

Tips for growing organic veg

Do I need a big garden?

- Vegetables will fit into almost any garden as long as there is some sunny space available. However they do not do well in shade or under trees.
- You can have a special plot for vegetables (a lawn can easily be converted), or you can fit them into a mixed border with flowers and shrubs.
- Where space is short, large pots and containers can be used. Tomatoes in hanging baskets and beans trailing up a wigwam of bamboo canes can look decorative, too.
- If you are thinking big, a standard allotment should produce enough vegetables for a family of four to be relatively self-sufficient. Contact your local council for details.

Growing in beds

- The long rows of a traditional vegetable plot don't suit many gardens. You can grow much more in a narrow bed (1.2m wide), which can be worked from all sides.
- Plants can be closer together and spaced evenly across the ground as there is no need to leave room to walk between the rows.
- Weeding is easier as the soil doesn't get compacted, and the vegetables crowd weeds out. The planner gives suggested spacings for beds.

Growing in containers

- If your garden is mostly paths and patio, vegetables can be grown in pots, boxes and other containers - the bigger the better. A minimum of 25cm deep and 25cm wide is recommended, and good drainage is essential.
- Fill containers with a good, peat-free potting compost. You can mix this with good garden soil to make it go further, but garden soil alone will not be suitable.
- Containers dry out quickly so you may have to water twice a day in hot weather. Where possible, sit the container in a water-retaining tray.
- Add a few flowers, such as trailing lobelia or French marigolds, to make an attractive display.



Good containers - and veg to grow in them

- Large pots and planters; wooden boxes; half barrels; chimney pots; window boxes; growing bags.
- Tomatoes; courgettes; French beans - dwarf and climbing; lettuce and other salads; spring onions; mini-beetroot.

10 tips for success

1. Grow vegetables that you and your family love to eat.
2. Grow in an open sunny spot.
3. Choose vegetables to suit your part of the country - see what your neighbours grow.
4. Feed the soil with garden compost and leaf mould.
5. Never sow or plant until the soil is warm enough, sow some veg indoors to get the best start.
6. Use slow-release organic fertilisers where needed.
7. Choose varieties with natural pest and disease resistance.
8. To help with pest control, introduce features such as a pond or bird boxes to encourage wildlife. Grow flowers that will attract pest eating insects.
9. Protect young plants by cutting the bottom off plastic bottles to make mini-cloches.
10. Don't grow veg from the same family group in the same spot year after year.

Buying seeds and plants

- Organically grown seeds are available from www.organiccatalogue.com. You can also buy organically grown young starter plants at garden centres and nurseries to get you growing without sowing.

Getting plants started

- Hardy vegetables - those that can withstand cold conditions - are usually sown straight into the soil ('direct sowing') when it has warmed up to at least 6°C. A good indication of this is when grass starts to grow. Most are sown where they are to be harvested.
- Leeks, cabbages, kale and broccoli, however, are usually sown in a nursery bed, then planted out into their final growing site when large enough to handle.
- Tender plants, such as tomatoes and basil, like it hot. They won't stand the frost and will do poorly in cool weather. These are best started off indoors in pots or trays, then planted out when the weather has warmed up. You'll need a light, warm place to raise these plants - or you can buy them from a catalogue or garden centre.
- Courgettes and French and runner beans are also tender but can be sown directly outdoors once the soil has reached at least 12°C.

Crop rotation

- Vegetables fit into nine major family groups. The closely-related vegetables in each family tend to be susceptible to the same ailments.
- To avoid a potential build up of pests and diseases, never follow one crop with another in the same family group. Wait at least three to four years between planting related crops.
- You can find much more information about crop rotation, and all other aspects of growing veg organically on the Garden Organic website www.gardenorganic.org.uk



5 steps to making garden compost

- Buy a compost bin (your local council may provide them at discount price) or make your own. A plastic dustbin with the bottom removed, is fine. Or drive four posts into the ground, staple chicken wire around the outside, and line with cardboard cartons. A compost bin is best sited on bare soil, somewhere reasonably accessible.

- Anything that once lived will make compost, though some things are best avoided.

Good for the compost heap: fruit and veg peelings, weeds, grass mowings, uncooked leftovers, egg boxes, paper bags, loo roll tubes, soft prunings.

Don't compost: cooked food meat, fish, plastic, tins or glass.

- Add as much as you can, whenever it is available. For best results add a mixture of ingredients, both soft and sappy and old and tough.
- Cover with a lid or waterproof sheet to keep out the rain.
- Keep filling the bin for around 6-12 months. The compost is ready to use when the original items you added are no longer recognisable, and have broken down into a dark, soil like substance. Remove the ready compost (usually the bottom layers) and replace the rest in the compost bin to finish decomposing.

Garden compost

- Home made compost makes your garden grow - for free!
- Home made garden compost is the ideal soil improver to make your vegetables grow - whatever soil you have. Apply it in the spring and summer, on the surface as a mulch, or mixed into the top few inches of soil.
- If you can't make your own, always buy organic, peat-free compost.

THE VEGETABLES IN THIS PLANNER ARE JUST A SMALL SELECTION OF THE FULL RANGE OF CROPS AND VARIETIES THAT CAN BE GROWN IN THIS COUNTRY. GO TO WWW.ORGANICCATALOGUE.COM TO SEE A MUCH WIDER CHOICE - ALWAYS CHOOSE ORGANIC SEED WHERE POSSIBLE!

About Garden Organic

Garden Organic is the UK's leading organic growing charity. Our charity has been at the forefront of the organic horticulture movement for more than 60 years with a mission to inspire as many people as possible to take up organic gardening methods in their own growing spaces.

Founded in the 1950s by organic gardening pioneer Lawrence D Hills, a horticulturist with a passion for the wide reaching benefits of organic growing. We have been working tirelessly ever since towards a common belief that organic growing is essential for a healthy and sustainable world.



What is organic growing?

Organic growing is all about looking after our gardens, green spaces, allotments and community land in the most sustainable way. Organic principles are about growing things naturally without artificial inputs, reusing and recycling, striking a balance between plant life and wildlife, maintaining and enriching the soil, and avoiding the use of harmful pesticides, chemical treatments and artificial fertilisers.

All of the above is great news for veg growers as you can be assured that what you pull out of the ground, pluck off a plant or chop up for the pot is natural, wholesome and seasonal.

Join the organic movement

If you like what we do and want to support our work towards getting more people gardening and growing organically then why not become a **Garden Organic member?**

Join our 20,000-strong movement of members passionate about protecting the environment through organic growing. Membership to Garden Organic helps us carry out our awareness-raising work, and talking to people about why organic growing is so important for the health of our planet.

To find out more about becoming a member visit www.gardenorganic.org.uk or call 024 7630 8210

The Veg Grower's PLANNER



Eat sustainably - grow your own organic vegetables

Follow us at GardenOrganicUK
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The Veg Grower's PLANNER

Organic since 1958
Pioneers

Vegetables and varieties to try	When to sow, plant and harvest												Q	How to sow, grow and tend		
	PF	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N			D	
Amaranth	9	T													15-36	Allow a final spacing of 30 cm between plants and 40 between rows if you want larger leaves, or allow plants to grow closer together for smaller leaves. Harvest August - September - can either cut off leaves or cut down to ground and allow to regrow. Varieties available from HSL: Mrs McGhie, Bangladeshi Dahta.
Bean, French <i>Dwarf - Modus, Purple Queen. Climbing - Eva, Blauhilde</i>	7	T													19	Sow into warm soil. For dwarf varieties, allow 23cm between plants and rows. Grow climbing varieties up a double row of canes, 15cm between plants along the rows, or make a wigwam.
Bean, runner <i>Scarlet Emperor, Painted Lady, Czar, Hestia (dwarf)</i>	7	T													18	Sow into warm soil. Grow up a double row of canes, 15cm apart along the rows, or make a wigwam. Pick beans regularly and keep well watered to maintain supply.
Beetroot <i>Early - Boltardy, Red Ace. Cylindrical - Cylindra, Golden Detroit</i>	1	H													33	Sow in rows 30cm apart, leaving 10cm between plants. On beds, try 15cm between rows and plants. When sowing before mid-April, use a variety that is resistant to bolting.
Broad bean <i>Autumn sowing - Super Aquadulce. Spring sowing - Witkeim, Green Windsor. Dwarf - The Sutton</i>	7	H													11	Sow in paired rows, allowing 23cm between plants and rows, 60cm between pairs of rows. Plant early to avoid blackfly or pinch out tops where pests are seen. Full-grown plants may need support.
Broccoli <i>Bordeaux, Purple Sprouting early, Claret</i>	2	H													2.7	Raise young plants in pots or a nursery bed 7cm apart, 15cm between rows. Transplant, when 7.5cm high, at 60cm between rows and plants. Harvest purple-flowered shoots in spring. Protect against cabbage rootfly (see 'Cabbages', below). Pick off any caterpillars.
Cabbage, summer <i>Greyhound, Golden Acre, Pixie</i>	2	H													6.25	Raise young plants in pots, or in a nursery bed 7cm apart, 15cm between rows. Plant out summer cabbages 35-45cm apart, (depending on variety and size of cabbage required). Plant out winter varieties 40-50cm apart. Closer spacing will give smaller heads. To protect against cabbage rootfly, cut a 13cm square of matting. Slit it to the centre, then place flat on the soil, so the plant grows through the middle. Pick off any caterpillars.
Cabbage, autumn and winter <i>Cuor di Bue, Celtic, Savoy - Vertus</i>	2	H													5	Sow directly where plants are to grow, as roots resent disturbance. Allow 15cm between plants, 30cm between rows. Pick main head while still firm; smaller side shoots will then develop.
Calabrese <i>Pacifica, Waltham, Fiesta</i>	2	H													22	Sow directly where plants are to grow, as roots resent disturbance. Allow 15cm between plants, 30cm between rows. Pick main head while still firm; smaller side shoots will then develop.
Carrot <i>Early - Nantes 2, Paris Market (round) Maincrop - Autumn King, Long Red Surrey</i>	3	H													66.6	Sprinkle seed in rows, then thin to final spacing, 10 cm by 15cm for early varieties, 4cm by 15cm for maincrop carrots. Pull as required to eat. Cover with horticultural fleece where carrot fly is a problem, or sow in June to miss this pest.
Chard and Leaf Beet <i>Rainbow chard, Swiss chard, Perpetual Spinach (Spinach beet)</i>	1	H													8	Sow at final spacing (30cm apart, 40cm between rows), putting in a couple of seeds at each point. Thin to one seedling per 'station' when around 2cm tall. A hardy crop that can be picked over a long period. Will tolerate light shade.
Chickpeas	7	H/T													28	Aim for 15cm between plants, 25 cm between rows. Unique green nutty taste which you can't find in the shops. Not worth growing them till they are dry as the mice will find them first. Harvest as soon as peas appear in their pods, when still green.
Courgette <i>Partenon, Defender, Goldie (yellow), Rondo di Nizza (round)</i>	5	T													2.7	Raise in pots in a warm, light place, or sow outside in late May/early June 60cm apart. Sow seeds on their sides. Cut courgette fruits regularly, when around 10cm long, to maintain supply. Choose a resistant variety where cucumber mosaic virus is a problem.
Garlic <i>Thermidrome, Printanor</i>	6	H													30	Plant individual cloves, 5-10cm deep leaving 15cm between plants and rows. Harvest when leaves begin to turn yellow. Autumn planting is best.
Kale <i>Red Winter, Nero di Toscana, Dwarf Green Curled</i>	2	H													4	Raise young plants in pots or a nursery bed 7cm apart, 15cm between rows. Transplant, when 7-8cm high, at 45-60cm apart (depending on variety). Protect young plants from cabbage rootfly (see 'Cabbages', above).
Kohl Rabi	2	H													20	Thin to 15 - 20 cm spacing.
Lablab beans	7	T													28	Sow climbing into 3 inch pots. For dwarf varieties space 15 cm apart. For climbing varieties space two plants per pole. Ruby Moon is a very popular variety or Ying's lablab from the Heritage Seed Library.
Leek <i>Hannibal, Bandit, St Victor</i>	6	H													33	Sow in a nursery bed 2.5cm apart 15cm between rows. Transplant when pencil thick. Drop plants into 15cm deep holes made with a dibber. Water in to settle the roots. For slim leeks, grow at 15cm by 15cm; for larger leeks, try 20cm by 20cm.
Lettuce <i>Hearting - Little Gem, Tintin, Marvel of Four Seasons Loose leaf - Salad bowl, Fristina, Red Fire</i>	4	H													25	Outdoor lettuces include heading, loose leaf and Cos varieties. Sow small quantities every three to four weeks to maintain supply. If sowing in Sept - Oct use indoor / cold frame. Allow 15-20cm between plants, depending on variety.
Onion, autumn planted sets <i>Radar, Senshyu Yellow</i>	6	H													16	Push sets (tiny onions grown for planting) gently into the soil until the tops are just showing. Autumn sets: allow 25-30cm between plants and rows. These may keep until Christmas but are not for long-term storage. Spring sets: allow 15cm between plants and rows to produce medium sized onions; up to 25cm for larger bulbs. Allow leaves to fall over naturally at end of season. For storage, harvest when foliage is dry and crisp.
Onion, spring planted sets <i>Jet Set, Sturon, Red Baron</i>	6	H													44.4	
Parsnip <i>Avonresister, Tender and True</i>	3	H													33.3	Sow at final spacing, placing several seeds at each spot, then reducing them to one. For small parsnips, sow 7.5cm apart, 20cm between rows: for larger roots, sow at 15cm by 30cm.
Pea <i>Greenshaft, Early Onward, Carouby de Mousanne (mangetout), Sugar Bon (sugar snap)</i>	7	H													35	Make a shallow trench. 5cm deep and 15cm wide, then sow three staggered rows of pea seeds in this. Grow plants up pea netting for support. Harvest mangetout varieties when pods are flat, sugarsnaps when pods are fat, and eat the whole pod.
Potato, early <i>Arran Pilot, Pentland Javelin</i>	8	H													8.7	Potatoes are grown from tubers, known as 'seed' potatoes. Plant early varieties 30cm apart, 15cm deep, in rows 60cm apart. Plant maincrop and salad varieties, 38cm between plants, 76cm between rows. Protect shoots from frost early in the season. Flowering can indicate that early varieties are ready to harvest. Harvest all varieties by early September to reduce risk of slug damage. Store any surplus in paper sacks in a cool, dry, frost-free spot.
Potato, maincrop <i>King Edward, Sante, Edzell Blue, Cara</i>	8	H													3.5	
Potato, salad <i>Charlotte, Nicola, Pink Fir Apple, Roseval</i>	8	H													3.5	
Pumpkin or Winter Squash <i>Buttercup, Blue Ballet, Bon Bon, Waltham Butternut</i>	5	T													2	Raise plants in pots in a warm place, or sow outside in late May/early June. Allow 60-90cm between plants. Trailing varieties can be grown up a trellis on a fence or shed. Will store for months if well ripened in late summer.
Rocket, Salad <i>Rucola</i>	2	H													Dense	Sow thinly in a 15cm-wide band. Pick leaves regularly when plants 5-8cm tall. Sow every few weeks for continuity of supply. Tends to go to flower quickly in hot weather - so best grown in cooler spring and autumn conditions.
Spinach <i>Matador, Giant Winter, Monoppa</i>	1	H													100	Summer and winter varieties available. Best grown in the cool of spring or autumn. Sow thinly in rows 30cm apart. Thin out seedlings to 30cm apart; the thinnings can be eaten. Pick regularly. Sow at three week intervals for continued supply.
Sweetcorn <i>Kelvedon Glory, Golden Bantam, Early Extra Sweet</i>	9	H													8	Sow in a block, leaving 35cm between plants. Cobs are ready to pick when grains exude a milky fluid when pressed with a thumbnail. Eat within the hour for maximum flavour!
Tomato, outdoor <i>Tall - Sungold, Harbinger, Ferline Bush - Red Alert, Tumbling Tom</i>	8	T													4.5	Raise plants indoors in pots in a warm, light spot. Plant outside when soil is warm and danger of frost is past. Plant tall varieties 45cm apart and support with a stake.



CABBAGES
Choose between summer and autumn/winter harvest



KALE
Protect young plants from cabbage rootfly



ONIONS
For storage, harvest when foliage is dry and crisp



PEAS
Pick mangetout when the pods are flat, but sugarsnaps when fat



BROCCOLI
Raise young plants in pots or a nursery bed



CHARD
Choose a hardy crop for a longer harvest



TOMATOES
Plant outside when the soil is warm and support tall plants with stakes



PUMPKINS
Leave pumpkin and squash until very ripe, then you can store them for months

How to use this guide

- Sowing Time**
In trays indoors (may depend on the variety)
- Sowing Time**
Direct in the soil (may depend on variety)
- Plant Out (if no risk of frost)**
At final spacing (example: 10cm by 15cm = 10cm between plants, 15cm between rows)
- Time to Harvest**
For eating or storing

All you need to know

- 1-9 - Plant Family:** Vegetables fit into nine major family groups (9 is a miscellaneous group). These will be important to know once your garden is up and running, to ensure correct 'crop rotation' which avoids build-up of pests and diseases.
- T - Tender:** These vegetables like heat, won't stand frost and will do badly in cold conditions.
- H - Hardy:** Can withstand cold. Sow directly in soil when temperature is warm enough (i.e. when the grass starts to grow).
- Q - Quantity:** The number of plants you can grow in a square metre. Helps you calculate how much space you need, and the yield you can expect.

Plant Family key

1. Beetroot
2. Cabbage
3. Carrot
4. Lettuce
5. Marrow
6. Onion
7. Pea and bean
8. Potato
9. Others

For more information please visit our website
www.gardenorganic.org.uk
or call us on 024 7630 8210