



The WEST·HARTFORD·GARDEN·CLUB

West Hartford Garden Club

in collaboration with

West Hartford Public Library

## PLANNING A GARDEN

What should I plant? How much should I plant? And where should I plant it? If you're new to gardening—and even if you're not—starting your garden can feel overwhelming. The good news? You don't have to be a master gardener to create a garden plan that yields a healthy harvest. Here are a few tips to help you kick-start your home garden.

### Have your soil tested!

Contact your local extension service Master Gardener Office to find out what kind of soil you have, so that you can understand what plants will want to grow well for you without a lot of inputs!

### Give It Some Thought

As with most projects, it pays to think through your garden project before you order your seeds or transplants. Which vegetable varieties really pique your interest? How much land can you commit to a garden? (Be sure to allow adequate space between rows!) How much time do you have to devote to weeding, mulching, watering, and other garden maintenance? Which [plant hardiness zone](#) do you call home, and which plants thrive in that region over the course of the year? Answering these questions will help you develop a garden plan that suits your land and lifestyle.

### Rotate Plantings and Plan to Save Seeds

Whether or not you are new to gardening, prioritize the crops that you love or intrigue you. And if you had a garden last year, make sure to rotate your crops this year, moving the location of each plant family to increase soil fertility and crop yield. Consider saving seeds from your garden, too. With just a few extra considerations, you can also plan to save seeds from your garden.

### Choose a Good Location

Most vegetables grow best when they get at least six hours of sun a day, so be sure to plant your garden in a sunlight-rich location. If that sunny spot is close to a convenient water source for irrigation, that's even better. Sowing your seeds or planting your transplants near a water source will make it easier to keep your soil at the optimal moisture level.

## Start Small

Bigger doesn't always mean better when it comes to basic garden planning. If you're new to gardening, or if you have limited time to devote to your garden, commit to a plot size that won't overwhelm you and concentrate on a selection of vegetables you like to eat that are also easy to grow. [Radishes](#), [lettuce](#), [spinach](#), and [carrots](#) are just a few of the crops that don't take a lot of time or experience to produce a harvest.

## Pay Attention to Your Soil

There's no way to overemphasize the importance of good soil: your garden will grow best in nutrient-rich, well-drained, weeded, and loosened (non-compacted) soil. Before you plant each spring, take the time to enrich your soil with quality compost or other organic matter if you want to boost your soil's fertility and your garden's production. Mulch (like leaves, straw, and hay) also adds valuable nutrients to the soil and will cut down significantly on your need to weed.

## Grow What You Love

What's the point of growing vegetables you don't like to eat? Let your palate dictate your choices when choosing your crops but try to stay open to planting at least a couple new vegetables each year to keep your home garden a bit more exciting. The last thing you want is to have your garden feel like a chore rather than a source of inspiration and relaxation.

## Keep Your Tools Simple

Truth is, you don't need to invest a lot in tools for weeding and breaking up soil or otherwise preparing your soil for seeds or transplants. Multipurpose tools like this [weeder and cultivator](#), used at Seed Savers Exchange's Heritage Farm, can help you keep your garden weed-free.

(Retrieved from <https://www.seedsavers.org/planning-a-garden>). 