

Hello Gardeners!

Welcome to Gardening 101!

My name is Kerry Hamlet and I have been a Sherburne County Master Gardener for about 10 years. I am excited to be working with Corrie Scott and Tom Wyatt-Yerka from the City of Big Lake on this project. Gardening is my passion and I really got the bug about 10 years ago when I retired from my corporate Accounting job. I liked gardening so much that I went back to school and got an additional degree in Horticulture from the University of Minnesota. Every year the gardens around my home grow bigger and bolder and I am always learning and trying new things.

This year, the program will be a bit different as everything will be done online due to the COVID19 pandemic. The University of MN Extension program has banned all in person activity until at least June 30, 2020. I think we will be OK though as the classes that I have come up with will be easy, informative and fun! I realize that some of the topics in the first class are already done, but it is still good information to have should you ever decide to branch out and start your own garden.

My husband and I live in Sherburne County on a 15-acre hobby farm. My specialty is organic gardening and canning and freezing. We have not used chemicals on our property for over 15 years. That doesn't mean that I can't help you with chemical questions though. Not using chemicals is simply a personal preference that we have. Everything in our garden is used in one way or another. I can and freeze vegetables and fruits and our garden 'waste' is fed to our animals or tilled back into our soil. We strive for and succeed with having no waste each year.

I am here to answer any questions that you may have and to help you create a successful and plentiful garden. Corrie Scott will handle all questions and she can be reached at cscott@biglakemn.org. Corrie will forward all questions to me and I will respond within 48 hours back to Corrie. Don't be surprised if I ask for more information from you when responding; photos are always helpful. All of my answers will be based on University research. Don't feel that you have to limit your questions to the garden that you are planting, though! I will do my best to answer any types of questions you may have. Also keep in mind that the following web sites contain a plethora of information for gardeners:

- University of Minnesota Extension - extension.umn.edu
- Sherburne County Master Gardeners - sherburnecountymastergardeners.org

I look forward to working with all of you! Happy Gardening!

-Kerry

Before you begin to garden, there are a couple of things that you need to take into consideration. Location, access to water, access to sunlight and your soil conditions.

- STEP ONE - SELECT A PLOT FOR YOUR GARDEN
 - Your garden will need full sun
 - Full sun is 8-10 hours of sunlight per day
 - Examine your soil
 - Select an area where water does not pool
 - Your garden should be in an area that is well drained
 - Avoid areas with soil erosion (hills, slopes, etc.)
 - Ideal soil is friable, well drained and has a high organic matter content
 - Soil is a living organism to be fed
 - Compost is ideal
 - Take the wind into account
 - Avoid windy areas if possible. Wind can dry out and damage crops
 - Create a wind break if necessary
 - Access to water
 - Watering aids in seed emergence
 - Watering reduces soil crusting
 - Correct watering prevents premature ripening of peas, beans, and sweet corn
 - Your garden will need 1-2" of water per week
 - Wildlife
 - You will never 'win' against wildlife in your garden
 - Build a fence if needed and available

- STEP TWO - PREPARE YOUR GARDEN PLOT
 - Soil
 - Till your soil and break it up. You can till throughout the year in-between rows
 - Once tilled, rake the soil to make a smooth garden
 - Add nutrients to your soil – feed it – it is a living organism
 - Compost
 - Fertilizer
 - Do a soil test
 - Create a weed barrier if desired
 - Newspaper can be used as a weed barrier using the ‘lasagna method’. This is done by placing layers of newspaper around areas that you want to deter weed growth. Several layers of newspaper are needed.
 - The newspaper will break down naturally and will feed the soil.
 - Landscape/Gardening Fabric can be placed in-between rows
 - Make sure that water can get through the fabric and won’t pool up
 - Mulch can be used in-between rows and will eventually break down. This will also feed your foil
 - Grass clippings can be used and will decompose naturally
 - Plastic
 - Black plastic is predominant in the US
 - Clear plastic can be used but you would still need a herbicide
 - Fencing
 - Fencing can be placed over any weed barrier

STEP THREE - SEEDLINGS

- Plant what you want! Start small and plant the vegetables that you like
- Read seed packets thoroughly and plant accordingly
 - Some seedlings should be wet first
 - Some plants do not grow well in our zone (3a and 4b)
- Purchase seeds from a dependable seed company
- Be careful using old seeds if they have not been stored correctly
 - Correct storage is in a cool, dry place
- Allow for space and growth
 - Know what you are planting
 - Most vegetables have very shallow root systems
 - Onions, lettuce and spinach will benefit from cool temperatures. These can be planted now
 - Shorter vegetables can be planted at the base of taller vegetables
 - Know what plants grow well together, what plants need to be staked-up, and what plants have vines that spread out
 - Corn, potatoes and beans work well with crop rotation
 - Carrots & radishes grow well together
 - Radishes and broccoli grow well together
 - Cabbage & spinach grow well together
 - Shade tolerant plants (lettuce, spinach & celery) can be planted in the shadow of taller crops
 - Do not plant cabbage family crops, (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower & brussel sprouts), in the same spot each year
 - Rotate your crops
 - Rotating prevents the buildup of diseases and insects
 - Peas grow up – they will need something to climb on
 - Melons, cucumbers and squash produce vines that will spread out; they will need ample space. The fruit and vegetables that grow from these plants would ideally be kept off of the ground.
 - Allow for plant ventilation – air must be able to move between plants
 - Water, water, water
 - Keep the soil moist after seed planting
 - For hard to see plantings, hold off weeding to avoid pulling out your vegetables
 - Once the plant begins to mature, try to avoid watering the leaves
 - The best times to water are in the morning or evening