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Ventura County Garden to Table Series – Vegetable Gardening

Vegetable families have unique soil, water, and fertilizer needs. However, here are some general guidelines to help you start your home vegetable garden in Ventura County.

# Choosing the Right Location

Most vegetable plants need 6-8 hours of sunlight a day – but here are some guidelines if you have less sun:

* 1. **Leafy vegetables** (lettuce, spinach, kale, basil, cilantro) do well with as little as 3 hours – can be in shade.
  2. **Root vegetables** (beets, carrots, radishes) **or flowers** (broccoli, cabbage, artichokes) need about 4 hours.
  3. **Harvested fruit (**tomatoes, melon, peppers, squash) need sun and warmth – optimally 6 to 10 hours.

# Preparing the Soil

1. **Amend with Compost** – Incorporate compost into the soil to improve fertility and water retention.
2. **Avoid Digging or Tilling –** Instead of digging or tilling, simply mix compost in and let nature work it in over time.
3. **Mulch the Soil Surface** – Apply a 3-4-inch layer of organic mulch like wood chips or leaves around plants.
4. **Level the area** – create a smooth, even planting surface.
5. **Using Raised Beds or Containers** – Fill beds with a high-quality potting mix or blend of compost, topsoil and vermiculite. Put netting in the bottom to keep out small critters, but don’t add rocks in the bottom of the pot.

# Planting – Seeds or Transplants

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# How to Keep them Alive!

1. **Mulch** - 3” – 4” will reduce soil moisture fluctuation, moderate soil temperature, and discourage weeds.
2. **Water** – by hand or set up a drip system. Vegetables need more water than other types of plants – check plants in morning and use a moisture meter to check the moisture level.
3. **Fertilizer** – a general fertilizer of 10-10-10 NKP (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium) – follow package.
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   Description automatically generated**Pests** - Regularly examine plants for pests and damage, cultivate a garden that supports beneficial insects, hand pick pests or spray with shots of water as control techniques, use pesticides judiciously and only when necessary, following label instructions carefully.

# When to Harvest

1. Harvest in morning or evening, when temperatures are cooler.
2. General Harvesting Tips:
3. Use clean, sharp tools to avoid damaging the plants.
4. Harvest regularly to encourage continued production.
5. Don't remove more than 1/3 of the plant at once.

# Resources

* UC ANR - Master Gardeners of Ventura County - https://ucanr.edu/sites/VCMG/
* UCANR Vegetable Gardening- https://rng.ucanr.edu/Gardening/Vegetable/UCDavis