

Plan your Summer Garden

It's time to start planning your summer vegetable garden.

Be sure the area where you intend to plant your seedlings gets enough sun. Six to eight hours is the minimum for most vegetables.

Do you have a plan for irrigation? And have you examined your soil? Is it nice and crumbly, like a piece of chocolate cake? Or is it waterlogged clay? Clay soil holds micronutrients but typically needs to be amended with compost to lighten it, so it has air pockets for the nutrients to cycle.

Don't neglect weeds. Most soils have a large amount of weed seed just waiting for the right conditions. Weeds compete with your vegetables for water and nutrients. Controlling them is a constant part of gardening but can be managed by depriving the weeds of water and light. Mulch your beds to exclude light, water only where necessary for your vegetables.

Plant healthy transplants at the right time to encourage growth and to out-compete weeds.

Now that you have a sunny spot with great soil, access to water and no weeds, what do you want to grow? Ask yourself why you are gardening. Is it for flavor, to save money, to harvest organic produce or to have access to unusual produce varieties?

It's tempting to want to grow everything, but properly spaced plants will be healthier and more productive than plants spaced too closely. Make a planting plan on paper. Think about the size of the vegetable when full-grown and how long it will be in the ground. Can you stagger plantings for a longer harvest season?

It is better to grow fewer plants well than to have a large vegetable garden that you can't take care of. Gardening is work and therapy, and you get tomatoes, too.

For the planting chart; go to cecolusa.ucanr.edu