

HOME & GARDEN

These are the summer vegetables that dreams are made on

By PETER TONGE
The Christian Science Monitor

WEYMOUTH — This is the time for seed catalogs and dreams!

It's also a good time to plan the 1982 garden, especially if you live in the snow-clad North. So if you haven't yet done so, get out some paper (quarter-inch, half-inch, or one-inch graph paper, if you have it), a sharp pencil, and a ruler. Lay out your favorite flower and vegetable catalogs around you and start planning for the coming season's bounty.

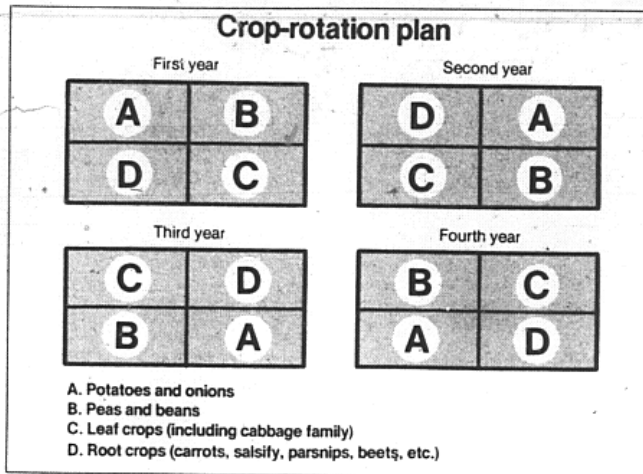
All good plans begin with dreams, those mental concepts of floral and vegetable perfection. The thing for you to do now is to get your ideas down on paper.

First, draw an outline of your garden to scale (one-quarter inch to a foot is a useful size) and divide it into four parts — or a series of fours. This way it becomes easy to rotate crops each year and thus sustain a balanced soil fertility (different crops take different nutrients from the soil) and insect and other problems associated with growing the same crop in the same soil year after year are avoided.

In the old days, rotation was practiced as a labor-saving as well as a fertility-retaining practice.

The first year a bed would be deeply dug and heavy quantities of aged manure or compost mixed in. This was planted to onions and potatoes, both of which yield well in rich soil.

The second year the bed would be given over to legume crops — and in the early spring, snap beans in summer — both for the food they yielded as well as for the nitrogen which all legumes take from the air and fix in the soil as a readily assimilated fertilizer.



The third year would see the bed planted to leaf crops — lettuce, cabbage, chard, spinach, etc. — all of which need a good supply of nitrogen.

In the fourth and final year of the rotation, the bed is given over to root crops — other than potatoes, of course.

The following year (year 5), it's back to

square 1 again with deep digging, a plentiful supply of organic matter, and potatoes and onions as the principal crops.

This system saved labor in the intensive food gardens of the past because only one bed in four had to be dug deeply and heavily fertilized each year. For the rest, a light turning of the upper 6 to 12 inches of soil was necessary. It meant, too,

that all the available organic fertilizing materials could be concentrated in one place and would, in effect, last for four years.

Today, concentrated fertilizers have reduced the importance of the soil-fertility aspect somewhat (although incorporating organic matter remains vital to soil structure), but the labor-saving aspects and other pluses of rotation still remain.

As with nearly everything in gardening, this rotation plan is not hard and fast. You can adapt it to your own best interests. Many folks follow a three-year rotation plan while some top gardeners whom I know have only one rule: Never plant the same thing in the same place in successive years. But, they'll come back to the same spot with just one year between.

The value of this four-year rotation plan has been proved over and over again even though it is flawed in one respect. The plan was devised originally by intensive market gardeners of northern Europe in the 19th century when tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant were not well known and highly suspect where they were.

So where do we put them in today's garden? Including them with the leaf crops isn't such a bad idea, but always remember that tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant, while members of the same family, do not get along well. Apparently they are too competitive and the tomatoes always win out at the expense of the others.

Conventional garden wisdom seems divided on the tomato issue, too. Never plant tomatoes in the same place twice, says one school; while another school says they do well in the same place year after year, growing fat on the decaying remains of their forebears.

For my part, I have grown tomatoes in the same spot for the past seven years. Each year I cut down the frost-blackened tops and compost them, while the root system is left to decay in the soil. Admittedly, they are given a good supply of compost, and, on occasion, some additional organic fertilizer when set out. They have always done well for us.

I move peppers and eggplant around the garden as best I can, frequently in rotation with zucchini or summer squash which generally stay out of the main garden beds. I also rotate vining crops (cucumbers and small winter squash which I train up fences) with climbing peas and pole beans.

Of course, in drawing up your garden plan there are other sound rules to follow. An obvious rule is never plant what you or your family won't eat; in other words, grow only what has dinner-plate appeal.

A second rule is to note which are the sunny and less-sunny parts of the garden. All vegetables need sun, but the fruiting species (those whose flowers produce the edibles) need more bright light than the leaf and root crops. If this means bending the rules of crop rotation somewhat, then so be it.

Be sure to note on your plan what follow-up crop will go in after the first harvest.

In my garden, for instance, the onion sets that I plant in the ground in March are harvested by the end of July. That gives me time to get in a planting of bush beans or even zucchini. Remember, however, that zucchini planted this late tends to be less troubled by squash borer but has less time to produce a respectable crop before the leaf-nipping frost arrives.

GARDEN CALENDAR

The following information is provided by the Franklin County Extension Service.

Now is the time to:

- Tamp down snow around your fruit trees to help prevent rodent damage.
- Check houseplants growing against windows for symptoms of poor growth, such as yellow leaves.
- Start amaryllis bulbs now.
- Get going on your seed order — it's later than you think.
- Make a good garden plan on paper now to save time and expense later.
- Sow seeds of wax begonia (*Begonia Semperflorens*) and impatiens.
- Continue to bring your hardy bulbs that were potted this past fall indoors for forcing. Enjoy your blooms!

NOTES:

- Growing herbs on your windowsill requires at least five hours of direct sunlight each day. An alternative is cool white fluorescent lights turned on for 12-14 hours each day. Avoid growing herbs with large taproot unless you have very deep pots and lots of room.
- Planning to purchase fruit trees? Remember that apples and pears need to be cross-pollinated for optimal fruit production, so purchase at least two varieties of each of these fruits. Peaches, except for Elberta strains, will produce fruits without cross-pollination.
- Choosing varieties for disease management: Decisions you make when choosing varieties of vegetables will influence your vegetable disease management all summer. Plant breeders, pathologists, and seedsmen have and are developing high quality vegetables that tolerate or resist diseases and still have good yields. However, many gardeners still are not using them and are missing a good bet for easy management of certain wilts and virus mosaics.

Bonanzas, Explorers in the garden

By PAT LEUCHTMAN
Recorder Columnist

As we sit flipping through the garden catalogs making up our seed orders, it is very easy to concentrate on the favorites and the tried and true. But every year there are new offerings, and we might be able to improve the garden or the harvest by trying them. At least we might have some fun.

Last year I tried Burpee's (Warminster, Pa. 18974) new Green Goliath broccoli because it was supposed to mature over a three-week period, which would make the harvest more manageable. It fulfilled its promise and in addition it grew well and healthily in my garden, so I was very happy.

This year they have another new broccoli variety — Bonanza. Like Green Goliath it matures in 55 days and is good frozen and fresh. The advantage is that after the main head is harvested it will continue to produce good-sized sideshoots for an extended period.

Bush squash are a fairly new development that enables people with small gardens to grow squash that usually come on sprawling vines. This year Burpee is introducing Early Acorn hybrid which promises five squash on each semi-bush plant.

Park Seed (Greenwood, S.C. 29647) has a new burpless cucumber this year. It grows on a dwarf bush and is early, maturing in only 42 days. It promises a prolific harvest.

Of course, Park's is also famous for their flowers and this year they offer

BETWEEN THE ROWS

Geranium Orange Cascade, which will be perfect in hanging baskets. The blooms will range in color from salmon-orange to scarlet and are bound to be a striking accent on any porch or patio.

Maybe something new will really be something old. The Vermont Bean Seed Co. (Garden Lane, Bemoseen, Vt. 05732) offers a good selection of heirloom beans. These old-fashioned varieties are often not available through regular seed companies.

The Swedish brown bean is a very hardy bush bean and is excellent to use in baked bean recipes.

My favorite is the Jacob's Cattle Bean because it is so beautiful. When freshly harvested, the bean is white with brilliant vermilion splashes. As it dries, the color deepens to a maroon. The bean is also excellent for baking and making chili.

The Soldier Bean is another heirloom bean that does very well in cool northern climates and is also drought resistant, which might make it a bean to consider after the dry summers we have had recently.

It seems that every year there is some breakthrough. This year it is potato seed. Until now we've had to buy seed potatoes, cut them up and make sure that each piece had an eye or two, but this year Explorer potato seeds are

Here's the answer

AP Newsfeatures

Q — Our home was built in 1963. We purchased it in 1976 even though it lacked insulation. Two years later, we had it completely remodeled. We insulated the walls and the attic and had double-paned windows installed. Since then, we have had moisture on the windows, on the ceilings of the bedrooms and sometimes in other places. We have a gas wall heater, but no central heating or cooling. The house is built off the ground. We have not insulated under the bottom and do not have ventilators, louvers. Can you tell us what is causing the moisture buildup?

A — The excessive amount of moisture in the house cannot escape. You need louvers in the attic and vents in the outside walls, which should have been done when the house was remodeled but still can and must be done. The chances are that much of the moisture, besides that which occurs from cooking and various other household activities, is coming from the ground under the house. Insulate under the floors, then cover the ground with sheets of polyethylene, several inches and covering the joints with enough sand to keep them securely in place and prevent ground moisture from getting through.

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