

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

What went wrong: Slow growth

Although some patience is required to watch your vegetables blossom from tiny seedlings into full-grown plants with fruit yields you can harvest and use in your kitchen, sometimes a gardener's patience isn't the problem and there's some other underlying reason below a vegetable plant's slow growth. There are several reasons a plant may experience slow growth and they can all be fixed relatively easily.

High quality soil:

Fertilizer exists for a reason. Prior to planting, make sure your soil pH is where it needs to be, but sometimes plants might be in the idea soil condition and still need some extra nutrients. Vegetables actually require more nutrients than flowers or other plants because of their large leaves and fruit, both produced within one season. Annually add 1 inch of compost or composted manure and mix it into your garden soil so you can better your future plant's growth. The compost will provide more nitrogen to the soil so it is richer in nutrients, but it also helps improve the drainage quality of the soil, as well. Also, prior to planting, mix in 2 pounds of a nitrogen fertilizer per 100 square feet of soil. Once plants are four inches tall, side dress them with 2 pounds of the same nitrogen fertilizer per 100 square feet of garden soil.

Sunlight:

Slow growth may be because your plant isn't receiving the energy it needs from the sun.



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When planning your garden, place it in the sunniest area possible. Since temperatures and warmth also plays a part, try using raised beds or floating row covers to improve soil temperatures in the early spring months when your plants may not receive the correct amount of warmth from the sun.

Water:

Make sure you're watering enough, but not too much, as both can cause slow growth. Try to use a drip-system instead of overhead watering to make sure the soil has enough moisture for the plant.

Transplant use:

Sometimes, gardeners like to start their vegetables from seed, but this can lead to a longer growth period. Instead, if you don't have the patience for the extra 10-12 weeks of growing strictly from seeds, purchase the already-established transplants that you can



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plant right in your garden. This may be a good choice for more novice gardeners since they won't have to worry about problems occurring during germination or very early on in the growth.

Weeds:

Weeds are not only ugly when growing in your garden, they also compete with your plants for the nutrients and moisture in your soil. It's suggested to spend at least one or two hours weekly weeding your garden so you can get ahead before the weeds get too big. To help prevent weeds, spread mulch or straw down to prevent the weed growth. This also helps retain moisture in the soil.

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