

## Planting Schedule

This planting schedule should feed a family of 4 all year, providing of course that the plants are adequately watered and fertilised. If you want to produce more or less vegetables, just increase or decrease the plot sizes accordingly.

The planting schedule incorporates the horticultural principles of:

- Crop rotation – different crops have different impacts on the soil and long term planting of the same crop in the one plot can result in the soil becoming deficient in particular minerals. By rotating crops and planting some crops specifically for soil improvement, this impact is reduced.
- Companion planting – some plants just work better together than others, either because they don't compete or because they have a particular characteristic that helps the other plant (for example basil repels some insects that are attracted to tomatoes, so these plants are often paired up).
- Seasonal planting – not all vegetables will grow or produce all year round, so this planting schedule takes optimal seasonal planting into account. It also means you'll have a variety of vegetables throughout the year.

The schedule is based on a temperate climate, so if you live in a tropical or alpine region find out what you can grow from a local horticulturalist.

It's worth talking to a local horticulturalist anyway to check which varieties of vegetables in each vegetable group grows best in your area and has the best yield (ie produces the most amount of vegetable).

And as you work through the planting program make your own adjustments to planting times and varieties, as well as making notes on other bed management activities such as mulching, fertilising, watering schedules and pest and weed control.

Keep reading for some more tips, and get as much advice from your local garden centre or horticulturalist as you can.

## Bed Preparation

For this planting schedule, you will need 8 plots that each measures 1m wide by 12 m long [4 feet x 35 feet]. A 1 m spacing between the plots will allow easy access to the vegetables without having to stand on the beds themselves.

If you don't have the space for separate plots, this could also be provided as a single 8 m by 12 m garden bed [32 feet x 35 feet] divided into 1m [4 feet] wide strips, but you'll have to be careful walking around the plot.

The garden beds need to be at least 150mm [6 inches] of good, well-drained, organic soil. Garden beds can be raised and edged with timber, rocks, or just mounded.

Turn over the soil in the plot with a fork to break up large clods of earth and mix in organic matter such as compost, manure or vegetation. Any weeds (and spent vegetable plants) on the plot can just be dug into the soil, unless they have seeded in which case remove them and dispose of in the rubbish.

If the soil has a lot of clay, apply gypsum to break up the clumps and improve soil condition.

Your local garden centre or horticulturalist will be able to give you some good advice for your particular soil type.

## Planting

Vegetable plants can be from seed or seedlings. Follow the planting instructions on the seed packet or on the advice on the seedling punnets.

You can even keep some seeds from your crops (including beans, tomatoes, pumpkins, melons, etc.) to self-propagate for the following season. In this case, it's helpful to propagate the seeds in a nursery before transplanting the seedlings, to ensure the seed is viable.

## Watering

Vegetables require the right amount of water at the right time to survive and produce a good harvest. Always read the seed packet or get advice from your local horticulturalist to find out exactly how much water to apply, as this will vary depending on where you live. Applying 25mm [1 inch] per week is typical.

Restrict watering to early morning and evening to reduce wastage by evaporation, and use mulch to reduce water loss as well.

Good organic soils will help retain water in the soil profile, but water crystals can help too.

By installing a rain water tank and dedicated vegetable garden irrigation system, you can reduce the amount of potable water used.

Don't use greywater or water from on-site wastewater treatment systems for irrigating vegetables that you are going to eat raw or lightly cooked, but this water can be used for watering fruit trees and thick skinned fruit and vegetables such as pumpkin and watermelon – make sure the produce is cleaned well before use though.

## Mulch

The use of mulch will greatly reduce water use and will also help keep weeds under control.

A cheap and effective mulch is old newspaper – just spread a couple of layers around the plants, or lay the newspaper down first and cut holes through it for planting seedlings.

Grass clippings in a 75mm [3 inch] thick layer is also OK, as long as there are no seeds in the clippings.

## Fertiliser

Manure and seaweed extracts make great natural fertilisers for vegetable gardens. Apply seaweed based fertilisers according to suppliers directions.

Check with your local Council if you are allowed to have chickens. These provide an endless source of manure for the garden, not to mention fresh eggs!

You can also plant a couple of fruit trees in the chicken coup [make sure the trees are protected from pecking and scratching] – these will grow very quickly with the daily dosing of chicken manure. It's even useful to let them scratch around the vegetable plot between plantings, but make sure they are well fenced and stay where you want them to.

## Compost

Compost is used to increase the organic content of your soil and is great for vegetable gardens.

You can purchase composting drums and bins, or build your own. You can even just use a compost heap, keeping it to about 1m [4 feet] high and wide.

Add kitchen scraps [no meat or grease], garden clippings and even newspaper [no magazines]. Don't add manure, or clippings with seeds and don't add too much of the same thing such as grass clippings as this will slow the process down.

Keep the compost well aerated [turn it every couple of days] and moist, but not too wet.

Worm based compost systems are even better, as the worm castings make a fantastic fertiliser. But worms added to compost can also help.

## Planting Schedule

Season	Southern Hemisphere	Northern Hemisphere	Plot 1	Plot 2	Plot 3	Plot 4	Plot 5	Plot 6	Plot 7	Plot 8
Autumn/Fall	March	September				Plant the entire bed in cabbage family: broccoli, collards, cauliflower, cabbage, radish, cress, daikon, bok choy, Chinese cabbage, and other Asian Brassicas. Plant cauliflower, broccoli, and early cabbage at ends of beds. Protect from snails.		Plant carrots, parsnips, garlic chives and multiplying onions at the edges of the beds totalling 1/4 of the area of the plot.	Plant beets, chard, summer squash, green beans and Berseem clover.	
	April May	October November	Plant Berseem Clover for soil improvement.	Plant 1/5 of the plot with snow peas.	Plant lettuce and other non-cabbage family salad greens in half the plot. At both ends of the bed plant globe artichoke transplants in between Berseem clover.			Plant bulb onions, garlic, leeks, dill, cilantro and Italian parsley. Keep garlic and leeks near the edges of beds. Leave an area of 30cm [one foot] down the middle of the bed.		Plant 60cm [two foot] wide strips of strawberries between the tomatoes. Remove the old tomato vines and cages when they finish.
Winter	June	December		Plant the rest of the plot with sugar snap peas, peas on a trellis and broad beans.			Plant more broccoli as plants thin.			Plant about 1/5 of the bed with beets and chard.
	July	January					Plant beets and chard at the ends of beds.	Turn over enough clover to plant spring tomatoes, and plant 3/4 of the plot with tomatoes.	Plant Sierra lettuce and other salad crops in 1/2 the plot.	
	August	February						In the remainder of the plot, plant com. When the com and tomatoes finish or among the com plant sesame, summer spinach, ginger, oka, yuca, and roselle.		
Spring	September	March	Plant squash, zucchini and butternut varieties by turning over some clover from the centre of the bed and planting down the centre. Squashes will quickly cover the full bed until the end of next autumn/ fall.	Plant climbing beans on the trellis (even if there are still peas on it) and green or Derby beans where the earlier peas have finished.				Plant rockmelon [cantaloupe] seedlings in the middle of the bed.		Plant about 1/5 of the bed with capsicum [peppers].
	October	April			Dig in the remains of the lettuce and plant watermelon down the center of the bed.			As the melons begin to crawl in mid to late Spring, turn over all vegetables and other vegetation before the vine gets within a few inches. Rockmelons [Cantaloupes] don't compete. Mulch around the vines.	Plant cucumbers in the rest of the plot.	
	November	May		Plant long beans and butterpeas (limas) on trellises, or peanuts, edamame (soy) or other peas and beans, in the remainder of the space.		Dig in everything except the remaining beets and chard, and plant sweet potatoes.				Plant edible and decorative gourds (such as cucuzi, bottle gourd, or bushel gourd) or crotalaria or buckwheat, peanuts, Southern peas or sesame.
Summer	December	June		Plant more pole and climbing beans.						
	January	July							Plant 10-16 tomato plants in two rows down the bed. Shade them, and water them frequently. Assume some will die, so over plant.	
	February	August		Plant more Snap beans.		Harvest sweet potatoe and plant Berseem clover.		Plant beets, chard, summer squash, green beans and Berseem clover.		
Autumn/Fall	March	September			Plant the entire bed in cabbage family: broccoli, collards, cauliflower, cabbage, radish, cress, daikon, bok choy, Chinese cabbage, and other Asian Brassicas. Plant cauliflower, broccoli, and early cabbage at ends of beds.			Plant carrots, parsnips, garlic chives and multiplying onions at the edges of the beds totalling 1/4 of the area of the plot.		
	April	October		Pull down any unproductive plants and broadcast lettuce seeds in a vacant patch. Transplant some of these in mid-late autumn to fill out the bed.						
	May	November	Plot 1 becomes Plot 2.	Plot 2 becomes Plot 3.	Plot 3 becomes Plot 4.	Plot 4 becomes Plot 5.	Plot 5 becomes Plot 6.	Plot 6 becomes Plot 7.	Plot 7 becomes Plot 8.	Plot 8 becomes Plot 1.