

Vegetable Gardening “To Do” List

By Bettylou Sandy of *Bettylou’s Gardening*

This is a basic list of things to do in the vegetable garden throughout the year. This is **only a basic guide**, not an exhaustive list. The **dates are *approximate and are dependant upon the weather for that season and the schedule of the gardener***. These are ***approximate dates*** that things need to be done in the garden so that we are able to pace ourselves and go with the flow of the seasons, rather than wear ourselves out all at once; for instance, planting and harvest times need to take into account the actual weather pattern of that year.

The key to gardening, as in life, is balance. When we have a plan and know the steps to take to get to our goals we can be more relaxed and enjoy the process; do a few things as you are able, enjoy the exercise and the promise of a good harvest throughout the year. Not all of these things need to be completed, just use your own common sense and do what seems appropriate for you.

January:

- Plant salad greens in the house by a window. No special lighting needed. Just water in the morning and turn the planters a few times a week to correct the growth pattern of the foliage. Harvest, as needed, at any point of growth, leaving enough to continue the production.
- Start a sprout jar, or two, in the kitchen; rinse daily, harvest after a week, or so..
- Plan your vegetables, flowers and the space needed for them outside.
- Clean and sort tools and supplies.
- Order seeds and plants.
- Buy seeds and test left over seeds from last year for germination rates.
- Prune fruit trees and fruiting shrubs
- Lightly sprinkle *cooled* wood ashes on the lawns and beds, even on top of the snow to add nutrients and balance the PH.
- Check stored vegetables; rotate supplies, and remove any spoilage.
- Save egg shells and dry, to crush for slug barriers and calcium supplements for the soil in the spring and summer.
- Save toilet paper tubes and paper towel tubes for planting around the squash, cucumbers and tomato plants to prevent bores and cut worms.
- Save egg cartons to use for starting seeds.
- At the thaw, walk around the garden and dream.
- Harvest some kale and other available greens

February:

- Harvest some salad greens indoors, by taking mature outer leaves.
- Test the soil outside, when possible.

- Finish pruning of woody fruit tree stock.
- Start vegetable and follower plants indoors.
- Clean out the shed, or garage to prepare for the season.
- Start some peas in a large container indoors to move outside in April.
- Build a cold frame or prepare the existing one.
- Check row covers, or build new ones.
- Add any necessary amenities to the surface of the planting beds.
- Prune some forsythia and bring inside to force blooming in the house.
- Loosen the heavy layers of leaves in the beds to allow the perennial vegetables and flowers to sprout

Early March:

- Clean up the beds.
- Add amenities of lime, gypsum or other minerals on top of mulch.
- Build new framed raised beds.
- Turn and sift the compost pile.

Mid March:

- Harvest some salad greens indoors.
- Plant peas by seed outside, after soaking the seeds overnight.
- Start more broccoli, brussels sprouts, tomatoes, and peppers indoors.
- Dig the scallions from the lawn and plant around the perimeter of the garden to protect it from grazing animals.
- Plant onion sets, garlic, shallots, lettuce, spinach in a cold frame.
- Loosen mulch and leaves from garlic areas
- Start looking for wild greens like violet leaves and dandelion leaves for salads and other cooking
- Enjoy the crocuses, primrose and other early flowers.
- Prune blueberry bushes

April:

- Last planting of peas early in April
- Plant potatoes, broccoli, brussels sprouts;
- Move out lettuce and spinach,
 - or plant by seed directly into the soil
- Add cow manure to tomato and pepper beds
 - Letting it condition soil before the planting late in May.
- Add cow manure to rhubarb beds.
 - Around the “drip line” of existing plantings
 - Or fork into beds to be planted
- Prepare outdoor containers for planting.
- Check the cold frames and be sure to vent them.
- Plan “Critter Deterrents”:

- Chili powder along the beds to deter mammals (even cats and dogs).
 - Twice a week for two weeks
 - To get the animals accustomed to not going there
- Aluminum pie pans, or CDs, or DVDs suspended on a string or a wire around the gardens will deter deer.
- A beach ball with a big eye will deter birds.
- Make a scarecrow with floppy arms.
- Plant chives and onions around the garden.
 - To deter the ground grazers like woodchucks and rabbits
- Put up a fence and bend out onto soil of *exterior* of garden to deter chipmunks, rabbits and woodchucks from burrowing. Cover wire with sod grass
- Enjoy the crocus, daffodils and beginning buds of the trees!

Mid April:

- Plant carrots, kale, cabbage, hardened off broccoli, etc. (the cold weather crops).
- Look for asparagus that is ready to harvest.
- Look for scallions and other onions ready to harvest
- Start harvesting Egyptian onion greens
- Check for the budding foliage of the Rhubarb plants
- Kale, broccoli and brussels sprout plants *from last year* are done now, but the flowers are wonderful in salads or on their own!
- Plant carrots and parsnips by seed
 - At one week intervals.
 - Add sand into the soil to help the roots grow deepse
- Turn your compost pile weekly now.
 - If it is an open pile
 - If it is a closed container,
 - poke some holes in the contents
 - To add air and allow water to drain through
- Bring out the hoses and the garden furniture.
- Add Manure to the Blueberry and Strawberry beds
- Plant pole beans and morning glories at the down spouts.
 - Pole beans may also be planted by seed at the base of your pea plants
 - To continue the harvesting of that place through the summer months
- Start planting the containers.
- Check the peas for progress
- Check the cold frames and be sure to vent them.
- Enjoy the spring flowers around you.

May:

- Pick first snow peas, spinach and lettuce.
- Look for more asparagus.

- Plant nasturtiums by seed around where there will be cucumbers and the squash family and in containers of peas and string beans.
 - This will deter many problem bugs and other pests.
 - Nasturtium leaves and flowers are also delicious in salads!
 - They also make the garden a more beautiful, and delicious place!
- Sow string beans with the peas, or on their own trellis,
 - support peas and
 - Plan space for tomatoes, peppers and warm weather crops.
- Harvest Mint varieties and hang to dry for Mint tea in the winter.
 - The plants will continue to produce through the season,
 - But spring is best time for winter tea supply.

Mid May:

- Plant squash family and cucumbers with a nasturtium border or interplant the flowers between the plants.
 - This repels squash bores, cucumber beetles and squash bugs
- Continue to plant carrots, parsnips, beets and other root vegetables at weekly intervals.
 - Add sand to the soil where the roots will be growing
 - This gives longer roots
- Start looking for ripened strawberries and blueberries.
- Look for Rhubarb that is ready for harvest;
 - harvest only the thick outer stalks to promote the harvest through September
- Harvest oregano and thyme to hang to dry for winter use.
 - The plant will continue to produce through the season.
- Harvest some Egyptian onions
 - The plant will continue to produce through the season
- Plant radishes around the cucumbers.
- Turn the compost pile.
 - Or poke holes in the contained piles
- Cultivate around the garden, weed where necessary.
- Mulch with straw, not hay, as hay has weed seeds and straw does not.
- Mulch 6-8 inches to prevent weeds and to conserve water
- Check the rain gauges and **water in the mornings** when needed.

End of May:

- Start harvesting strawberries and blueberries
 - as they ripen every few days
- Harvest some rhubarb, as it becomes ready
- Harvest some Egyptian onions
- Harvest peas, spinach, lettuce, kale and other greens.
 - The plants will continue to produce through the season
- Plant the tomato plants, peppers, eggplant, and corn at one week intervals.
 - Make sure to add plenty of manures to the soil
- Add more compost to beds where needed.

- But only a light layer of ¼ inch
- Put out the Japanese beetle traps, away from the plantings.
 - This is their breeding time
 - This prevents the white grubs (baby Japanese beetles)
- Make sure there is a shaded sitting space close to the vegetable garden to rest from the sun, but keep the gardener focused on the tasks to be done. Consider seating for two!

June:

- Harvest peas and broccoli until it gets too hot for the plants.
 - Let them keep growing for the late August crop and into the winter too!
- Do not worry about the Brussels sprouts, as they will produce in the fall and into the following spring.
- Replace peas with cucumbers or string beans.
 - Or let the string beans continue through September
 - And plan for more Peas planted in August
- Start using the pearl onions from the Egyptian onions
- Watch the basil and pinch it back from time to time to prevent flowering.
- Harvest garlic scapes.
- Fluff the mulch, weed and cultivate.
- Check the rain gauge and watch for water needs.
- Check beetle traps and change bags.
- Look for broccoli, strawberries, raspberries and blueberries to be available.

End of June:

- Start pruning tomato plants, *when the fruit is set*, so they don't get too tall, or too wide.
- Tie up tomatoes and vines for support.
- Stop cutting asparagus and leave the ferns.
 - Asparagus ferns keep bugs away from tomato plants by confusing the bugs
- Start pruning back the squash and cucumber vines
 - To help the "fruit" have more energy.
 - To grow more and larger vegetables
- Check the rain gauges and water in the mornings when needed.

July:

- Check the rain gauges and make sure the garden is watered well, at least twice a week in the mornings.
- Fluff the mulch, add more where necessary.
- Replace spinach and lettuce varieties as needed.
 - They do not like the hot weather
- Cut back broccoli and Brussels sprouts, leaving good foliage, when they look tired,
 - **But** let them stay for the fall and winter harvest.

- Manure tea for the tomatoes once a week,
 - Extra sprinkle of compost everywhere else, *where needed*.
- Do your “beer cans” and slug hunting early in the morning.
- Check the squash plants and dust with pulverized lime to prevent mildew spores from spreading.
- Dead head marigolds to encourage growth.
 - Save the seed pods for next year in a marked **paper bag**
- Turn the compost pile and make sure there is moisture in the pile.
- Start a new pile with kitchen scraps, weeds, extra mulch and leaves.
- Give a bath to the garden every 2 weeks or so, in the morning
 - with lemon scented dish liquid (not anti bacterial) spray,
 - Using ½ cup dish liquid per gallon of water.
 - To clean the leaves, open the pours of the foliage and prevent the spread of mildew
- Chinese cabbage can be planted and more carrots.
- ***Daily harvesting and grazing!***
- Leave out lots of buckets to collect rain water.
 - Under the roof line, or drip lines of buildings is best
- Add a drop of dish liquid to open buckets, barrels and other standing water **to prevent mosquito larva.**
- Plan a garden party to celebrate the middle of the gardening season.

Mid July:

- Harvest the **garlic** from last October’s planting.
- Add composted cow manure to garlic space
- Remember to turn the compost pile and provide some moisture to it.
- ***Daily harvesting and grazing!***
- Can, dry and freeze the abundant harvest
- Enjoy the beauty of the summer day.
- Enjoy the summer evenings.
- Plan your fall planning of cold crops for next month.

August:

- Make sure string beans, summer squash, zucchini and cucumbers are supported and checked daily, harvest as they ripen to encourage more production.
- Check the squash plants and dust with pulverized lime to prevent mildew
- Dead head marigolds to promote flowering (dry the seeds for next year)
- Harvest some nasturtiums for your salads
- Give the garden some “snacks” of compost.
- Check tomatoes so they won’t get too leggy;
 - support the large fruit varieties to protect from heavy wind damage as needed; prune non producing branches to keep production going; cut back on branches; remove tall tops; remove lower leaves and branches and any nonproducing branches;

- Tomatoes do not need much foliage once fruit production gets vigorous
 - fertilize every 2 weeks with manure tea, or tomato-tone once a month;
 - fluff mulch, add more as needed;
 - Water deeply twice a week.
- Pinch back herbs to prevent flowering, especially mint and basil.
- Hang herb pruning's to dry for the winter use
- Check beer cans and slug hunt early in the morning.
- Remember to freeze, can or dry extra produce for the winter.

Mid August:

- Check squash plants for leaf damage and remove the leaves that have any mold.
- Support pepper plants.
- Plant snow peas, snap beans, radishes and carrots at weekly intervals for fall harvest.
- Plant broccoli, kale and Brussels sprouts, by plants, not seed for the late fall and winter harvests.
- Dig early potatoes when tops die down, but only as much as you need so the harvest will continue through November.
- Feed winter squash every 2 weeks with compost ***until mid-September.***
- Put a wood shingle under melons and pumpkins to prevent bug damage.
- Add extra support to the tomato and pepper plants.
- Prune the majority of foliage and non-fruiting branches from tomatoes so all of the energy will go to the fruit.

September:

- Cook, freeze, can! It is all abundant! You did it! Eat well; enjoy the fruits of your labors.
- Water peas, beans and tomatoes well.
- .
- Onions, Carrots, potatoes can be lifted as soon as they are ready, But save some parsnips and carrots, in the ground, for the winter harvest.
- Carrots and parsnips may stay in the ground through the winter for harvest as needed; they are good through March. Parsnips are best harvested after a hard frost.
- Plant Radishes and lettuce in a cold frame, or row cover, for November and December harvesting
- Set up supports for row covers ***before the frost.***
- Brussels sprouts, planted last April, will be ready to start harvesting ***after the frost*** and will continue to produce through the winter until April.
- Check the asparagus bed for a small late crop. You can eat them right from the garden, as they are tender and sweet at this time of year
- Spray any indoor plants that are outside with the "Basic Bug Spray" of lemon dish liquid and water twice before bringing them inside the house again.

Mid-September:

- Untie tomatoes and lie on the straw to ripen faster, or prepare to cover the plants when there is a fear of frost. By covering the tomatoes, for the early frost, they may continue to produce until November in some areas.
- Another option for Tomatoes is to cut down the stalks of tomatoes, with the fruit on them, then hang them inside your home or barn to be available for picking for months to come
- Bring any indoor plants back inside for the winter. Spray The plants with the “Basic Bug Spray”. They may look sad for a few weeks, but they will perk up again
- Listen to the weather reports for frost warnings. Cover tender plants for the night when there is a warning, but uncover them before the sun gets high enough to burn (8-9:00 a.m.). When covering is left on the plants might burn from the heat within the covering.
- When the hard frost is predicted, pick the remaining tomatoes and set on a shelf in the kitchen to ripen, or wrap green tomatoes in newspaper until you need them, or fry green tomatoes, or make relish! Yes, these are *more* options for tomatoes...

After the frost

- Pick the pumpkins, winter squash and some Brussels sprouts, kale and broccoli.
- Brussels sprouts, kale and broccoli can go through the winter to be harvested through the winter as you need them. In March and early April, Broccoli and brussels sprouts have edible yellow flowers that are wonderful in salads, or alone!
- Dig any root crops that are still in the ground, but leave some parsnips and carrots for a winter harvest.
- Cover the carrots and parsnips with 6 inches of straw for the winter and cover with leaves. This will make digging easier and protect the crown of the roots. Carrots, parsnips and garlic *do not* need sun for their foliage through the winter. The leaf cover will provide insulation and feeding for the plants through the winter.
- Cover the strawberry plants with straw, then with leaves on top of that. This will protect the plants from frost bite of harsher cold later.
- Clear the ground as you harvest, add it to a compost pile or build a new one.
- Cut the asparagus plants to 4 to 6 inches high.
- Add compost, grass clippings and other organic debris to your vegetable gardens, cover with a heavy blanket of leaves and let it sit for the winter. Up to 2 feet of leaves will break down by spring to just one inch of mulch you can then plant through, without turning the soil!

November:

- Cut down any remaining cornstalks, tomato stalks and other dead matter, to put into your compost pile.
- Pile leaves and straw on your garden area and future garden area to prepare the soil for next year.
- Spread wood ash and pulverized limestone on those bed areas to sweeten and improve the soil for next year, either over, or under the leaf cover.
- Clean your tools and sort through the piles of pots and containers to store for the winter.
- Check the cold frames and row covers for ventilation on warm days.
- Dig the last of the potatoes, as they do not winter over very well.

- Harvest some Brussels sprouts, Kale, and broccoli for a sweet treat for dinner, but leave some for another meal through the winter.
- Start planning indoor gardening. Window boxes from outside could be used to grow salad greens inside the house, with no special lighting, just a window!
- Start sprout jars at one week intervals and rinse daily.

December:

- Enjoy the holidays and list the tools and gadgets you wanted last summer as a gift list for you to share.
- Start some salad greens and a sprout jar in the house, or wait until January.

January:

- Enjoy your indoor gardening of salad greens and sprouts
- Transplant your indoor flowering plants this month to larger containers, if needed.
- Start planning for the new gardens outside.
- Order seeds and plants.
- Sort through your tools, equipment and supplies.
- Any leftover seeds from last year can be sown into containers and put outside to eventually sprout for your own seedlings for the garden. Use a one gallon milk or water, or cider jug, cut the top half, leaving a “hinge”, plant seeds into the potting soil in the bottom half and close the bottle top half to make a small green house. Check it weekly.
- During the thaw, walk around the garden and dream.
- Harvest some kale and other greens from your garden.
- Dig some carrots or parsnips for a sweet and crunchy treat
- ***Go back to the beginning of this “to do” list!***

Happy Gardening,

Eat Well and Have Fun!!

For more information, questions and comments, contact Bettylou at:

Email: Bettylousandy18@gmail.com

Telephone: 860-268-6270 (cell/text)