



Tips for a healthy vegetable garden

Good gardening is largely a matter of common sense. But it helps to know a couple of tricks. Here are some tips to help reduce your work load and keep your garden free of weeds and pests for a beautiful, bountiful harvest.

DIG YOU MUST: Soil preparation is half the weed battle. Cultivate to a depth of eight to 10 inches with a tiller or by hand. You'll not only loosen and aerate the soil, you'll bury a lot of weed seeds and insect eggs deep enough to kill them.

CHOOSE SEEDS AND PLANTS CAREFULLY: Check seed packets or seedling labels for disease-resistance. A tomato labelled "VFN" means it's resistant to Verticillium wilt, Fusarium and nematodes. Ask the nurseryman what kinds are best. Pick varieties suited to your climate — early maturing types if you have a short growing season.

PLANT IN BLOCKS: Plant your

seed or started seedlings in tight blocks a foot or so square, with boards or straw-mulched paths in between. This checkerboard method leaves little bare ground for weeds to invade and gives easy access to plants.

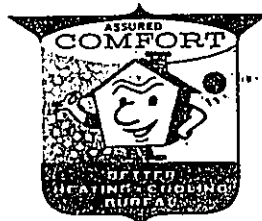
MIX THINGS UP A LITTLE: Mix blocks of vegetables with herbs, flowers, and other ornamental plants for a more interesting garden, and to discourage attack by large numbers of the same kind of pest.

BEAT THE BUGS, SAFELY: You needn't panic and start spraying chemicals around if you see a bug. Plants can tolerate a few pests without serious damage. If you must take action, keep it simple:

- To control slugs, sink a shallow dish to its rim in the garden and fill it with beer. Crowds of these voracious pests will be attracted, fall in and drown overnight.

- To foil cutworms, put paper cup collars around your tomato plants, and sink them an inch or two into the soil.

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