

Spring Into Vegetable Gardening



Sustainable Gardening



- Composting
- Water conservation
- Limited use of pesticides & fertilizers
- Improving soil structure
- Leaving a gentle footprint on the soil

A Few Garden Secrets

The best spring gardens begin in the Fall



- The soil is easier to work
- Good time to build “bones”
- Expose soil to bug killing frost
- Use cover crops to improve soil
 - Austrian Winter Peas
 - Cereal Rye
 - Hairy Vetch

A Few Garden Secrets

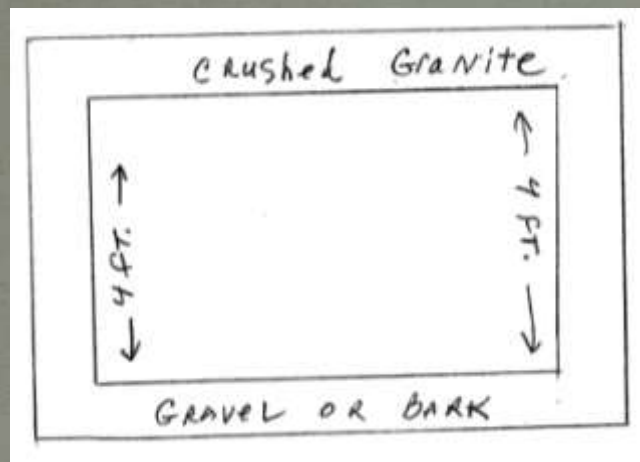
Make a plan, save energy



- Don't let Spring fever overwhelm you
- You can spend your time building & plant in the Fall

A Few Garden Secrets

Prepare & plant raised beds or mounded rows



- Beware of evil twins! Bermuda & Johnson grass.
- Beds no wider than 4' for access.
- Drainage is important in our clay.
- Keep foot traffic from compacting the soil.

A Few Garden Secrets

Keep a notebook

- It is really hard to remember the location of every thing.
- Record best performing varieties.
- Record fertilizer applications.



A Few Garden Secrets

Practice rotation of crops

- Helps protect plants from disease & pests
- Helps provide correct nutrients; legumes help nitrogen levels.
- Make a rotation plan before planting:
 - Rotate root, vine, fruit (tomato, eggplant, pepper), grain (corn), Brassicas (broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts) and greens.
- Keep potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant and peppers in 3 year rotation.



A Few Garden Secrets

Plant at the right time for taste & success

- Cool season crops like carrots, lettuce, brassicas, garlic & beets do best in Fall & Winter
- Protect lettuce with frost cover
- Buy & plant correct varieties for Texas



Calendar

January – part I



- Get out those catalogs & order
- Inventory & prepare tools
- Buy amendments - dry molasses, green sand, lava sand, horticultural corn meal, finished compost, wheat straw & fertilizers
- Read up on Texas gardening
- Rely on:
<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>

Calendar

January – part II

- Plant onion slips end of the month in prepared soil 1 ½" deep
- Order specialty potatoes or buy local. Pre- sprout.
- Local feed stores & nurseries will carry potatoes & short day onions
- Prepare an irrigation plan



Calendar

February – Part I

- Continue planting onions
- Plant tomato seeds inside under lights
- Plant pepper & eggplants under lights on heated pad
- Plant potatoes after Valentine's Day
 - 4" trenches, ferts in two parallel trenches on the sides
 - Pull soil up around green tops when 6" high
 - Keep wheat straw handy



Calendar

February – Part II



- Plant English & Sugar snap peas - can germinate between moist paper towels inside
- Prepare a place for compost
- Begin harvesting mature asparagus after Valentine's day

Calendar

March – Part I

- Plant asparagus crowns in prepared 16” trenches:

- Amend with compost, cover 3”
- Continue to cover spring & summer

- 1st week can start planting cool season crops, weather permitting:

- Carrots, lettuce, brassicas, beets, spinach

- Cover seed trenches with quality potting soil



Calendar

March – Part II

- Keep frost cover close
- May plant tomato transplants at the end of month with protection
- Install chosen supports & don't over fertilize
- Harvest winter crops when needed
- Start weeding



Calendar

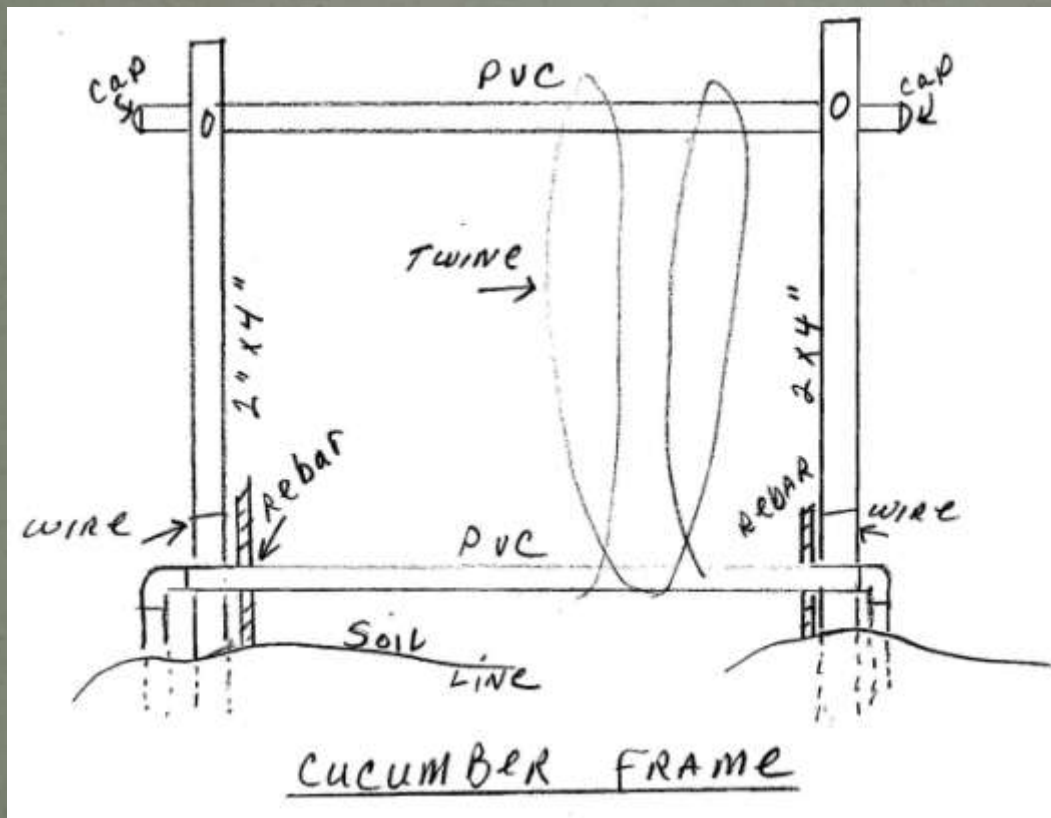
April – Part I

- Prepare tomato irrigation, (water 1 to 2 inches a week)
- Keep planting asparagus
- Continue planting tomato transplants
- After the 15th you can start to plant warm season veggies:
peppers, eggplant,
corn (in blocks),
squash, cucumbers,
melons, beans &
okra



Calendar

April – Part II



Calendar

April – Part III



- Start ruthless weeding!
- Start harvesting peas
- Take time to enjoy your partnership with nature!

Calendar

May – Part I



- Mound soil up around corn & potatoes
- Cover tomato & potato rows with wheat straw 4" deep
- Harvest vegetables as they mature.

Calendar

May – Part II

- Check for pests and diseases (Use Neem oil, Avenger, mineral oil on corn silks)
- Keep your garden free of debris
- Fertilize corn & beans & tomatoes
- Irrigate as needed & compost pile, too



Calendar

June

- Harvest potatoes, onions & garlic 1st of the month
- Store crops appropriately
- Hang plastic red Xmas balls on tomato plants to discourage birds



Some Vegetable Varieties for Collin County

| Vegetable/melon | Variety | Comments |
|-----------------|----------------|--|
| Asparagus | UC157 | Excellent, green, slow to fern |
| | Atlas | New, purple-tipped, slow to fern |
| | Purple Passion | Mild flavor, purple, less productive |
| Beans | Blue Lake | Old standard, reliable, good flavor |
| | Contender | Vigorous, easy to pick, good flavor |
| | Nash | Heat tolerant, good flavor |
| | Festina | Reliable, good flavor |
| | Roma | Great flavor, flat pod |
| Carrots | Sweet Treat | Short, Sweet |
| | Purple dragon | Dark purple skin, sweet orange Inside |
| Corn | Mirai | Short plant, excellent flavor |
| Cucumber | Sumpter | Picking size, stays sweet |

Some Vegetable Varieties for Collin County

| Vegetable/melon | Variety | Comments |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Lettuce | Buttercrunch Green Ice Prize Leaf Little Caesar | Sweet, butter head Consistent, loose-leaf Red-tipped loose leaf Good flavor, romaine |
| Spinach | Baby leaf Big ruffles | Delicious, tender Sweet, hardy |
| Onions | Granex, white, yellow, red 1015Y Bermuda | Consistent & sweet, flat Large, sweet, round, yellow Old favorite, flat, sweet, hard to find |
| English Pea | Maestro | Sweet, moderately mildew resistant Raised bed only |
| Sugar Snap Pea | Super Sugar Snap | Sweet, plump, productive Raised bed only |

Some Vegetable Varieties for Collin County

| Vegetable/melon | Variety | Comments |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Melon | French Orange (Cantaloupe) | Super sweet, firm, The only one to grow. Produces June – October |
| Peppers | Fat and Sassy Tequila Orange Sun Early Sunsation | Reliable, green to red Beautiful lilac, productive Sweet & beautiful Large, green to yellow, sweet |
| Potatoes | Kennebec Lasoda Yukon Gold Desiree Caribe | Large, white keeper Good quality, red-skinned Flavorful, yellow, small to medium Excellent, small, yellow, gourmet Pretty, purple-skinned, white |
| Squash | Zebra Zuke Sunray | Delicious, striped, productive Yellow, mild |

Some Vegetable Varieties for Collin County

| Vegetable/melon | Variety | Comments |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Tomatoes | Sun Gold cherry | Tops in flavor & production |
| | Champion II | Old favorite, large, flavorful |
| | Carbon | Dark-fleshed, excellent flavor |
| | Paul Robeson | Brick colored, complex flavor, Tomato tasting winner, heirloom |
| | Viva Italia | Excellent plum |
| | Super Marzano | Large plum, reliable, few seeds |

Sources: Tomato Growers Supply - tomatogrowers.com, Burpee's - www.burpee.com, Parks - parkseed.com, Territorial Seed - www.territorialseed.com, Johnny's Selected Seeds - Johnnyseeds.com, Vermont Bean Seed Co. - www.vermontbean.com, John Scheepers - www.kitchengardenseeds.com

SEED STARTING AND TRANSPLANTING

Part I

- Follow directions on each packet.
- If planting directly in the garden, cover with potting soil for best results.
- Small seeds should be planted sparingly to avoid over-crowding.
- Keep left over packets in cool dry, dark place.
- Date packet



SEED STARTING AND TRANSPLANTING

Part II

- If you are planting seed for transplants in cells, start 5-6 weeks before average last frost date.
- Place under lights in warm place. Use commercial seed starting mix to avoid disease.
- Prepare a spot in the garden with amended soil: compost, green sand, dry molasses, scoop of finished manure and weak liquid fertilizer.
- Plant out on a cloudy, calm day if possible.

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The End