

Dear Friend and Fellow Gardener,

QUICK ORGANIC GARDENING TIPS

Organic gardening is the way of growing vegetables and fruits with the use of things only found in nature.

With the costs of living rising all the time, it may be possible to save money and increase your family's health at the same time by growing vegetables in your backyard.

It's a good idea to choose your favourite vegetables to grow and plan beds for early, middle of the season and late varieties.

Most vegetables require at least 6 hours of sunlight per day, some need 8. Some quick growers like lettuce and radishes can be grown between the rows of plants that take longer to mature, like beets or corn, thus making full use of the area available.

Throughout dry periods, vegetable gardens need extra watering. Most vegetables benefit from an inch or more of water each week, especially when they are fruiting.

During the growing season watch for insect pests. If you discover a bug problem early it will be much easier, but be careful to not use pesticides once the vegetable are close to being picked unless it becomes an absolute necessity. Organic gardening is one healthy and environment-friendly option. Once you have reaped your crop, put the vegetable waste into your compost pile so that it can be

recycled for next spring.

It is important to protect your vegetable garden from wild animals looking for a tasty treat. Make sure your garden is surrounded by a fence that will keep out dogs, rabbits, and other animals. The harm done by wandering animals during one season can equal the cost of a fence. A fence also can serve as a frame for peas, beans, tomatoes, and other crops that need support.

Protection is needed in order for your vegetable garden to yield a bountiful harvest. Hard work will pay dividends if the necessary precautions have been taken into account.

Pest control must be done with utmost consideration to safety; safety in terms of the plants, animals and humans. This holds especially true for those with vegetable and organic gardens.

Here are a few long-term maintenance tips to make pest control less damaging and more environmentally friendly.

Why would one want to indulge in organic gardening?

1. One can easily make compost from garden and kitchen waste. Though this is a bit more time-consuming than buying prepared chemical pesticides and fertilizers, it certainly helps to put garbage to good use and so saves the environment.

2. Organic farming does not use chemicals that may have an adverse affect on your health. This is especially important when growing vegetables. Chemical companies tell us that the chemicals we use are safe if used according to direction, but research shows that even tiny amounts of poisons absorbed through the skin can cause such things as cancer, especially in children.

On the average, a child ingests four to five times more cancer-causing pesticides from foods than an adult. This can lead to various diseases later on in the child's life. With organic gardening, these incidents are lessened.

Remember, pesticides contain toxins that have only one purpose - to kill living things.

3. Less harm to the environment. Poisons are often washed into our waterways, causing death to the native fish and polluting their habitat.

4. Organic farming practices help prevent the loss of topsoil through erosion.

The Soil Conservation Service says that an estimated 30 - 32 billion tons of soil erodes from United States farmlands every year.

5. Cost savings. One does not need to buy costly chemical fertilizers and pesticides with organic gardening. Many organic recipes for the control of pests and disease come straight from the kitchen cupboard. Sometimes other plants can be grown as companions to the main crop. An example of this is the marigold, which helps to repel aphids from vegetables.

Recipes for alternative pest control include the following:

Against Green Aphids and Mites - Mixing 1 tablespoon of liquid dish washing soap and 1 cup of cooking oil can make a cheap garden pest spray. Put 3 tablespoons of this mixture in 1 quart of water and spray on plants and visible aphids and mites..

Against Cockroaches - Dusts of boric acid can be applied to cracks or entry points of these insects. Bay leaves on pantry shelves could also help in warding off these critters. Boric acid is often used as an insecticide and can also be used as an antiseptic.

6. A simple mulch of pine needles will help to suppress the growth of weeds as well as keeping the moisture in.

7. Organic gardening practices help to keep the environment safe for future generations.

The main purpose of growing vegetables organically will be defeated if they become tainted with pest control chemicals.

8. Use the physical pest control process.

This may be accomplished through picking grubs off by hand, creating barriers and traps and plugging holes. Snails can be found hiding in damp places under rocks and towards the base of those plants with strap-like foliage.

9. Apply biological pest control.

Encourage predatory insects such as green lacewings and dragonflies to feed on aphids and other pests that attack your plants. You can do this by placing a shallow bowl of water in the garden. Dragonflies especially will hover around water. Bacterial insecticides such as *B. thuringiensis* could also be used against caterpillars.

10. Only as a last resort should we turn to chemical pest control.

Organic pest control methods can be successful and the ingredients for many of the recipes can be found in the kitchen cupboards. If chemical sprays are really necessary, try and find the least-toxic. These include insecticidal soaps,

horticultural oils, dehydrating dusts, etc.

Make sure that the chemicals you use are made specifically for the insects you are targeting.

Best Wishes,

Darrell Gibbs

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