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CROP ROTATION AND SUCCESSION PLANTING

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CROP ROTATION

What is crop rotation?

Crop rotation is the practice of changing the plant family that you plant in a certain portion of your garden after each crop. Each type of vegetable is part of a larger group of vegetables referred to as a family. The goal is to plant at least 4 different families one after another in a single location. Some common vegetable families are listed below but there are also other minor families we grow.

1. Leguminosae (legumes: beans, including fava and lima beans, and peas)
2. Cruciferae (cruciferous vegetables: cabbage family plants, most Asian greens, radishes, and turnips)
3. Umbelliferae (carrot family: carrots, celery, parsnips, parsley)
4. Cucurbitaceae (cucurbits: cucumbers, melons, and all types of squash)
5. Solanaceae (nightshade family: tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers, eggplants, potatoes)
6. Amaryllidaceae (onion family: onions, garlic, leeks, asparagus)
7. Chenopodiaceae (spinach family: spinach, beets, chard)

Why should I rotate my crops?

Each plant family has certain soil-borne diseases and pests that are specific to that plant family. By continuously changing the plant family in a given location, you make it harder for these family-specific diseases and pests to become well-established. Rotating your crops keeps your soil healthier and will give you better crops.

Can you give me some examples of suitable crop rotations?

Here are some examples of good rotations of families (as you can see, you have a lot of options!)

Note: To make sure you plan your rotation correctly be sure to consider whether the plant you plan to grow is a cool-season or warm season plant.

1. Late-fall-planted fava beans (legumes) → spring-planted beets (chenopodiaceae) → summer-planted corn (other) → fall-planted cabbage (cruciferae)
2. Fall-planted to winter over broccoli (cruciferae) → late spring planted tomatoes (solanaceae) → fall planted carrots (umbelliferae)
3. Spring-planted spinach (chenopodiaceae) → summer-planted summer squash (cucurbitaceae) → fall-planted lettuce (other)
4. Wintered-over green onions (amaryllidaceae) → spring-planted snow peas (leguminosae) → mid-summer corn (other) → fall-planted Asian greens (cruciferae)
5. Summer-planted carrots (umbelliferae) → November-planted garlic (amaryllidaceae) → late-spring-planted winter squash (cucurbitaceae) → fall-planted lettuce (other)
6. Late summer planted cabbage (stands into late fall) (cruciferae) → spring-planted peas (leguminosae) → late-summer-planted corn (other)
7. Winter-planted bulb onions (amaryllidaceae) → summer-planted beans (leguminosae) → fall-planted broccoli (cruciferae)
8. Winter-to-spring repeat planting of chard (chenopodiaceae) → late-spring-planted tomatoes (solanaceae) → fall-planted fava beans (leguminosae)

SUCCESSION PLANTING

What is succession planting?

Succession planting is planting multiple batches of the same vegetable, in order to extend the harvest period. You can plant the same variety at different times to get a longer harvest period. You can also plant varieties of the same kind of vegetable at the same time that have different “days to maturity”. For example, some broccoli varieties produce heads for harvest in as little as 60 days from transplanting, while other varieties need as much as 90 days longer. Plants set out the same day will produce edible heads at different times.

How do I know how often and when to plant?

How often you plant depends on how long that particular plant will yield, how long it takes to mature, and the time of year. For example, bush beans typically yield for 2 – 4 weeks. If you would like a continuous harvest of bush beans, you would need to plan your planting so that the plants mature 2 – 4 weeks apart. In the spring, days are getting longer and warmer, and the sunlight is getting more intense. That means that plants planted later will tend to catch up quite a bit. Therefore you would typically plant more weeks apart (more than 2 – 4 weeks apart) than the actual harvest timing. In the late summer and fall, the opposite is true; you would plant your seeds closer together than the actual harvest dates (less than 2 – 4 weeks apart).

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