



Sustainable  
Landscape Solutions

## Customer Information

# START A FALL VEGETABLE GARDEN

**What to Grow** You may already have a productive warm season garden and just need to decide which cool season crops you'll now grow and where. It's helpful to record the varieties you grew and include any notes you want to remember for the following seasons. It's also important to rotate crops from year to year to increase soil fertility and break the life cycle of disease organisms and pests. Our handouts "Planting Guide for North Florida Vegetables" [CLICK HERE](#) and "Planting Guide for North Florida Culinary Herbs" [CLICK HERE](#) can help you decide on your crops. Use the Plant Family column so you can avoid successively planting vegetables from the same family. Grow what your family likes to eat and if it's your first time, don't try too much at once. You can also plant small amounts in 2 week intervals to keep a manageable amount coming.


**When to Grow** Bush, lima and pole beans, summer and winter squash, and cucumber can still be grown this time of year but you might prefer to renovate your garden at this time to ready for the cool season crops and a second crop of tomatoes, eggplants and peppers. Seeds of most cool weather crops can be started in late August. Turnips, carrots, and celery, and onion sets are all best planted directly into the garden. You can also start seeds either in ground or starter pots of beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, Chinese cabbage, endive, kale, collards and mustard (take a little extra care if transplanting mustards instead of direct sowing). In September, arugula, kohlrabi, lettuce, radish, spinach, strawberries and swiss chard can be planted. Many of herbs we typically grow prefer the cool season, including parsley, sage, cilantro, dill, fennel, chervil and thyme. Consult the Planting Guide for North Florida Culinary Herbs to see more precise dates for successful planting.

**Where to Grow** If you don't already have a garden location, choose the sunniest site on your property. Account for any deciduous trees that may block light when they're leafed out. Easy access to the kitchen is a plus. If the land has some slope and you garden in rows, align the rows perpendicular to the slope to decrease runoff. Otherwise align them east to west for best sun exposure. Also keep in mind that taller plants like tomatoes, or trellised plants should be located where they won't block the sun from shorter plants. Some crops can get by with a little less sun than others so if you have some shadier spots in your garden, refer again to our planting guides for vegetables and culinary herbs to see the approximate sun needs for various plants.

**How to Grow** If you've already created a vegetable garden, clean out the summer crops that are spent and remove any other debris. Don't compost anything that looks diseased as the heat may not kill certain diseases and nematodes. Reinforce raised bed structures if needed or clean up the boundaries of your beds. A soil test would be advisable at this point. Based on the test, add recommended amounts of fertilizer. Next add organic matter. Compost improves soil and plant growth regardless of the type of soil you're adding it to. Spread a 3-4 inch layer over the bed and lightly work in.

If you need to create a garden, probably the most productive and attractive way to grow a garden, especially in our area where soils lack nutrients and good texture, is to create raised beds. There are many advantages to a raised bed, and one of the biggest is that it doesn't involve tilling. Tilling has become less popular in the home garden – it contributes to top soil loss, can increase weeds by bringing seeds up where they will germinate, and destroys the structure of the soil and the beneficial organisms living there. Many sites describe how to build a raised bed (for example, the UF document ENH1211). They can be built any size but limiting them to 4' wide allows you to reach from both sides without walking into the bed. Raised planters complement square foot gardening, first proposed by Mel Bartholomew, which has become a popular and efficient way to garden.

**Create your Bed** Once you've located your garden, if you've built raised beds, it's time to create your soil mix. A 1-1-1 mix (by volume) of compost, peat moss and vermiculite makes the perfect soil. If you don't have your own garden compost, then combine different kinds of store compost to ensure you're putting a variety of nutrients into the mix. Once the planters are filled, mark off 1' by 1' squares with a sturdy grid. One-inch-wide strips of wood lath work well for this and give you a constant point of reference for spacing your plants correctly. Again refer to our "Planting Guide for North Florida Vegetables" and "Planting Guide for North Florida Culinary Herbs" for suggested number of plants per square foot, for both transplants and seeds.

**Plant your Garden** Before planting, spray the soil to moisten it thoroughly. Seed packets will list the sowing depth, but generally seeds are planted at a depth about equal to their size or a little deeper. Position trellises as you plant transplants (see our article "How to Make Trellises").  Lightly water your new plants or seeds in and keep moist. With the right soil mix in the garden, fertilizer is less necessary, as nutrients are added when additional compost is refreshed at the end of the season. Keep your beds tidy and watered. A serpentine soaker hose run through the bed beneath the soil surface is an efficient, water-wise practice. Hand watering can supplement the irrigation regulated by the SJRWMD. Check on your garden daily and harvest often.

### References

Bartholomew, M., 2013, All New Square Foot Gardening, 2nd edition, Cool Springs Press, Minneapolis, MN, 272 pp.

DelValle, T.B., Gardening in Raised Beds, ENH1211/EP472, Gainesville: University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, July 2016. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep472>