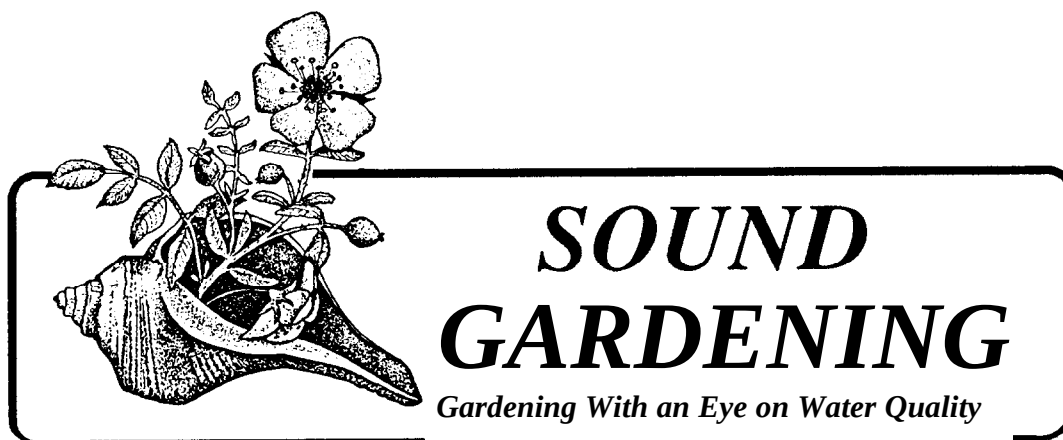




FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GARDENING



Gardening is a Wonderful Source of Food

We **all** enjoy fresh garden-grown fruits and vegetables. By using Sound **Gardening** techniques, it is possible to produce top-quality crops while maintaining soil fertility and protecting our natural waters.

The *Sound Gardening* approach to fruit and vegetable gardening is to select disease-resistant species and varieties, to properly plant them in well prepared sites, and to minimize the use of chemicals.

Where to Plant

To get the most out of a garden, it is important to choose the right site. It should have a minimum of six hours of direct sunlight, have well-drained soil **and** be away from shade-casting trees. Plant the **garden on** level ground, avoiding sloping areas that are likely to erode.

If the garden has to be on an incline, plant across the slope. This way each row acts as a ridge to trap rainfall, reducing soil erosion.

What to Plant

Fruit and vegetable plants need adequate sunlight, moisture, space, air, soil temperature, **pH** and fertility. A plant living in less than optimum conditions will not be as healthy as a plant growing under ideal conditions. Selecting varieties suited to your area and caring for them properly means better plant health and reduced maintenance. Check with a Cooperative Extension office for a list of recommended varieties. Healthier plants mean:

- * more food from the garden
- * less garden work
- * less reliance on pesticides to deal with insects and diseases that take advantage of weak plants
- * less potential for pollution and erosion.

Garden Care Watering



Water only when needed. Vegetable garden soil should be kept evenly moist. If nature does not provide 1" of rainfall per week, supplement with a single application during a seven day period. Some vegetable crops are naturally more deep-rooted and drought-tolerant than others.

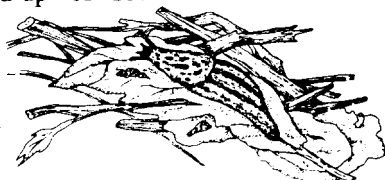
Generally, leafy crops and nightshade, tomato, pepper and onion family crops will need the most frequent watering. Root vegetables should also be kept evenly moist (no wet-dry fluctuation) to prevent woody roots. The application of mulching materials will reduce the need for additional water. Seeds and seedlings in the germination/establishment phase require more frequent watering as they need moisture closer to the surface.

Small fruits such as blueberries, strawberries and raspberries need adequate moisture (1" per week) at all times during the growing season. Full size fruit trees require less watering than dwarf fruit trees.

Pests

Serious pest problems can often be avoided by properly siting, planting and maintaining the garden. The following preventative measures will reduce the chance of pest invasion:

- * Choose healthy vegetable transplants and disease-resistant fruit and vegetable varieties.
- * Rotate crops when practical so the same or a related crop is not in the same place year after year. Repeated plantings of the same plants in the same spot can encourage insect infestation and the build-up of soil diseases.
- * Practice good garden sanitation. Weeds, garden debris and other rubbish may harbor insects, slugs and diseases.
- * Weed out volunteer vegetable seedlings such as tomatoes and squash. They compete with desired crops for water, space and nutrients.
- * Time vegetable plantings to avoid peak pest infestations. Keep a record of when insect problems appear so you can plan future plantings.
- * Inspect plants for insects and eggs frequently. Pick off and destroy any you find.
- * Dislodge insects with frequent sprays of water. This may be all the control you need for aphids, whitefly, two-spotted mites and spittle bugs.



- * Construct insect barriers over vegetable plants. Use screening or floating row covers (remove covers for insect pollinated plants when flowers appear).
- * Protect fruit crops from birds with netting.
- * Proper training and pruning of fruit trees may help reduce disease and insect problems.
- * Monitor for slugs by trapping in containers of beer. They can also be lured beneath boards for capture.
- * Keep the garden free of debris to limit hiding and breeding places for pests.
- * Herbicides are unnecessary in a vegetable garden. Mulching around fruit and vegetable plants will keep down weeds, add valuable organic matter to the soil and reduce evaporation. Pull all weeds by hand before they get larger.
- * If a pest problem develops, use the least toxic control method. Some of these might include *Bacillus thuringiensis*, insecticidal soaps and horticultural oil.

Fertilizer

Fertilizers supplement the nutrients already in the soil. Many people apply too much, which may damage plants, endanger water quality and waste money. When preparing the ground for vegetables in the spring, incorporate limestone (according to a soil test) and 1 to 2 pounds of granular fertilizer per 100 square feet. When using chemical fertilizers on established plants, apply in bands along rows of seeded vegetables or in a circle around each plant. This can improve yields and reduce the amount of fertilizer used.

A complete chemical fertilizer containing nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium in the ratios of 10-10-10 or 5-10-10 are the easiest and least expensive to use. They are readily available for plant uptake during the period of cool soil temperatures in the spring. However, organic sources of nutrients such as cottonseed, bone and blood meal, manures, compost, fish extract and other organic materials are available and may be used. As the percentage of nutrients in them is relatively low compared to chemical fertilizers, fairly large amounts may be required to supply plant needs.



REMEMBER

- * Locate the garden where it is sunny and level.
- * Plant disease-resistant, locally adapted varieties.
- * Water only when needed.
- * Use the least toxic pest control methods.

For more information on Sound Gardening and fruit and vegetable gardening, contact your local Cooperative Extension office.

In Connecticut:

Storrs: (203)486-3435
Fairfield: (203)797-4176
Hartford: (203)241-4940
Tolland: (203)875-3331
Windham: (203)774-9600

New Haven: (203)789-7865
Middlesex: (203)345-4511
Litchfield: (203)567-9447
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Nassau: (516)454-0900
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