

Getting the most from your veggie plot

Plant Often

Successive planting is the best way to stretch the harvest over a period of time. One successive planting method is to simultaneously sow seeds and set out started seedlings of the same variety. The transplants will be ready for harvest before the direct-seeded veggies are.

Another successive planting method is to replant at periodic intervals. Sow radishes and spinach once a week; sow beans, beets, carrots, scallions, and salad greens every two weeks; sow cucumbers and summer squash once a month. Since you can't tell in advance just how warm or cool the season will be, keep planting until seeds stop sprouting well.

Successive planting has an additional advantage — it keeps the soil productive and thereby discourages weeds.

Use trellises

Trellising veggies whenever possible makes it easier to weed and mulch around the base of plants, as well as giving you more room to plant additional crops. Some vegetables you can successfully trellis are peas and beans (climbing, not bush, varieties), indeterminate tomato varieties, and vining types of cucumber, melon, winter squash, and zucchini. If large

melons or squash get heavy and start pulling on the vine, fashion slings from stretchy material, such as worn-out panty-hose.

Interplant crops

Interplanting, or combining compatible vegetables in the same row, has several advantages. It lets you extend the harvest by planting fast-growing veggies among slow growers. By the time the slow growers need more room, the fast growers are done and gone.

Another way interplanting extends the harvest is by letting you grow cool-season veggies into the warmer months. Shade created by big-leafed crops like cabbages, tall crops like corn, or trellised crops like beans can improve summer growing conditions for cool weather crops like radishes and lettuce.



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Row covers ~ Looking ahead into Fall weather

When early sporadic frost strikes, sometimes all your garden needs to keep growing is a night or two of vigilant frost protection. Although they're expensive, floating row covers (such as reemay) are ideal because they let in light and air during the day. Plastic sheeting will work, as will old bed sheets, provided you remove them during sunny days so they don't trap in too-hot air. You'll also have to prop them away from plants, since plastic collects puddles and wet sheets get heavy and can break off plant stems.

One way to keep plastic or bed sheets above plants is to drape them over a portable tunnel frame fashioned from PVC pipe. The frame can do double duty in warm weather: covered with shade cloth instead of sheeting, it can be used to protect tender salad greens from the summer's hot sun.

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