

Get your Vegetable Garden Ready: Resource Guide



Locate your garden

- **Locate your garden** in an area that receives plenty of sunshine.
- **Locate your garden** away from sewage systems, animal-based compost piles or farm animals.
- **Locate your garden** away from areas prone to flooding or exposure to agricultural run-off water. Flood waters can bring contaminants into the garden, putting the harvest at risk.
- **Locate your garden** on level ground, where possible, to prevent standing water. Your plants will be happier and your harvest safer.
- **Locate your garden** in soil what is free from heavy metals and full of organic matter. Have your soil tested for nutrients, pH, and heavy metals such as lead, cadmium, mercury and copper. Heavy metals may accumulate in foods grown in contaminated soil and increase exposure to those heavy metals when consumed. Testing for lead is important, especially in urban gardens. Invest in testing to make sure the produce that you grow will be healthy to consume.
- **Locate your garden** in soil with the right nutrients for plant growth. Major nutrients needed by plants for growth are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K), together known as NPK. Other important nutrients are calcium, magnesium and sulfur. Plants also need small quantities of iron, manganese, zinc, copper, boron and molybdenum, known as trace elements because only traces are needed by the plant. Contact your local Extension office for more information.
- **Locate your garden** to protect from erosion and nutrient run-off.

General resources:

Food Safety in Gardens <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-1153>

Plant the Garden <https://extension.umn.edu/planting-and-growing-guides/planting-vegetable-garden>

Soil Testing <https://ohioline.osu.edu/factsheet/hyg-1132> (Ohio)

Soil Testing <http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu/> (Minnesota)

Testing your Garden Soil <https://uwlab.soils.wisc.edu/soil-samples/lawn-garden/> (Wisconsin)

Composting:

The Complete Composter <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/pubs/wa/wa182.pdf>

Composting in the Home Garden <https://extension.illinois.edu/compost/process.cfm>

Making and Using Compost in the Garden <https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Assets/pdfs/A4021.pdf>

If you support gardening in a **community plot**, an essential resource is:

A Handbook for Beginning and Veteran Garden Organizers: How to Reduce Food Safety Risks

Available here: <https://nccommunitygardens.ces.ncsu.edu/nccommunitygardens-food-safety-in-community-gardens/>

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