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Vertical gardening" by trellising pole beans on a wooden frame. (Everette Hartzog, Yadkinville, 2019).

## PLANNING YOUR 2020 GARDEN

Is the winter chill and rain keeping you out of the garden? Got dirt-under-your-fingernails withdrawal? From gardener to gardener, here's a secret to kicking those indoor blues—plan your garden for next year! Successful garden planning involves selecting a site, choosing varieties, laying out crop arrangement and determining when to plant.

### Reasons to plan:

By taking the time to carefully plan your garden, you can prevent frost injury, provide disease control, and help plants withstand weather extremes like drought, flood and wind. Planting at the correct time for each crop contributes to strong, resilient plants that are more resistant to disease. Sometimes you can reduce pest damage by knowing when a certain insect feeds and planting to avoid this window. For example, planting beans early or late can limit Mexican bean beetle damage which peaks in July.

### Site Selection:

Location, location, location—it is the foundation of a productive garden. So select the best garden site.

- Sunlight is the most important factor. Most vegetable crops require at least 6 hours of direct sun, 8-10 hours is ideal. Avoid planting near buildings and trees in order to limit shade and competing roots.

NOTE: plants with edible leaves (collards, cabbage, lettuce) and roots (turnips, radishes, carrots) can tolerate more shade than plants that flower and set fruit (tomatoes, melons, peppers).

- Soil drainage is key. Healthy roots need oxygen as well as water, and good soil drainage prevents waterlogging and

root rots. Finding a well-drained site can be challenging with our heavy, clay soils. Look at your yard after a rain and avoid areas where water pools. Amending the soil with compost can improve soil drainage. Raised beds are a great alternative if drainage issues are severe.

- Avoid low-lying areas which trap cold air and increase the risk of late frost injury. These areas are slower to warm in spring which can delay germination and seedling establishment.

- Choose a convenient location that is easy to access and close to your water source. This will make it easier to keep an eye on your plants and spot diseases and pests.

- A location that gets morning sun is ideal. Early sun exposure dries plant leaves which reduces foliar disease and frost damage, and extends the growing season.

### Garden Design:

Once you have a site chosen, the next steps are selecting crops and laying out crop arrangement. Order a seed catalogue, grab a pair of scissors or marker, and pick out crops that you and your family ENJOY that also grow well in your area. People often grow vegetables that taste noticeably better when eaten soon after they are picked; sweet corn is an excellent example because its sugar quickly converts to starch.

### Garden diagram:

Many templates are available online. It's fun to create/customize your own. Select a sheet of graph paper.

- Draw an arrow that pointing north.
- Mark water and composting bins.

- Use a ruler to draw planting beds and walkways.
  - Mark areas for each veggie using different colors.
- NOTE: Find spacing requirements in Central N.C. Planting Calendar.\*
- Select a sheet of graph paper.
  - Draw an arrow that pointing north.
  - Mark water and composting bins.
  - Use a ruler to draw planting beds and walkways.
  - Mark the area for each veggie type using different colors.

\*<https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/central-north-carolina-planting-calendar-for-annual-vegetables-fruits-and-her>

### Planting Time:

The Central N.C. Planting Calendar\* lists the proper time for seeding and transplanting different crops in our region. Consider making successive plantings versus a one-time planting so you can extend the harvest and not have more than you can use at one time. Make 2 to 3 plantings of leaf lettuce and radishes 7 to 10 days apart. Carrots, beets and cabbage can be planted in early spring for a summer crop and in late summer for a fall crop. Several plantings of sweet corn, squash and snap beans can provide a fresh supply throughout the summer. If possible rotate crops every year to prevent overwintering soil diseases. A three-year rotation with an unrelated crop is ideal.

To maximize space in small gardens, plant later crops where early-harvested crops were grown. You can also intensify production by interplanting early crops such as spinach and green onions between rows of long season crops such as tomatoes and peppers. Refer to the planting calendar\* to time these plantings. Utilize vertical space by growing vining crops like cucumbers, beans and melons on supports such as trellises, frames or poles.

Be creative! You can interplant vegetables in flower beds to add diversity and a whimsical element to your home landscape. Don't start too large—a small, well-tended garden can be just as productive as a large space that grows up in weeds because it is too much to manage. Once you break ground, it is easy to expand if you discover you have time and energy to maintain a larger garden.

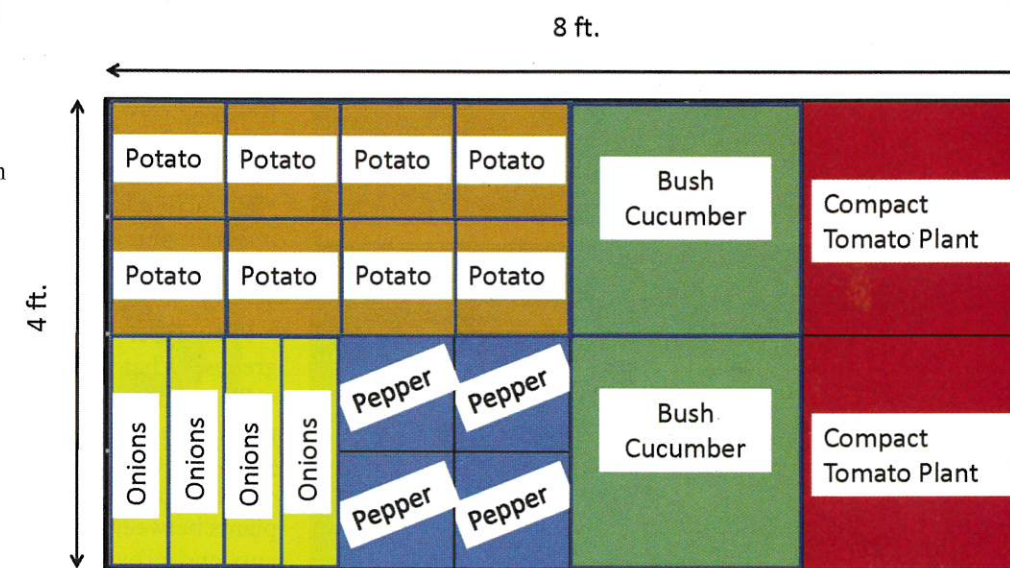
With these tips in mind, you can maximize your space and enjoy a fruitful season of continuous harvest.



Finding a well-drained site can be challenging with our heavy, clay soils.



Edibles do not need to be relegated to vegetable gardens. This dinosaur kale is right at home in this perennial bed.



Spring/Summer Garden