



Over the Garden Fence

Plan Your Vegetable Garden



By Bob Labozetta (UC Master Gardener, Mariposa)

With so many people following stay-at-home orders, vegetable gardens are on the rise across the country. Are you ready to put in your own “victory” garden? Let’s look at some tips to get you started.

When planning a garden, consider where the sunlight falls. Almost all vegetables grow best in full sun (at least six hours of unfiltered sun). Spend some time in the garden to determine where the sunlight falls at different times of the day and year. Photos taken with your smartphone will help you discover those patterns. Place taller plants (corn, sunflowers, climbing vines, etc.) so they don’t block sun-loving plants while letting them shade cool-season crops. Looking to shade cool season and overwintering crops (kale, leafy greens, etc.)? Deciduous fruit trees will cast a shadow from spring to fall then drop their leaves, allowing the sun to reach your crops.

Make sure there are easy watering sources close at hand. Outdoor faucets, hoses, or drip irrigation should be easy to access. In our drought-frequent area, water catchment systems as simple as water barrels can be used to catch roof rain runoff from greenhouses, your home or garage.

Include paths to walk around your garden beds. Your walking path should be wide enough for a wheelbarrow to pass through: 18 - 24 inches is the minimum for the width of garden paths. Paths should be covered with pavers, gravel, wood chips, sawdust or other biodegradable material to cut down on weeds.

Consider what type of beds will work best for you. You can grow right in the ground if your soil is good and underground pests like gophers and ground squirrels are not too abundant. Use raised beds lined with gopher wire to keep out pests and make gardening easier on your back. You can also grow many vegetables in containers you have lying around.

You may want to consider if a propagation center is right for your garden. This is a place for propagating veggies from seed or by cuttings, layering, division, budding, and grafting. You will need bench space to start seedlings and plants prior to planting out in your garden beds. Such an area in a greenhouse or heated garage is best but, lacking space, you may consider a cold frame.

Now is the time to put in your garden for the summer—the weather will be right for planting warm-season crops soon—and you may just have the time while stay-at-home orders are in place.

UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County are located at 5009 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa. For more gardening and event information, visit our website (http://cemariposa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener/) and Facebook page (UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County). UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Mariposa County, including Greeley Hill, Coulterville, and Lake Don Pedro (209-966-7078 or mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu). Listen to us on the radio at KRYZ 98.5 FM on Wednesdays at 2 pm and Saturdays at 5 pm.