

Growing for Auckland Summer vegetables

Planting for summer

October (the soil is getting warmer)

- Direct sow radish, nasturium, carrot, dill and silverbeet.
- Give the garden a boost with a spray of fish fertiliser or worm tea.

November (last chance to plant before it gets too hot)

- Plant out bean, tomato, eggplant and capsicum seedlings.
- Use a cloche or plant where they are protected from wind.
- Stake and tie as you plant.

December (Summer is here)

- Water garlic well in the three weeks up to harvesting (in fact keep whole garden well watered from now on).
- Around the longest day, once tops have died off the garlic, dig up using a fork to gently lift the plants. Wash the dirt off the roots and snip them off, then plait and hang to dry.
- Develop the habit of removing laterals (on dry sunny days) from tomatoes so that energy is concentrated into fruiting.



January (hot and dry)

- Deadhead annual and perennial plants to stimulate new growth - but leave any that might have pretty seedheads in autumn, those that you are happy to leave for the birds to enjoy and healthy specimens from which you'd like to save seed.
- Do a second sowing of beans, courgettes and basil.
- If there are any gaps, protect bare soil from sun by sowing a green cover crop.
- Cut back comfrey – add half to compost and make a liquid fertiliser with the other.

February (hot and dry)

- Sow winter brassicas, onions, shallots into seed trays. Direct sow rocket and coriander into the beds.
- Clip and shape bay, lavender and rosemary – add some good carbon to your compost with your prunings.
- March (Autumn is around the corner).
- Enjoy, preserve and store harvest.
- Save and store seed from favourite, tasty, healthy plants to sow and enjoy again next year.

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The right selection of vegetables can produce an abundant and prolonged summer harvest, even in a small garden or containers.

What you need

- A sunny garden – most vegetables require 6+ hours of sunshine per day, so consider this when locating your edible garden and containers with vegetables.
- Good soil – thoroughly prepare soil before planting.
- Vegetable varieties that are appropriate for the season.
- To follow basic growing techniques.

What to do

- Work compost into the soil prior to planting – a 50mm layer is fine, more if you have it available.
- Apply a base dressing of general fertiliser or blood and bone to the soil before planting – rake it into the soil.
- Delay planting seedlings until the soil is warm, usually from late October onwards.
- Insert stakes or other supports for crops that require support such as tomatoes and climbing beans before planting seedlings.
- Choose healthy-looking seedlings that are good colour (not yellowish).
- Purchase seedlings growing in individual cells rather than in punnets to minimise root disturbance.
- Do not bury the seedlings stems.
- Sprinkle non-toxic slug and snail bait around seedlings.
- Make several plantings a few weeks apart to prolong the harvest period of quick growing vegetables such as lettuce and beetroot.
- Regularly apply worm juice or liquid fertilisers during the growing season (always follow the directions).

Note – add a dressing of lime (about 2 large handfuls per m²) to the soil every second year at least.

Top summer vegetables



Basil Thai Thrives in heat. Great for pesto and flavouring.



Beans Choose from dwarf varieties or tall such as scarlet runners.



Capsicum 'Target' is reliable with green fruits turning red. Use in stir fries and salads.



Chilli pepper 'Wildfire' Another heat lover, great for spicing up cuisine.



Lettuce Loose leaf varieties such as 'Cos' and 'Red Oak' are great – just pick as many leaves as you need.



Parsley Flat leaf Italian varieties have great flavour. Plant in spring or autumn.



Silverbeet 'Bright Lights' has colourful stems – looks great in the garden and very nutritious. Plant in spring or autumn.



Sweetcorn 'Honey and Pearl' is delicious and easy. Avoid root disturbance and plant in blocks to maximise wind pollination.



Tomato Taller types require staking but use less garden space than bushy varieties. Cherry tomatoes such as 'Sweet 100' are prolific and sweet. Large fruited types such as 'Grosse Lisse' are great for sandwiches and cooking. Many varieties with medium sized fruit are available. Grafted plants are vigorous and produce abundant fruit on just one plant.

Sowing success

Spring is the time to start sowing and planting so that your veges can establish while the weather is still mild, before the heat of summer.

Make sure to include lots of flowers (especially edible ones for your salads e.g. viola, calendula, nasturtium and borage) and scented herbs in and amongst your veges. Not only do they act as a living mulch to help retain moisture in the hot summer months, but they attract beneficial insects and distract and deter pests – a mono-crop is an easy target!