

Creating a year-round organic kitchen garden

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<http://www.naturalgardening.blogspot.com/>

Kitchen gardening: traditions, practice

- ~ keep it attractive and manageable
- ~ crop intensively
- ~ interplant with flowers and herbs
- ~ use trellises to maximize space
- ~ consider raised beds or permanent beds for continuous use

Basics:

1. Start with a good site (or work with the site you have).

Best location:

Having a kitchen garden close to your house makes it easy to monitor and enjoy.

Optimal light conditions: full sun (6-8 hours/day)

Cool-season vegetables generally can manage with less sun, but traditional warm-season summer crops such as tomatoes and peppers need lots of sun.

2. Create a manageable layout for permanent beds.

Raised beds, whether contained or simply mounded make it easy to maintain soil quality with a minimum of effort. These beds are also easy to rotate and maintain.

A relatively flat site with good drainage is best or correct through soil amendments & terracing/raised beds.

3. Keep your soil healthy.

Add amendments and/or compost during each planting rotation. Mulch with leaf mold or weed-free straw. Check nutrient levels periodically through a soil test through CU Extension Service.

4. Minimize pest & disease problems.

Build soil health (compost, beneficial soil micro-organisms).

Crop rotation & companion planting reduces pest pressures.

Interplanting of crops is also helpful.

Encourage predators of pests (beneficial insects, toads, birds, etc.).

Choose resistant selections.
Avoid over-fertilization.

5. Plant seeds and transplant at the right times for each vegetable.

Climate in the Carolinas:

- 1) relatively mild winters with occasional hard freezes -- variable!
- 2) hot, humid summers

Refer to CU HGIC Fact Sheet: Planning a Garden (#1256) for times of planting as well as the Piedmont Planting guide and regional calendars (NC and GA).

Choose appropriate varieties for spring, fall, and winter seasons (seed catalog and packet information is helpful).

Practice succession planting (with attention to rotations).

6. Choose the right plants!

Swap out cool and warm season vegetables in your planting blocks.
Choose among hybrids, heirlooms, and disease-resistant varieties.
Plant vegetables that you enjoy and not more than you want to eat.

7. Extending the season. Use row covers, cold frames, hay bales, cloches, etc)

A few kitchen gardening references:

Creative Vegetable Gardening (Joy Larkcom)

Warm-climate Gardening & Handbook of Southern Vegetable Gardening (Barbara Pleasant)

Square-Foot Gardening (Mel Bartholomew)

Lasagna Gardening (Pat Lanza)

Four Season Harvest & The New Organic Grower (Elliot Coleman)

Seed-starting Primer & Almanac (Rodale Organic Gardening)

Kitchen Gardens (Brooklyn Botanic Garden series) and BBG handbooks on *Gourmet Vegetables, Herbs, etc.*

Designing the New Kitchen Garden: An American Potager Handbook (Jennifer Bartley)

Taylor's Weekend Gardening Guide to Kitchen Gardens: How to Create a Beautiful and Functional Culinary Garden (Cathy Wilkinson Barash)

The Gardener's Table: A Guide to Natural Vegetable Gardening and Growing (Richard Merrill and Joe Ortiz)

Month by Month Gardening in the Carolinas (Bob Polomski)

CU Extension factsheet 1256: Planning a Garden

<http://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheets/hgic1256.htm>

(includes planting dates for the Piedmont, Midlands, and Coastal Plain)

NC State Leaflet 8100: Growing a Fall Vegetable Garden
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8001.html>

NC Growing Small Farms: Planting and Harvesting Guide for Piedmont Vegetables and Herbs
<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/chatham/ag/SustAg/plantingguide.html>

Some favorite seed catalogs:

Johnny's Seeds
<http://www.johnnyseeds.com/>

Nichols Garden Nursery
<http://www.nicholsgardennursery.com/>

Territorial Seed Company
<http://www.territorialseed.com/>

Renee's Garden
<http://www.reneesgarden.com/>

Seeds of Change
<http://www.seedsofchange.com/>

SowTrue Seed
<http://sowtrueseed.com/>

Southern Exposure Seed Exchange
<http://www.southernexposure.com/>

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds
<http://rareseeds.com/>

Succession planting examples:

Spring	→	Summer	→	Fall
Snow peas		cucumbers		fall lettuce
Sugar snap peas		squash		garlic
Lettuce		tomatoes		fall greens
Kale		peppers		spinach
Corn salad		basil		radicchio
Potatoes		beans		onions

Spring

Early spring

(as soon as the ground can be worked)

Lettuce (many different varieties)
Broccoli/cabbage/cauliflower transplants
Arugula
Snow peas/sugar snap peas/pea shoots
Cilantro
Spinach
Dill
Borage

Spring (soil temps between 50 – 60 degrees)

Beets
Carrots
Radicchio
Asian greens
Red Mustard
Pac choi
Broccoli
Parsley
Radishes
Potatoes

Mid- spring (after danger of frost)

Pole and bush beans (many varieties)
Asparagus beans
Black-eyed peas
Corn

Late-spring (night-time temperatures above 50 degrees) & summer

Tomatoes	Summer squash
Peppers	Malabar spinach
Cucumbers	New Zealand spinach
Tomatillos	Swiss chard
Eggplant	Pumpkins and winter squash
Okra	Basil
Zucchini	

Late summer/early fall →

Lettuce (many different varieties)
 Fall/Winter Mix
 ‘Northpole’ and ‘Arctic King’

Mustard greens

Corn salad (Mache)

Cilantro

Arugula

Broccoli/cauliflower/collards (transplant)

Garlic

Kale (many varieties)

Radicchio

Radishes

Beets

Parsley

Turnip greens

Carrots

Asian greens

Mizuna

Red Mustard

Pac Choi

Spinach

Swiss chard

Squash

Winter → Kale, collards, cabbage, freeze-tolerant lettuce varieties – use cold frames, mini hoops, and/or row cover to extend other lettuces and greens. Many evergreen herbs (rosemary, lavender, oregano, marjoram, and germander) are hardy in our area.

Quick-growing greens for spring and fall (fast fillers)

Arugula

Lettuce

Radishes

Spinach

Mustards

Cilantro