



A Healthy Vegetable Garden

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Spring is here and it is a welcoming site! I really enjoy this time of year when the landscape starts to come to life. This is usually the time of the year when I start getting questions about starting a vegetable garden. I was recently asked to review the publication " Home Vegetable Garden Disease Control" by Dr. Steve Bost, a UT Extension Specialist.

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In this publication, there are guidelines for growing a healthier garden. Let's take a look at these tips:

- 1 Garden site selection: It is best to plant your garden in an area where you have good drainage and at least eight hours of full sunlight. Poor drainage leads to root rot.
- 2 Optimal growing conditions: It all starts with a soil test. In order to have a successful garden you must have a proper soil pH, adequate fertilization, good weed control and proper spacing between plants.
- 3 Use resistant varieties of plants: If you don't want to have disease or fungal problems, I encourage you to purchase seeds that are already resistant to diseases that are present in the garden. Do purchase seeds that are resistant to specific pathogens.
- 4 Disease-free transplants: It would be a good idea to buy locally-grown transplants or grow your own from disease-free seeds. Diseases that are brought in on transplants are very difficult to control.
- 5 Planting date: It is important to choose the best date to plant your vegetable. Planting in soils that are too cool can result in many diseases. Planting warm season vegetables too early in the season could be damaged by a late freeze.
- 6 Crop rotation: Be sure to plant your crops in different parts of the garden every year. This is something most gardeners don't do. Rotating your crops help prevent pathogen buildup in the soil.

7 Seed disinfestation: Hot water or diluted chlorine bleach can kill many pathogens that are carried on a seed. You have to be careful when disinfecting seeds as to avoid damaging those seeds.

8 Mulch: Mulch helps control weeds and reduce fruit rot on many crops by preventing them from making direct contact with the soil. It is always good to use organic mulches which after breaking down can be used by the plants.

If you need additional information about vegetable gardening, please give me a call (901-752-1207). It seems that over the years, more people have become interested in starting their own backyard vegetable garden. This is a good thing! Until next time, happy gardening!



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