms are able to move through the soil easily, improving aeration and allowing roots access to nutrients.





## Living Organisms in Soil

Healthy soil is alive, teeming with micro-organisms such as bacteria, fungi and yeast, as well as larger creatures like earthworms. These organisms depend on the availability of air, water and nutrients in the soil to live.

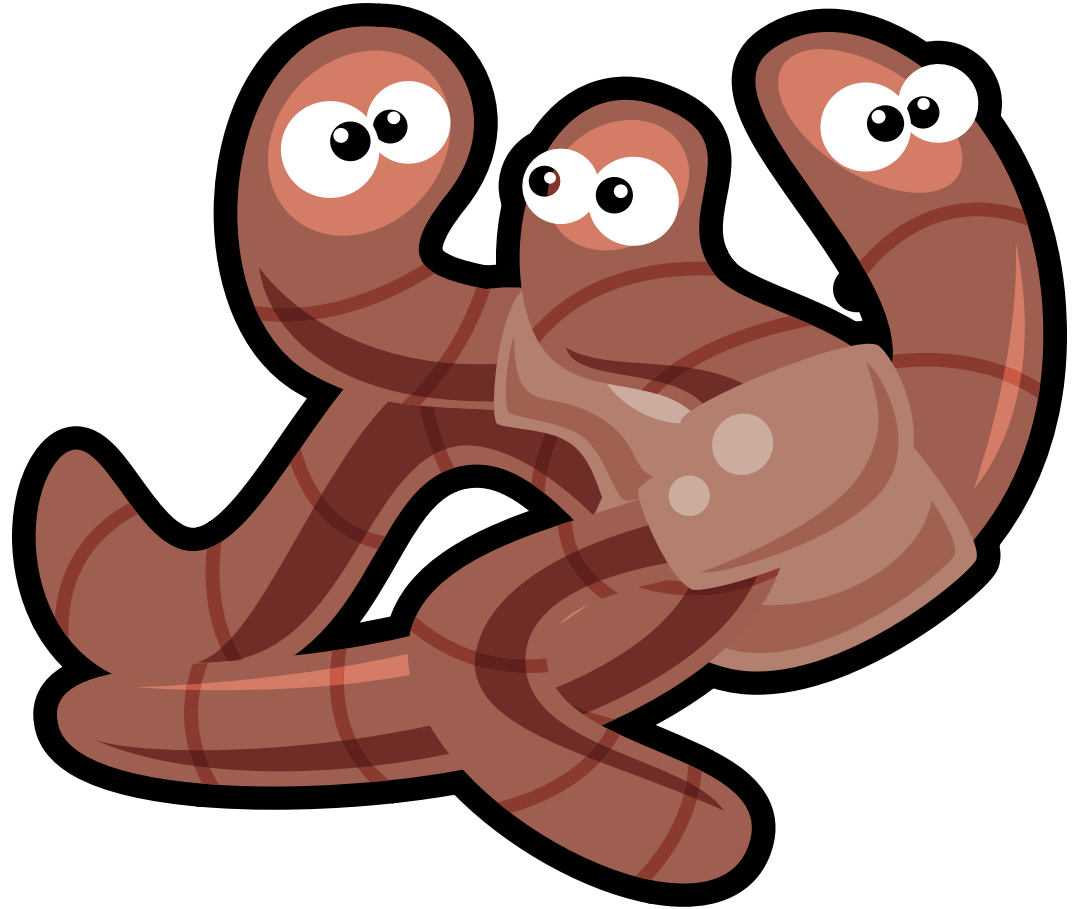
In return, they are the ultimate recyclers - breaking down organic matter to release nutrients for root development and plant growth while mixing the soil to improve aeration, texture and structure.

## Feeding Soil (and Plants)

A fertile soil is comprised of both macro and micronutrients, plants require both to thrive. The macronutrients include nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P), potassium (K), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg) and sulphur (S), and they provide the main nutrients for plants.

The first three - N, P, K - are the elements most consumed by the plants. Each element provides specific benefits including leaf and stem growth (N), root growth (P and K), flower and fruit development (P) and overall vitality (K).

Plants need micronutrients, also called trace elements, such as iron (Fe), magnesium (Mn), copper (Cu) and zinc (Zn). Their presence in very small quantities is essential for plant life. The balance and level of these micronutrients is critical as excesses are harmful to plants. Compost provides a balanced supply of these micronutrients, and most soils contain these micronutrients in adequate amounts.



## The Essential Ingredient to Healthy Soil - Compost

Organic matter is the soil's conditioner and food supply. Compost or humus is decomposed organic matter. Vegetable and fruit scraps, lawn and garden trimmings, manures, wood and soiled papers are all examples of raw materials which can be composted.

Finished compost can be applied to the soil in many different ways such as a soil amendment (turn it into the soil) or as a topdressing or mulch (spread compost on top of the soil and it will "disappear" over time). Two centimetres (about 1 inch) of finished compost is a good amount to include in your spring and fall gardening routine.

Over time, quality soil can happen naturally if you follow one piece of advice: what you take out, you must put back in.

The ongoing addition of organic matter and compost provides soil with the texture, structure and nutrients needed to create a positive environment for plant growth. Compost feeds the soil, builds structure and helps provide nutrients for your plants.



# Soaking It All In ... How to Quench a Plant's Thirst

Vegetable plants have a great need for water. Water helps plants to absorb nutrients, gives structure to plant cells, and helps plants transpire (which is how they breathe).

The success of your growing efforts is tied directly to making sure that your plant has enough water throughout its growth. Too little water will wilt and stunt your plant's growth. Too much water will drown the plant's roots. So, like everything in life, it's all about finding the right balance.

The best watering routine starts even before you start planting -- during your soil preparation stage. Understanding the type of soil you have and improving its' texture and structure through the addition of compost will go a long way to helping the soil retain moisture. At the same time, well-conditioned soil will help ensure that it will have good drainage, thereby minimizing the potential for the soil to become over-saturated and drown plant roots.

A good way to conserve moisture in the soil is to use mulch. Mulch (at least 8 cm in depth) between the rows and plants provides a physical barrier to slow evaporation.

## During the gardening season, soak in some of these tips to make your watering efforts effective and conservation-wise at the same time:

- **Take advantage of rainwater.** Add a rain gauge in your garden to keep track of rainfall to help you figure how much you need to supplement natural rainfall. And install a rain barrel to collect rainwater that would otherwise become wasted runoff from your roof.
- **Water early in the day.** Getting your watering done in the morning allows the water to be absorbed by the plants before the sun's heat is at its' prime in midday, when a lot of water evaporates before soaking deep into the soil.
- **Avoid windy days** when water sprays can head in directions other than intended and the possibilities of evaporation is greater.
- **Don't allow your soil to completely dry out before watering.** To decide when it's time to water, put your fingers in the soil to about 2.5 cm in depth and feel it. If it's dry, it's probably time to water. If not, you can put watering on your to-do list for another day.
- **Try to avoid watering at night** as any dampness overnight might lead to plant diseases and rot.



- 
- **Aim for a watering of about 2.5 cm (1") each week.**

Giving your soil a good soak every 3 to 4 days instead of a little each day will help train your plant's roots to "stretch" farther into the soil, helping them to become more resilient to drying out. (Early in the season when your plants are in their "youthful" stage, the surface of the soil and just below should be kept moist to help them establish their root systems. This might mean that you need to water more often and not so long.)

- **Remove weeds** so that they don't compete with your plants for water.
- **Direct your watering to plants' roots** rather than to their leaves. You might even want to install a simple drip irrigation system, which allows watering to be done at a slower pace, helping the roots to have more time to absorb moisture.

# Weed and Be Merry

Weeds compete with your vegetable plants for space, sunlight and water as well as nutrients.

As a lot of the time that you spend in your garden throughout the summer will be spent on weeding, you might as well treat it as a fun and even therapeutic thing to do.

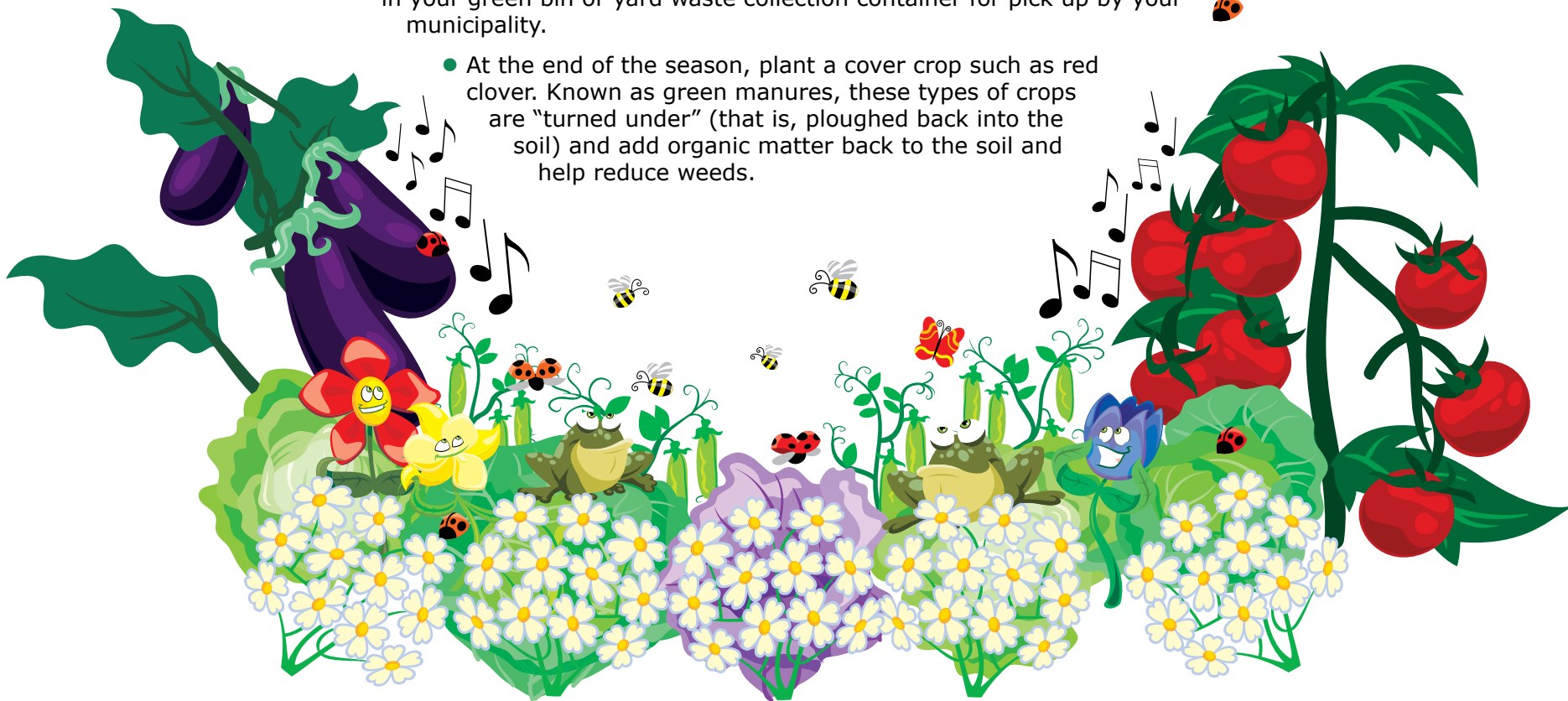


You are going to have to learn to recognize which plants are the ones that you planted and which ones came without an invite to your garden party.

- Start off early in the season and remove weeds when they are small before they become established. This will save you a lot of time in the long run. Use your hoe to remove weeds. With your hoe, use a chopping motion and run it along and just slightly below the surface of the soil. This should help you cut or surface (especially when they are small) weeds.
- Use a mulch. A cover about 8 – 10 cm thick between the rows and plants can be made from materials such as bark, compost, dried leaves, newspaper clippings and straw. A plastic film cover can also be used (with openings for your plants). Just remember to remove the plastic cover after a couple of months so that your soil can breathe again.
- Water before weeding or weed right after it has rained as it's easier to pull out the weeds from moist soil.
- Don't get discouraged and think that you have to get the weeding done all at once. Section off your garden in appropriate chunks of time so that you can complete an area, heading to the next upon your return.

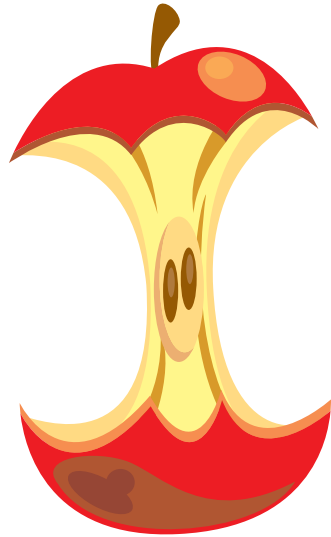
- While you can use your compost bin to dispose of weeds that have yet to go to seed, it's best to avoid adding weeds that have gone to seed. (Most compost piles are not hot enough to destroy weed seeds. If they are not destroyed through the heat of the compost pile, they will likely come back to life when you return the finished compost to the garden.) For those weeds that have gone to seed, place them in your green bin or yard waste collection container for pick up by your municipality. 🐞

- At the end of the season, plant a cover crop such as red clover. Known as green manures, these types of crops are "turned under" (that is, ploughed back into the soil) and add organic matter back to the soil and help reduce weeds.



# Compost-a-Peel

Composting is one of the most significant ways to reduce the amount of waste created by each of us and to create a wonderful soil amendment for your garden. Composting can benefit your soil and plants in many ways. It increases the soil's organic matter content and its' moisture-holding capacity. Compost improves soil porosity and helps to control soil erosion. It also enhances plant and flower growth and helps plants develop a sound root structure. Use it on your lawn, in your garden, around trees or combine it with potting soil for your plants.



Home composting can be done with the use of either a "build your own" or commercial unit such as the Earth Machine, often available through your municipality. It's always good to give your municipal recycling department a call to find out what support materials they might be able to offer you as you begin your composting journey.

Composting is basically the recycling of organic materials. Anything that used to be a living entity, be it a carrot, leaves or an apple, can be recycled through the composting process.

To make composting happen, you need to put a basic recipe into action. For backyard composting, the two best sources of these ingredients can be found in your kitchen and your garden. The ingredients come from two categories: the "greens" and the "browns."

Common "greens" are materials like fruit and vegetable trimmings, tea leaves, coffee grounds, prunings from plants and grass clippings.

Browns include dried leaves, coffee filters, shredded paper and small branches.





# COMPOST-A-PEEL



It's best to completely avoid including meat, fish and bones, fats and oils, dairy products, sauces and pet waste in your compost as these will smell bad and attract rodents.

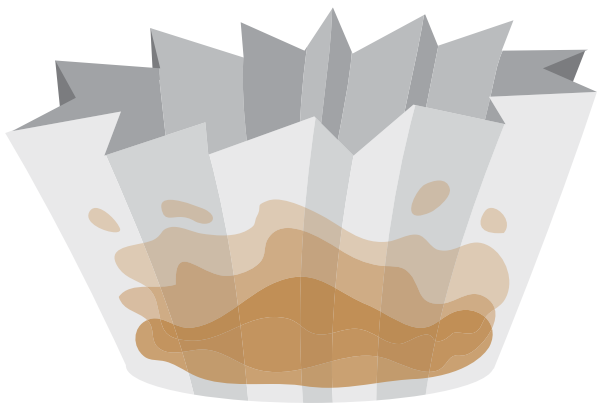
The composting process works best when the organic pieces are small. Chopping up a banana peel or shredding the leaves before adding them to the compost pile will do wonders to speed things up.

In filling up your bin, think of it as if you were making lasagna. Alternate your greens and browns. Adding some finished compost or soil from your garden provides a start-up crew of micro-organisms to speed up the composting process. Don't add thick layers of any one kind of organic material.

Grass layers should not be more than 6cm deep, and layers of leaves no more than 15 cm deep (think about cutting, chopping, drying and crumbling them before putting them in your bin). If you can, let grass dry first or mix it with dry, coarse material such as leaves to prevent compacting.

Turn or mix the contents of your bin every couple of weeks or each time that you add new materials. This helps keep the compost well aerated and mixes up the materials.





Always make sure that you cover up your food scraps. Consider keeping a bag of leaves from the fall clean-up next to your bin for this use as the year progresses.

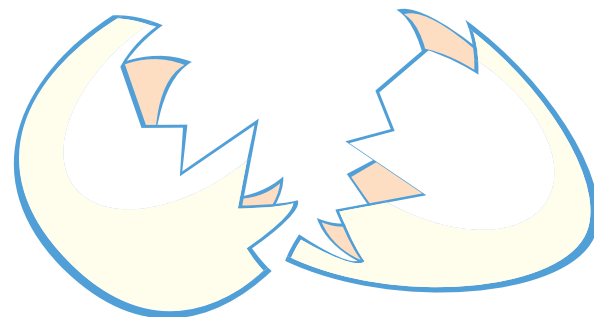
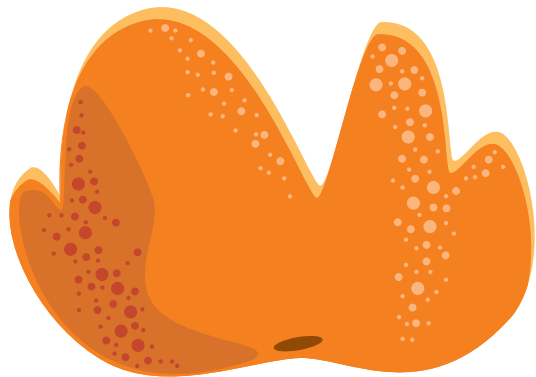
The compost contents should be moist, like a wrung-out sponge. If the contents are too dry, they will take too long to compost; and if they are too wet, they may begin to smell.

To make things more convenient, consider keeping a container in your kitchen to collect the scraps destined for your compost bin. This will help reduce the number of trips out to your compost bin.

The composting process can take from two months to two years, depending on the materials used and the effort involved. To accelerate the process, the pile must be a balance between green and brown materials and be turned frequently.

Compost is ready for use when it is dark in colour, crumbly and has an “earthy” smell. You can sift the compost through a screen and put the larger chunks of recognizable materials that haven’t fully “broken down” back into your bin to be further composted.

And once your compost is ready, you can spread it on your lawn, in your garden, around trees or combine it with potting soil for your plants.

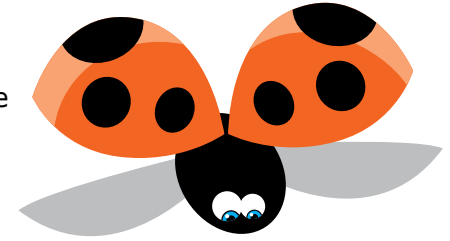


# What's Bugging You?

Resist the urge to kill every bug that appears in your garden! Most insects are, in fact, beneficial.

## Welcome! Bugs & Creatures

**Ladybugs** – Don't let those black-on-red polka dots fool you! Not only are they cute to look at, but they are hungry critters that love a good feed on aphids and other insects. Ladybugs perform a valuable service in the garden.



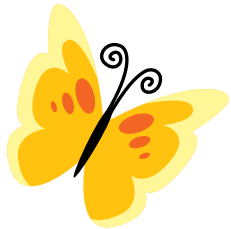
**Sowbugs** – At home in a compost bin, they help break down organic matter.

**Spiders** – They control other pests in your garden, and are food for the birds. Spiders are hugely beneficial because they catch numerous other insects in their web.

**Dragonflies** – Beautiful, beneficial predators, they feed on many insects, especially pests such as mosquitoes. They can often be found near ponds or slow streams, and woodlands. If you don't live near a wetland, you can consider building a dragonfly pond.

**Butterflies** – Butterflies are magnificent. To attract them to your garden, plant nectar-producing flowers and bushes. Butterflies like colourful flowers and sunlight. Butterfly-friendly gardens also need a shallow watering hole for the butterflies to drink from.

## Go Away! Bugs & Creatures



**Aphids** – Aphids love to suck the juices from your plants.

**Slugs and Snails** – They usually show up at night to feast on leaves and plants. Pick them up each morning and drop them into your compost bin.

**Caterpillars** – Caterpillars eat your plant's leaves. Gently pick them off your twigs and branches and place them in the grass away from your garden.

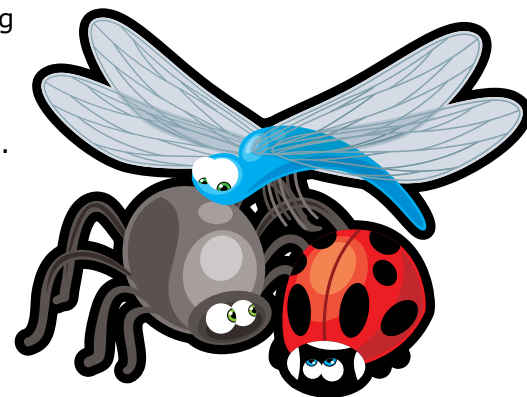
**Weevils** – Weevils are white grub-like larvae that can be found in the ground, and have an intense fondness for roots as a food source. Prune off the infested area, bag and dispose of it. Also provide plenty of habitat for natural predators such as wasps and flies.

**Red Spider Mites** – Itty-bitty in size, the colour description gives them away. They are usually found munching on the underside of leaves.

## What do I do to make the uninvited go away?



- Mix liquid soap detergent (choose a natural, phosphate-free version) with water (about 2 tablespoons of soap for every gallon of water) and spray it on plants. The soap acts as a deterrent or creates critter discomfort, helping to deter insect visits. This soapy spray is especially effective for dealing with an aphid infestation.
- Spread diatomaceous (pronounced: dye-a-toe-may-shus) earth around your plants. A very fine, white powder, diatomaceous earth is made up of the very small, fossilized remains of ancient sea critters. It basically cuts the skin of snails and slugs that crawl over it. As an alternative, you could also spread crushed egg shells around plants. Snails and slugs will tend to avoid slithering over them. At the same time, the shells provide an added benefit by adding calcium to your soil.
- Rotate your crops yearly. Changing planting locations within the same garden plot (and making sure that you replenish the soil each year with the addition of compost) helps create fertile and healthier soil conditions.
- Some plants repel garden pests and can be planted alongside your vegetables to keep insects away. For example, plant marigolds in your tomato patch.
- Some plants such as fennel, dill, clover, coriander, and sunflowers are especially good at attracting beneficial insects into your yard.
- Plant more than you need so that if you do have some losses, there is still plenty left over.
- Time your spraying so that you avoid hot sunny days when leaves could be burned in the process.
- Pick up larger, unwanted bugs and squish them with your fingers or pop them into a jar of water.
- Plant a variety of different vegetables in your garden for diversity. Pests tend to cause most problems when there is a lack of diversity in the garden.
- Be mindful about the use of pesticides as they usually don't discriminate between bugs that you want out of your garden and those which are welcome.



# The Life & Times of your Garden

Join the thousands of gardeners growing food for the hungry as part of the Plant-a-Row • Grow-a-Row program. All the information you need to start a project is contained in this workbook

## JANUARY:

- Start planning your garden. Decide how large a growing space you can maintain—it's better to start small and expand rather than get overwhelmed by too large a space in the early days.

- Consider the sorts of food plants you'd like to grow: vegetables, herbs, fruits, nuts—maybe a combination of all types!
- Begin researching various food plants and what they need to thrive. Visit your local library and check out gardening books (see Source list). Search the web, reading the wealth of material on popular gardening sites (see Source list).
- Compile a list of food plants you'd like to grow. Separate the list into plants you can start from seed and those you'll purchase as seedlings.

## FEBRUARY:

- Start contacting local nurseries to order seeds.
- Draw up a plan for your garden, detailing size dimensions and what plants you'll put where. Evaluate the sun/shade conditions of your garden plot. Most vegetables require lots of sun, but there are some you can grow in part shade.

## MARCH:

- Start seeds indoors in pots, under grow lights or in a sunny, warm window.
- Aerate the materials in your compost bin—use a pitchfork to “turn” materials and mix them up thoroughly.

## APRIL:

- Prepare the ground for your planting.
- Dig out all weeds. Add compost and rotted manure to your garden bed. Dig compost and manure into the ground thoroughly.
- Plant seeds of cool-weather crops such as spinach and peas.

## MAY:

- After the danger of frost has passed, plant seeds of heat-loving crops.
- Purchase seedlings; plant after danger of frost has passed.



## JUNE:

- Water all plantings.
- Weed all plantings.
- Mulch around plants.
- Add compost around plants.

## JULY:

- Continue to water and weed and thin out crops as necessary.
- Harvest early-season crops such as peas.
- Give your plants a nutrient boost by feeding them compost tea.

## AUGUST:

- Continue to water and weed.
- Harvest.
- Apply more compost.
- Plant a second planting of cool-season crops.

## SEPTEMBER:

- Continue to water and weed.
- Harvest.
- Evaluate what worked and what didn't. Keep notes for next year's garden.

## OCTOBER:

- Finish harvesting all crops before the first frost.
- Remove all spent plants.
- Dig compost into your garden beds.
- Cover the soil with mulch.

## NOVEMBER:

- Turn your compost one last time before winter.

## DECEMBER:

- Take a well-deserved rest from gardening and start dreaming of next year.



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**1-877-571-GROW(4769)**

As part of your garden this year, plant and grow an extra row of your favourite veggies and donate the harvest to your local food bank. Help us help all those in need.





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