

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

How to: Plan the Next Year's Garden

Although fall may have just commenced the harvest season and the gardener is tired of weeding, mulching, watering and harvesting, it is still important to consider next year's garden at this time. Your garden will reap the most benefit when you plan it with your current garden in mind, so although waiting until the winter to plan the next year's garden may be a habit, beginning the planning phase in the fall will be even better.

First steps:

When you're cleaning out your current garden, address what didn't go as planned. Did you want more tomatoes? Did your pepper plants not produce as well as you thought they would? These questions and identifying what went well and what could've gone better will help lead to a better garden next year. Once you have these thoughts in place, be sure you test your soil next so you know what the pH is and if you have any amendments you need to make before your next year's crop needs to be planted.

Picking out your new vegetables:

When it comes to planning your garden, picking out the new seeds you want to try may be the most fun steps. However, don't try too many new things at once because if you plant more than you can manage or don't research what the vegetables you plant require, you may be in for a disappointing season the next year.

Once you have all your ideas picked out, map out your garden on paper and include



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all the places you plan to grow – such as your main garden, any raised beds and pots. This helps you see where the vegetables will get the most sun, what vegetables may need more space because they take up more room like squash and it allows you to figure out companion planting methods before you are putting the seeds in the ground.

Planting:

Planting seeds may actually occur in the coldest months of the year if you decide you'll start your warm weather plants like peppers and tomatoes inside or if you'll wait until the ground thaws to plant them outdoors. If starting from seed indoors, you'll need to prepare by buying the right equipment, like grow lights or seed-starter packs. If planting transplants outdoors, be sure to buy them as soon as they're available so you can choose from a large selection and not be left with all the transplants that have already been



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picked over. The last step is figuring out what to plant when. Look at seed-planting calendar or a succession-planting one if you want to have crops all summer long. Urban Farmer has excellent planting guides specific to which USDA Hardiness Zone your garden may fall in, so you know exactly what to plant when.

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