

THE ORGANIC GARDEN (part 2)

A. Summer Garden Maintenance

1. Check plants weekly
 - a. Inspect them for insects and worms
 - * Look for holes in leaves or trails on leaves or plants
 - * Look at underside of leaves as well as topside
 - * Look in the soil
 - b. Look for diseased leaves
 - * Spots, yellow leaves, mold-like appearance
2. Water garden
 - a. When it rains less than an inch in a week
 - b. Water during the day, not in the evening
 - c. Water the base of the plant
 - * Try not to get leaves wet
3. Use mulch around plants to keep out weeds and retain moisture

B. Integrated Pest Management (using a combination of strategies to control pests and diseases)

1. Manage weeds by hand-pulling or hoeing
2. Remove plant debris, rotting vegetables, plants that have gone to seed
 - * Insects and diseases can hide in the debris
3. Prune the dead, diseased, and dying plant parts to remove insects and diseases
 - * Do not compost diseased plants; put them in garbage can
4. Remove pests
 - a. Step on slugs or beetles
 - b. Pick off worms
 - c. Wash aphids or mites from plant
 - d. Use a barrier of tin cans or strips of cardboard to keep worms out
 - e. Use a sticky paper to catch insects so that you can identify them and find the best control for that insect
 - f. Use animal friendly traps
5. Use living organisms to control pests
 - a. Some insects (praying mantis, spider) eat insects
 - b. Some flowers planted around a garden may repel pests
 - c. Animal urine sprayed around a garden may repel pests

6. Use an organic pesticide
 - a. Examples include Insecticidal soap, neem oil, dormant oil
 - b. Can be purchased at nurseries, garden centers, or big box stores
 - c. Always read the directions and follow them exactly when applying a pesticide because it can be harmful to wildlife, pets, and people

C. Harvesting Tips

1. Beans

- a. Harvest when the pods are firm and crisp but before the beans are mature
- b. Pick beans after the dew is gone from the plant, and they are thoroughly dry to avoid spreading bean bacterial blight
- c. Plant will continue to produce if the pods are removed before the seeds mature

2. Broccoli

- a. Cut the central head with 5 or 6 inches of stem
- b. Cut after head is developed but before it begins to loosen and separate and before it turns yellow.

3. Cabbage

- a. Harvest heads when they are solid (firm to hand pressure)
- b. Harvest before heads split

4. Cantaloupe

- a. Ripe melons are tan or yellow
- b. Pick when the stem separates easily from the point of attachment
- c. Look for a crack near the point where the melon is attached to the stem
- d. Harvest early in the day after the plants are dry

5. Chard

- a. Cut off the outer leaves 1 and ½ inches above the ground
- b. Cut while leaves are young and tender, usually when they are 8 to 12 inches long

6. Cucumber

- a. Pick at any stage of development, but pick before it turns yellow
- b. Best when it is dark green, firm, and crisp
- c. Pick off old cucumbers so new ones will grow

7. Kale

- a. Harvest when the leaves reach full size
- b. Strip older leaves off the plants first, allowing the young leaves to continue to grow

8. Peppers

- a. Pick when they are mature and firm, usually 3 to 4 inches in size
- b. Cut them off to avoid damaging the plant
- c. Hot peppers may be picked either green or ripe

9. Squash

- a. Summer squash should be harvested when it is small and tender and when the rind can be easily pierced with a thumbnail
- b. Winter squash has a hard rind and is harvested when mature

10. Sweet corn

- a. Pick ears during the “milk stage” when kernels are plump and smooth and produce a milk-like substance when punctured with a fingernail
- b. Corn is ripe when silks are dry and brown, ears are firm and kernels at tip are full

11. Tomatillo

- a. Harvest when the husk changes from green to tan while the berry is still green.

12. Tomato

- a. Harvest when firm and fully colored
- b. Pick when they are a healthy pink color and let them ripen further inside for a firmer and better flavored tomato

13. Watermelon

- a. Harvest when there is a combination of these factors
 - * light green, curly tendrils on the stem at the point of attachment turn brown and dry
 - * the surface color turns dull
 - * the skin cannot be penetrated with a fingernail
 - * the bottom of the melon (where it lies on the ground) turns a yellowish color.

References:

1. *University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Manual, University of Illinois College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences*
2. www.extension.illinois.edu/veggies/planting.cfm
3. www.extension.illinois.edu/vegguide