Introduction to Gardening

How to Garden in California Schools
Who are the Master Gardeners?

- 6,154 current volunteers in California
- 350 active members in SD County
- 450,000 hours donated in 2022
- Trained by University of California Cooperative Education
- Supported by County Extension Offices
- 70+ MGs serving 300+ SD schools
How to Grow Vegetables

Plant, Grow, Eat, Compost, Repeat
Basic Needs of a Garden

1. The Right Plant in the Right Place
2. Container or Bed
3. Nutritious Soil (Amended)
4. Sunlight
5. Water
California Climate Zones

• 13 zones mean a wide range of growing conditions
• Subzones within zones
Two Planting Seasons for Most Areas

Warm: Plant March - Summer

Cool: Plant Oct - Feb
Warm Season Plants

Grown from Spring through Summer

For example:

- Beans
- Eggplant
- Melons
- Peppers
- Tomatoes

You eat the reproductive, seed bearing parts
Cool Season Plants

Grown in late summer through February or March

For example:

- Beets
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Lettuce
- Peas

You eat the vegetative parts
Container Ideas

- Half wine barrel
- Grow bag
- Large pot (5 gallon)
- Bigger container the better
- Drainage holes required
Soil

Amended soil is dark, earthy and pliable
Soil Triangle
To Assess your Soil

A Soil Jar Test
Ribbon Test
Amendments

• Soil amendment: 20%
  • Amendment could include compost, worm castings, fertilizer and composted chicken manure. I recommend a mix of all ingredients
• Potting soil (bagged or by the cubic yard): 80%
  • Mix well and fill soil to top of container
  • Water well before planting
  • Plan to amend soil annually
Sunlight

- Edibles need 6-8 hours of direct sun to grow fruit
How to Plant

- Moisten the soil before planting
- To extend the harvest, plant a plant and sow the same seed behind it
- Starts are 1-2 months older than seeds
- Sow seeds 4x deep its width, pat down
- Do NOT let seeds dry out = certain death
- Cover seeds with burlap to aid germination
- Thin seeds when 1-2 inches tall to give them room to grow
Water & Irrigation

Veggies aren’t drought tolerant! Keep root ball moist but not too wet; Water deeply
Inline drip irrigation provides reliable irrigation and is most successful
Avoid wetting the leaves
Water in the morning
Inline Irrigation

Inline drip irrigation provides reliable irrigation and is most successful. It wets the soil, not the leaves which abates disease.

¼ inch tubes emit water every 6 inches

Know How to Work your Controller

Use with a battery operated controller.
Vegetables thrive when given a consistent, reliable source of water.

In a sunny raised beds during growing season:
- Sown seeds likely need watering twice daily
- Young plants daily
- Most established vegetables every other day
- Turn off irrigation in the rain
- Don’t water empty beds
Irrigation Beyond Raised Beds

Group similarly watered plants on the same irrigation zone operated by a multi zone controller.
Watch your Plants Grow.

- As plants grow bigger, water deeper and less frequently, water when top inch is dry
- Vines need supports
- Mulch veggies with straw
- Harvest regularly
Don’t Hesitate to Harvest

- It is important to harvest frequently to keep the plant producing
- When fruit is present it is a race between you and the critters
Dealing with Wildlife

IPM (Integrated Pest Mgmt.) recommends:

• hand removal
• exclusion
Composting Closes the Loop

Whether you use a worm bin, a commercial compost bin, or a deluxe composting system, you’ll reduce garden waste and make your soil more productive.
A Final Tip: Everything you need to know is right here

Seed packets can teach you how to garden. It’s all on the label.