



GETTING YOUR GARDEN READY FOR SPRING

1. Choose a location

- Pick the sunniest spot in your space
- With good drainage and that is level
- Get a soil test: Get your soil tested by the Massachusetts State Cooperative Extension office: <http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/>. Or at the very least do a pH test from a kit.

2. Amend your soil:

- Good soil has an even mixture of clay, sand, and silt, with 5-10% organic matter. Most Philadelphia soils have excess clay, so add humus, sand, and compost two weeks before planting.
- For the first year, and every three years after, invert soil to a depth of 18 inches to incorporate organic matter, especially if using a mechanical tiller.
- Don't forget micronutrients. NPK is great for growing season but has a short term in the garden. Magnesium, boron, calcium are all essential for good fruit set and pest resistance.
- Get rid of all debris!

3. Planning your planting: What kinds of vegetables are good in small spaces and how can you make the most of your space?

- Think about how many tomatoes or squash you can really eat when planning your garden.
- How many hours of sun does your plant need? Tomatoes and other fruiting veggies need at least 6 hrs, but 8 is better. Greens need less hours of direct sunlight. Strawberries, lettuce and kale can tolerate some shade.
- Keep garden beds narrow for easy access. 32-36 inches is standard.
- Organize your garden around a common scale for easy planning.
- Order potato, garlic, and specialty seeds early before they sell out.

4. When to plant: Pay attention to seed instructions!

Radishes, greens, beets, herbs can be sown every other week to keep a constant supply ready for harvest. Peas must be planted in the spring around St. Patrick day. Tomatoes will die or be stunted if put in the ground before the risk of the last frost. Pay attention to the number of days it will take for your plants to mature and plan ahead for the last frost.

- Direct seed your: Radishes, carrots, cutting lettuce, beans, beets, melons
- Start indoors or purchase starts for: Tomatoes, peppers, cukes, squash, head lettuce, broccoli, cabbage, onion, leeks, thyme, rosemary
- Companion planting, shade and good use of space: Tomatoes and lettuce: use the tall tomatoes to provide some shade for the lettuce.
- Know your rotations and keep track of garden history.
- Give adequate spacing! Thin out competition, learn to love greens!
- Mulch: Use compost, straw, or coco shells to mulch around plants. DO NOT use wood chips for anything other than pathways.

5. Rotations

Know your main families

- Brassicaceae – Collard, kale, cabbage, broccoli
- Solanaceae – Tomato, pepper, potato, eggplant
- Leguminosae – Pea, bean, clover

Don't forget the minor families

- Umbelliferae – Carrot, dill, parsnip
- Amaryllidaceae – Onion, leek, garlic
- Cucurbitaceae – Cucumber, squash, melon
- Chenopodiaceae – Spinach, chard, beet

