

## Vegetable Gardening for Everyone

- You can grow and harvest something fresh every month of the year in the low desert!



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### Presented by:

U of A Maricopa County  
Master Gardener

Jo Setliff



The mission of the Master Gardener Program is to teach people to select, place, and care for plants in an environmentally responsible manner, based on research specific to the low desert.

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### People have been gardening or farming here for more than 1000 years

- Whether you have 4 square feet, 40 square feet, or 40 acres, you can harvest fresh vegetables every month of the year here in the low desert!



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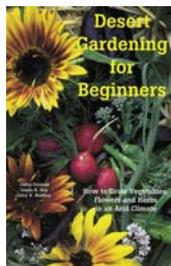
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## RESOURCES

- [Desert Gardening for Beginners](#)
- [Desert Gardening](#) by George Brookbank
- [Maricopamastertgardener.org](#)
- [AZ1435 Ten Steps to a Successful Vegetable Garden](#)
- [AZ1005 Vegetable Planting Calendar](#)
- [Seed Catalogues](#)



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## 6 Steps to harvesting homegrown fresh vegetables.

1. Select site
2. Decide how big
3. Prepare site
4. Select and plant your crops
5. Maintain the garden
6. Harvest!!

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## Where to put your garden: Vegetables need

- 6 - 8 hours of sun each day
- A reliable source of irrigation
- Soil about 18" deep
- The garden should be easy and inviting to get to
- Space for paths between planting areas

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### How big should it be?

- Should fit where the conditions are best
- Should not be so big and so much work you get discouraged
- You can always add on!
- Should allow you to grow what you want to grow and use!

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### Raised beds

- Soil is warmer in the winter
- Hotter, dryer in summer
- Build for comfort
- To fit the site
- You should reach the middle from both sides
- Choose materials that fit your landscape and budget



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### Or plant container gardens



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- 14" + wide
- 8 – 10" deep for winter leafy crops
- 18" + deep for large plants
- Use quality potting soil
- Put on casters for ease of movement



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### 3. Preparing the soil

- Till and rake soil.
- Remove debris
- Add 3 – 6" of compost
- Add balanced fertilizer according to directions
- Till the bed again and rake it level
- Install/check irrigation



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### 3. SELECTING YOUR CROPS: Choose crops that will grow for each of our seasons. We have three!

- Refer to AZ 1005 for planting dates
- Fit the crops to the garden
- Plant things you like to eat!
- Rotate your crops

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### Sources of seeds and plants

- Local independent nurseries
- Seed catalogues and internet sites
- Friends
- Plant sales, garden clubs
- Big box retailers

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### Shall I buy transplants or start seeds?

- Some plants do better when sown directly into the soil
- Some need an extra head start
- So do both!

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- Transplants
  - No guesswork- you jump start the garden
  - Give you a head start on plants that require a longer season
  - Limited to varieties you can find

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**Plant these directly into the garden.**

- Plants that grow from tubers, crowns, or cloves: garlic, potatoes, asparagus
- Easy seeds to handle: peas, beans, corn, squash, melons, cucumbers, pumpkins
- Root crops: beets, carrots, parsnips, radishes, turnips

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**Some *need* 8 weeks head start. Buy transplants or start your own**

- Spring planted, long season crops:
  - Peppers,
  - Eggplants,
  - Tomatoes,
  - Sweet potatoes



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- Fall planted, long season, or perennial crops:
  - Brussels sprouts
  - Artichokes



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### Starting the garden

- Work the moist soil, making it friable
- Use a string and sticks for straight rows
- Make a shallow planting trench along string
- Plant seed according to package directions!
  - Do not plant deeper than suggested
  - Follow spacing instructions

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- Firm soil gently after planting for good seed-soil contact
- Label each row!
- Water carefully but well with soft pressure
  - Soil must remain moist to initiate growth
- Check daily and irrigate as necessary to keep soil moist

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### Planting transplants

- Remove transplant gently
- Handle by the crown and roots
- Do not damage the stem
- Put into ground so soil levels of plant and garden are even
- Firm soil gently around the plant
- Water.

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### Irrigating your garden

- Select a timer you are comfortable using
- Adjust it as seasons change
- Ground-level systems to reduce evaporation



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- Hoses
  - With a soft spray nozzle for new seedlings
  - For watering in fertilizer
  - Washing plants or harvest
- Keep a watering can handy for spot watering

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### Arizona has great soil for gardening!!

- Our soils are rich in 19 of the 20 nutrients necessary to grow vegetables
- Balanced fertilizer incorporated during soil prep is often enough to go a season
- Fertilize only when plants show reduced vigor or nutrient deficiencies, or are described as 'heavy feeders'

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### Nitrogen, the missing link

- Arizona soils are consistently low in nitrogen
- Vegetables need only a little nitrogen to grow and produce.
- Too much produces lush, too healthy, non productive plants, but they are beautiful plants!
- Nitrogen is very volatile

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### More garden care-weeds

- Pull weeds while small before they flower and seed, add to compost pile
- Weeds are hosts for many unwelcome pests,
- Weeds compete for water and nutrients

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- Mulch paths to reduce weeds
- Mulch helps maintain even soil temperatures
- Mulch reduces evaporation



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**Pest control: know your enemy!**



- Most bugs do no harm!
- Use cultural and mechanical controls first
- Toxic products kill the bad guys and the good guys!
- Most plants can sustain some damage and still produce a great crop

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- Learn to recognize the difference between pest damage and disease [biotic]
- From other problems [a-biotic]. These include
  - Salt, wind-burn and sunscald
  - Frost damage
  - Over/under watering
  - Nutritional deficiencies

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- Make a compost pile, turn and irrigate it
- Plant flowers to invite pollinators to visit
- Visit the garden frequently
- Build fences, or cages to keep rodents out
- Use hardware cloth to line raised beds to deter gophers

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### Frost protection

- Use 'frost cloth', remay, old sheets and light blankets to protect plants from frost
- Make a structure from pvc, 2x2 lumber or other material to support the protection
- Never use sheet plastic, it does not work
- String hot lights around containers, into trees, etc.

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### Combat summer's sun



- Shade cloth protects tomatoes and peppers from birds, and keeps fruit from sun burning
- Use netting to keep caterpillars and other insects off crops

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### 5. Harvesting

- Pick young and often to keep new ones growing
- Use the information on the seed packet to predict harvesting
- Experiment with new recipes
- Share your success
- Thin and eat lettuce, other greens, radishes, mustards, carrots...
- Use succession planting to extend harvest

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