Raised Bed Guide

for beginner gardeners

By Stephanie

(@RaisedBedGuide)

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Introduction

"My most beautiful masterpiece is my garden."
-Unkown Author

You most likely know who I am if you downloaded this guide because you follow me on social media. In case you discovered this guide elsewhere, let me introduce myself. My name is Stephany, but you can call me "'The Raised Bed Guide". Some of you may think that is a bold statement but let me explain myself.

My academic background does give me some credibility, but my thriving garden is the "proof" of this statement. My goal is to give a guiding hand to those who have no idea where to start but have a growing desire to have their own vegetable garden. For that reason, I will be your guide.

While I did tell you I have an academic background, I did not mention what it is. I am a horticulture and landscape designer tech. Being in contact with nature started at a very early age for me. I spent my childhood climbing fruit trees at my grandma's house and traveling to my uncle's farm.

While growing up, I did experiment with having a few plants, but I have to confess that I killed most of them. RIP for all the bonsais that I killed in the process. As you can see, having a "green thumb" is not necessarily true for me. I will tell you a secret; most people do not have a green thumb. What they have is patience and an incredible capacity to observe nature and how nature works. Patience because growing plants is not an overnight process, and observing nature because plants can tell you what they need; you just have to pay attention.

Digging in

Congratulations on starting your new garden. If you are a new gardener or an experienced gardener that downloaded this e-book with hopes of learning more about raised bed gardening my goal is to give you as much information as possible while keeping it short and sweet.

I hope that by the end of this e-book you feel so inspired that your next step is looking for materials to build your own raised bed. If you do decide to start your garden please send me a message on Instagram, I would love to see what you create!

Okay, let's talk about the reason why you want a raised bed vegetable garden. Do you want to provide the majority of your family meals? Or do you want to just produce part of the vegetables that you will eat?

Taking the time to really think about these questions will help you determine how much space you will need to produce the amount of food desired. The amount of space and the amount of food that you desire to produce may not be compatible, but you can still grow a lot of fresh yummy food, you will just need to prioritize what to grow.

The data regarding how much space is needed to provide all the staples per person was conflicting so I will use my own experience as an example. I currently have 8 8'x4' raised beds, 2 2'x1', 3 8'x1' and 1 2'x2'. The amount of food we produce varies by season. We are located in zone 9B. This means that winter is pretty much non-existent. However, summer for us is brutal. Most people believe we can grow a lot in summer, but the excess heat and humidity can be as damaging as snow, so there is not a lot we can grow. I would say that we can produce anywhere from 1/3 to 1/4 of the staples we eat. You can produce even more than that, but it will depend on your space, diet, and your zone.

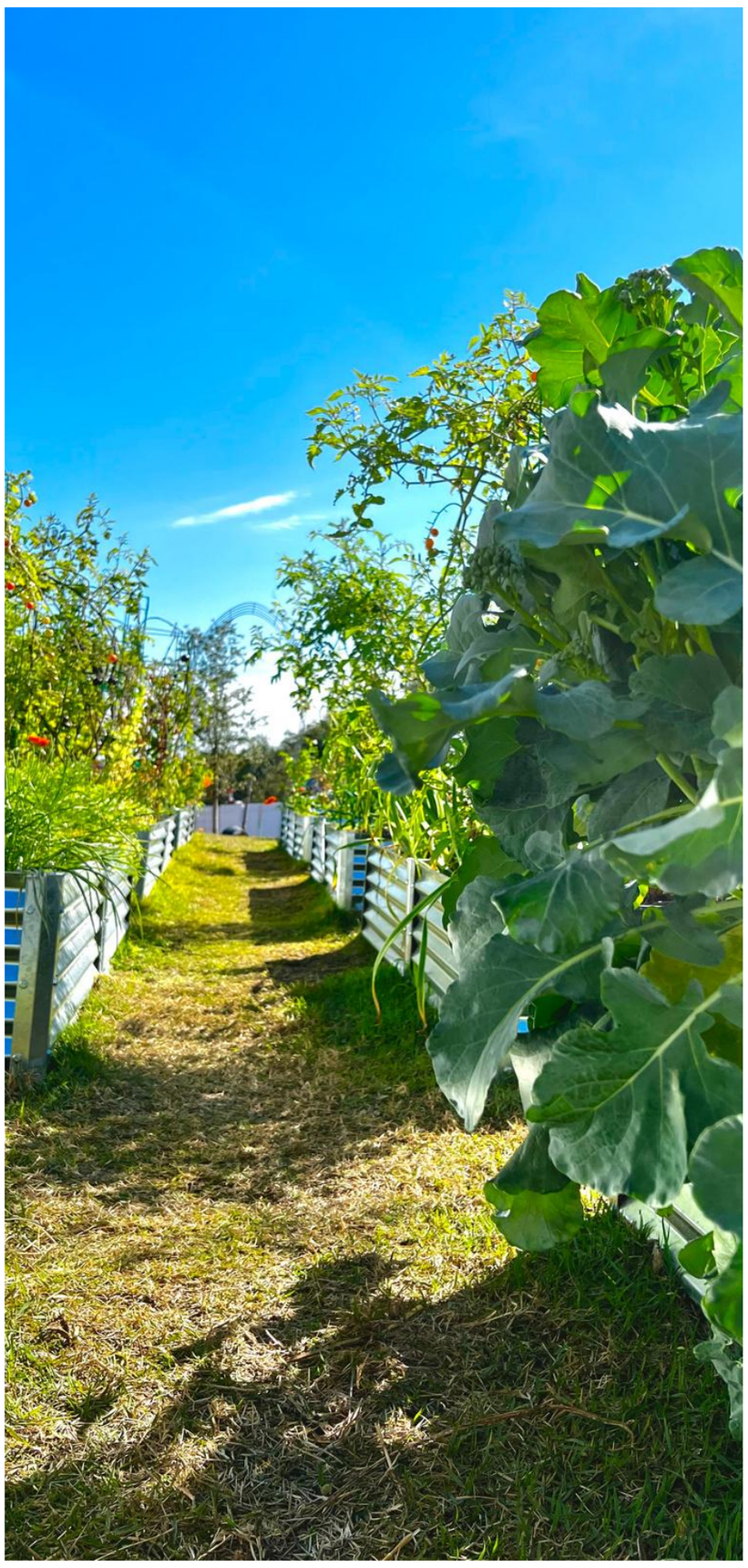
Why Raised Beds?

As much as I like the idea of you guys believing me when I say that raised beds are one of the best methods when it comes to backyard gardening, I believe that you need to know the different reasons.

- Most people in the US do not have good quality soil in their backyard. So gardening directly into the ground is challenging. Raised beds allow gardeners to set up the perfect soil medium to grow vegetables
- Let's be honest, as much as we like gardening, bending down to plant or weed gets old really fast. Well, raised beds make it easier on your back as less bending is required, and also less weeding.
- Raised beds can be anywhere from 10 inches tall to 3 feet tall. The height makes raised beds very accessible for people with mobility issues and kids.
- Watering is also reduced in raised beds as the soil is controlled and the water usage can be estimated very easily.
- Raised beds reduced certain pest problems such as moles and rabbits.
- Raised beds can also be designed to be very neat and organized

Location, location, location

Finding the perfect location is not only important when it comes to real estate; it is also essential for your garden. Although raised beds are not considered permanent structures - except raised beds made of brick - no one wants to move pounds and pounds of heavy soil if the wrong location is chosen.



Most vegetables prefer anywhere from 6-8 hours of direct sunlight - you can probably get away with 5. Direct sunlight means that the rays of sunshine are hitting the plant. A bright spot is not enough. Choose a south-facing location as it will maximize the amount of sunlight your beds receive.

Before you place your beds, look for permanent structures that could block the sunlight or structures that can become permanent (such as a growing tree). Also, think of how long you will be in this space and what future plans you may have for your backyard. Is having a pool on your wish list? Perhaps a patio? Think of any other structures you may want to add and how they impact the amount of sunlight your garden receives. I must confess that the location of our beds isn't perfect; however, our yard is very slopped, so we also had to consider that.

Suppose getting enough sunlight isn't a problem for you. You should look into accessibility. Is the space easy to access? Will you have a problem hauling compost or other items there? Will you be able to check the beds daily?

Another point to look for is how windy the location is. If where you are planning to add your raised bed garden is too windy, it may negatively affect the plants. So looking into a wind barrier such as a fence or nearby trees is a must in order to help your garden thrive.

It is essential to be close to a water source regardless of how you choose to water your beds. If the desired location doesn't have a water source, you will need to think of how far you are from a water source. Can a hose reach the raised bed location? If not, can you install a faucet close by or install an irrigation system? Let me quickly add a note that I prefer not to use sprinklers for the vegetable garden beds. Many pathogens can be carried through water, and watering hitting the leaves of some plants may increase the susceptibility to disease when their foliage gets wet.

What to plant

One of the biggest mistakes many first-time gardeners make is planting the wrong plant at the wrong time. Some plants are frost-sensitive, while others are sensitive to heat. So it is crucial to know when that plant will grow in your region. The back part of seed packages is a good general guide. However, sometimes it can be a little deceiving as some regions in the same zone have distinctive characteristics which do not provide the right conditions for the grower to plant certain crops. Joining local groups, talking to local growers to hear their feedback is helpful to find out more how to garden in your area.

Learning the first frost date and the last one is helpful but relying on this information alone isn't. What do I mean by that? Sometimes we can get a late frost, and an early frost. Also, structures and proximity to large bodies of water can also help protect your plants from the cold. If a frost is expected after the last day of the frost date you can try covering your plants and watering them before to protect them from the frost.

Getting started with your vegetable garden is exciting, so before picking out your seeds, stop and think, do I like to eat this crop? Will my family eat this vegetable/root/bulb? Well, if the answer is no, look for other options. Another big mistake first-time gardeners make is selecting seeds of vegetables/roots/bulbs that they do not eat just because it looks fun.

While there is nothing wrong with experimenting with a fun new variety, if food production is our main goal, we should consider whether that variety will perform well in our region or have other desirable characteristics in addition to looking cool.

Within different species, we have different varieties and cultivars. Those varieties and cultivars hold certain distinguishing characteristics that make them wanted. For example, one of my favorite tomato cultivars is called 'Black Beauty' (it's the tomato in the picture above). This cultivar produced well, and the look and taste are unbeatable. Some cultivars are known for their taste profile, size, ability to resist certain pathogens, resist extreme temperature, and others. So before choosing a vegetable solely because of how it looks, it is important to research what characteristics of the cultivar make them ideal for your location.

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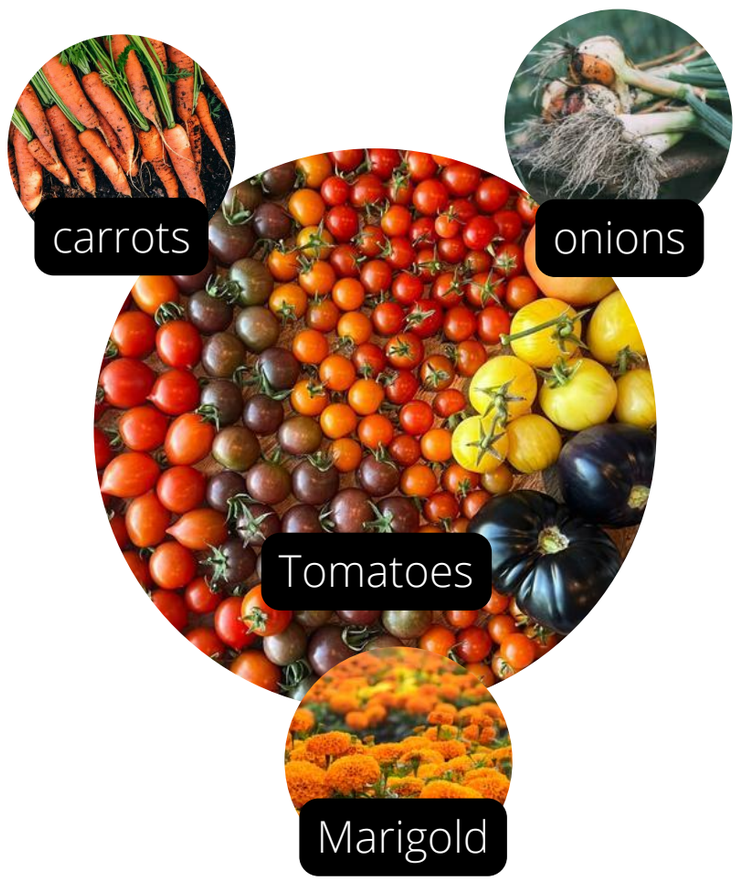
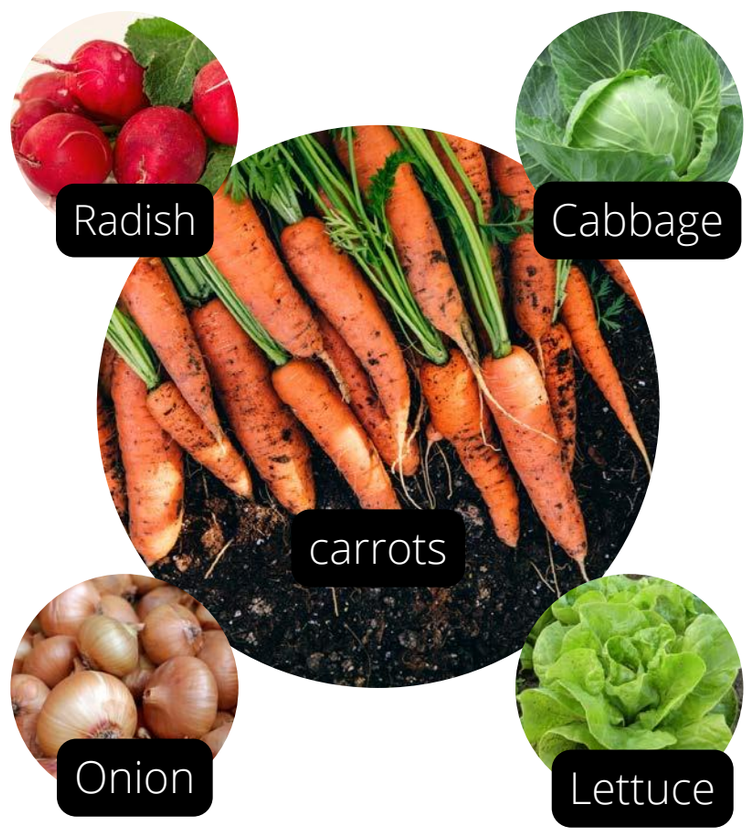
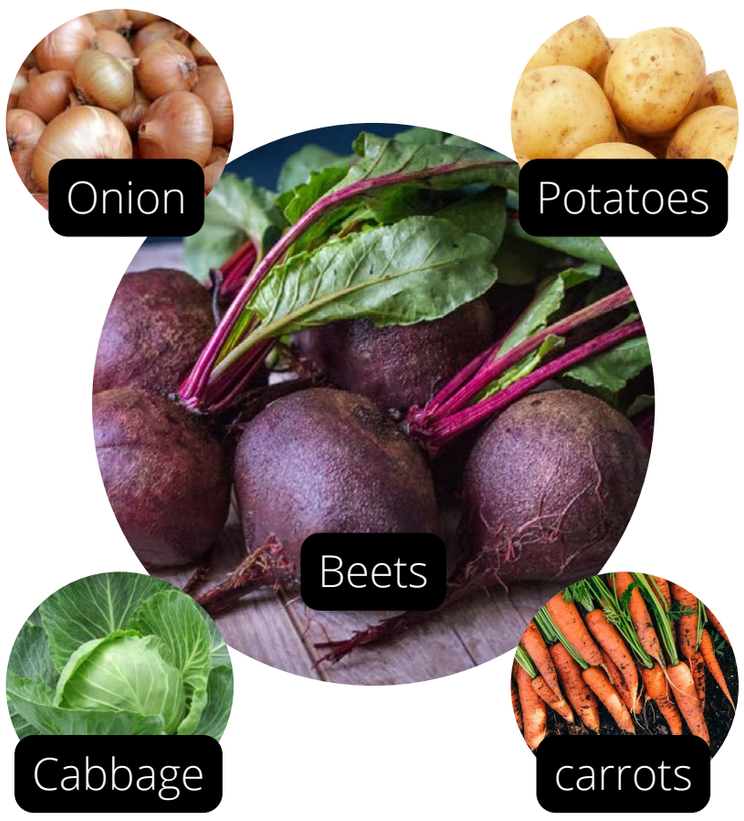
Companion Planting

Companion planting is based upon the principle that some plants thrive close to each other while others don't. Companion planting can also be used to deter pests. I created this little guide to showcase a few of the plants that thrive close to each other.







Soil

Repeat after me, "Soil health equals plant health." Whenever I hear someone asking me where they can get "dirt," I cry. Dirt is what you clean from your house; soil is an alive matrix that holds plants. Dirt isn't soil, and soil isn't dirt.

The most important aspect of growing healthy plants comes down to having good soil. The soil will be one of the most significant investments you'll make when starting your vegetable garden. The good news is that you will most likely only do it once and top it off with compost at the end of every season.

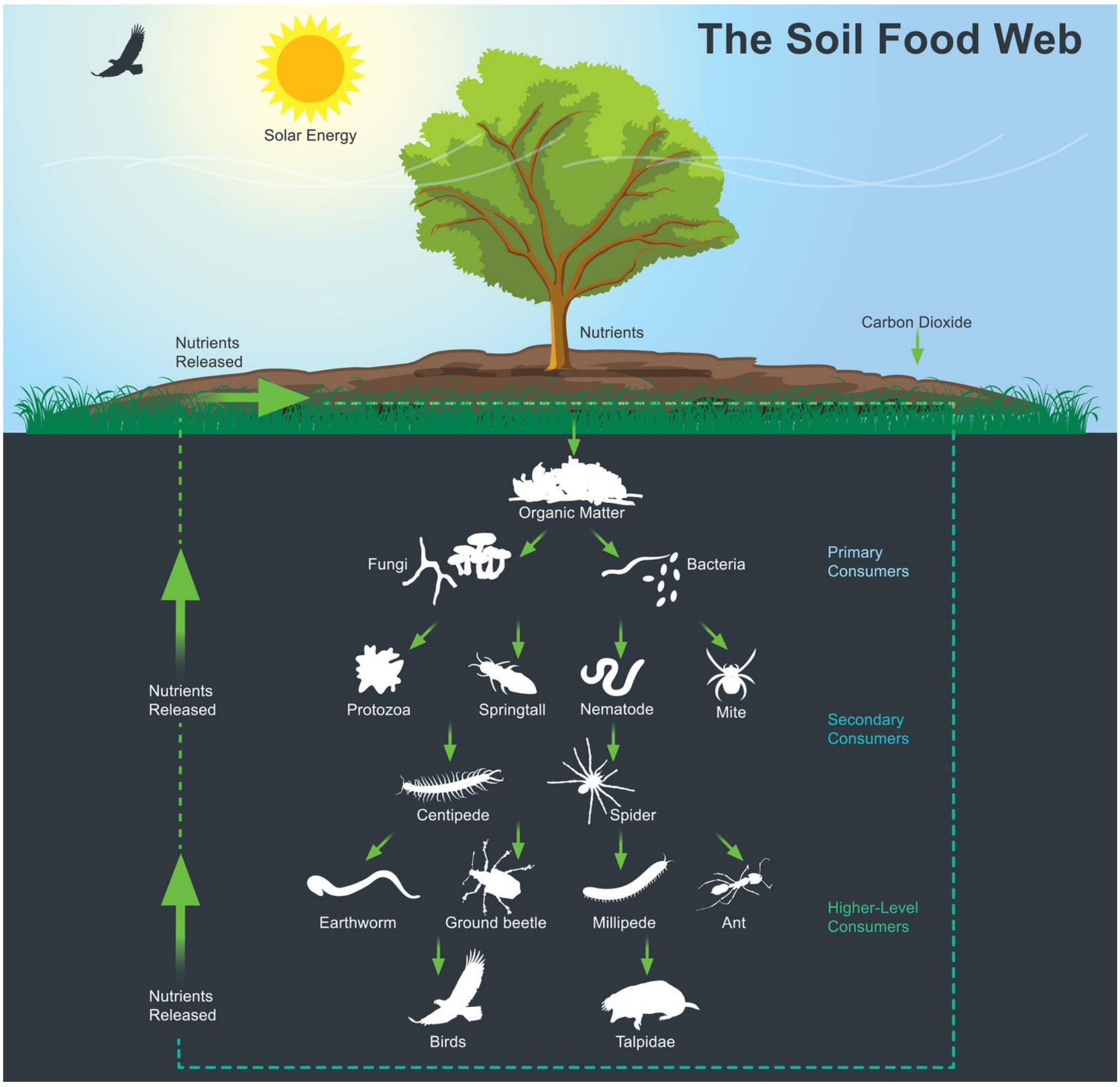
Preserving soil life is one of the critical factors of plant growth. By adopting certain practices, we can support soil life, therefore supporting plant health. If you haven't heard before, this piece of information may shock you. There are more microorganisms in a tablespoon of soil than are humans on the planet. Shocking, right? But do you want to know what is more shocking? We still don't understand the role of most of them!

However, there seems to be a commonality when it comes to supporting microorganisms. They all seem to benefit from soil rich in organic matter. Truth be told, as far as what I studied, increasing organic matter content in the soil appears to be the answer to almost every soil issue.

So what do we do to preserve soil life or add soil life to dead soil? Leaving the soil bare is one of the worse practices you can do. Many old scholars used to believe that the soil had to rest for some time before being used again. New research has shown that the soil needs living roots in order to stay alive (due to the relationship of these microorganisms with the roots).

Another practice that helps soil health is leaving the roots undisturbed. At the end of every season, instead of pulling the roots of plants out, it is a better practice just to cut the plants at soil level. I must also add that is why no-tilling gardening has been such a growing practice; tillage breaks soil structure and disturbs soil microorganisms.

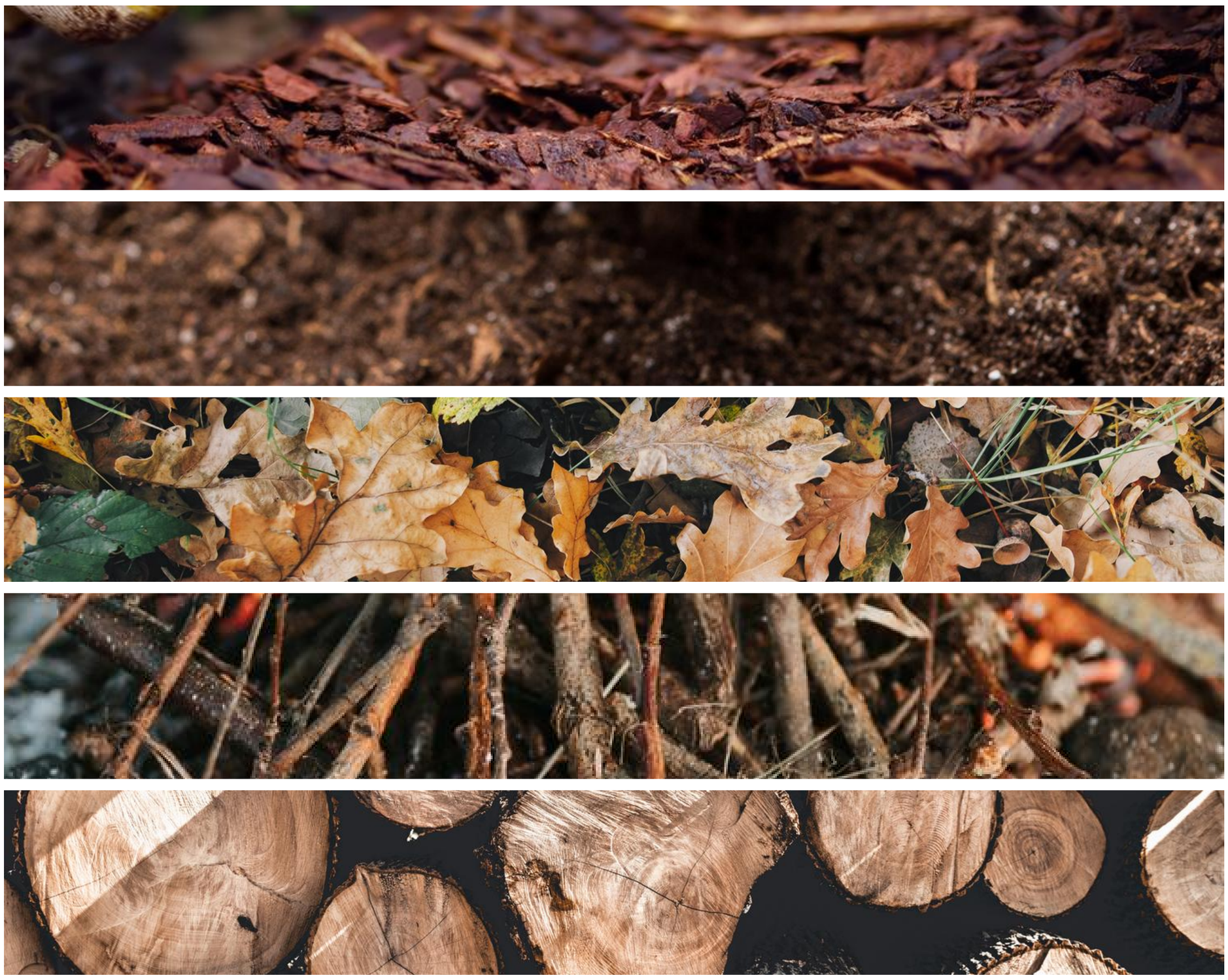
Soil



Other practices that will support soil life:

- Mulching. Mulch helps preserve soil life and aids in weed suppression and lower irrigation requirements. But beware of what kind of mulch you use, pine straw contributes to soil acidification, and dyed mulch leaches chemicals into the soil. So the best type of mulch to use is an all-natural dye-free mulch.
- Topping off the soil with organic matter at the end of every growing season.
- Using mycorrhizal fungi. These fungi create a symbiotic relationship with roots increasing nutrient absorption and water uptake.
- Inoculating your soil with microorganisms. There are many reputable suppliers that sell bacterial mixtures that can be added to your water system and used in the garden. If this isn't an option, you can make your own. Look into Korean Natural Farming.

Filling Your Raised Beds

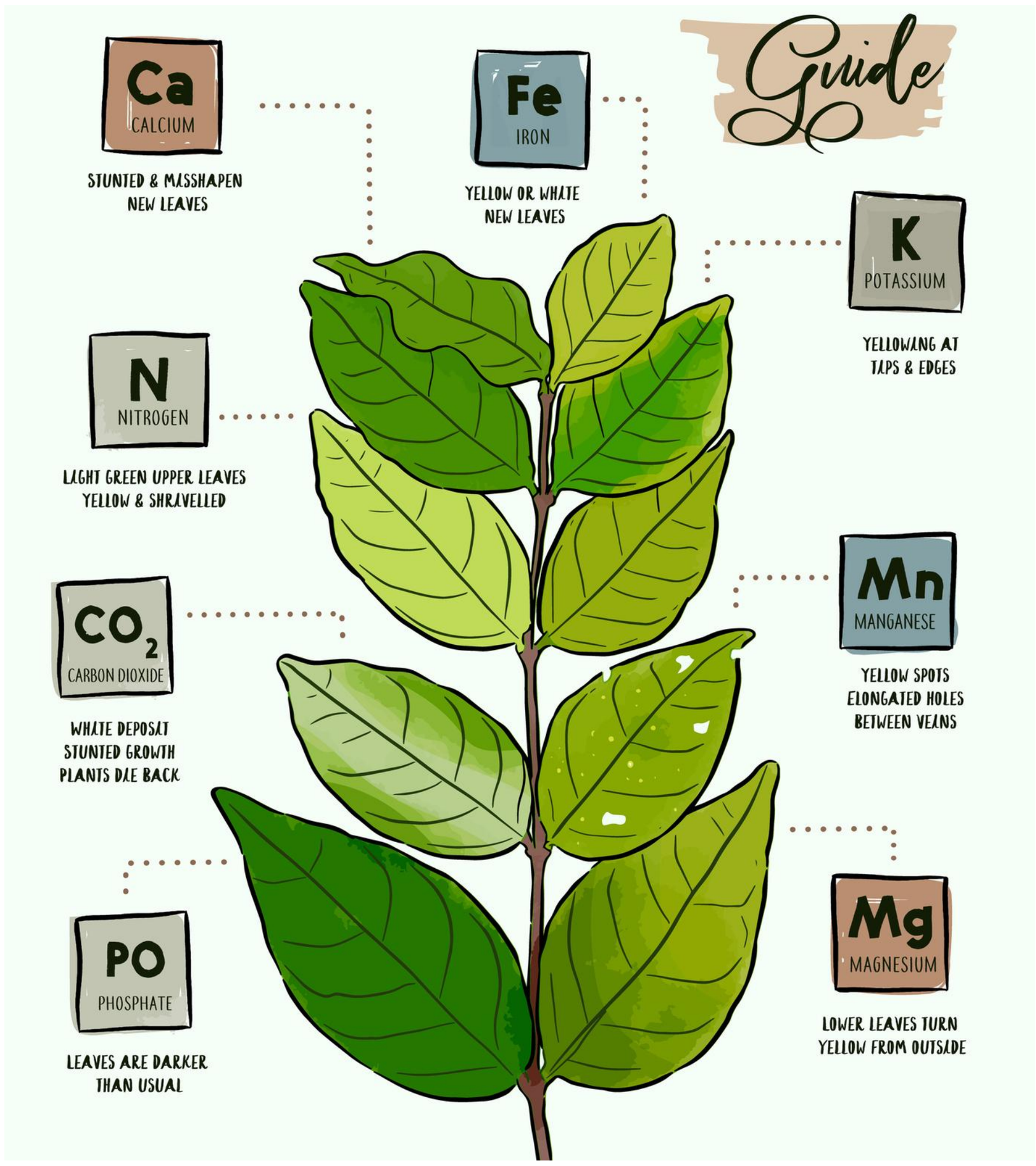


Now that we know a little bit about soil and how important soil is for overall plant health, let's talk about how we can fill your raised beds. Soil can be very pricey (especially if we buy bagged soil). So how can we have living soil without breaking the bank? I will tell you how I fill beds without spending loads of money. In the picture above we have something called "hugelkultur" which uses decaying materials to fill the bottom of raised beds. This method not only reduces costs but also helps to increase fertility, moisture-holding capacity, and others. This method uses large logs in the bottom, then twigs, leaves, compost and soil, and mulch at the very top.

For the top 6-12 inches you can fill the beds with organic bulk soil. Not all locations will have this option available, but if you do have it make sure you take advantage of it as it can save you hundreds of dollars. In the top 3-6 inches of your bed, you can fill it up with high-quality soil and/or high-quality compost.

Depending upon your location if moles and bermudagrass is a problem you may have to use hardware cloth and landscape fabric on the bottom to ensure you don't have a weed or pest problem. Where I live neither is a problem so we just used a cardboard box at the bottom.

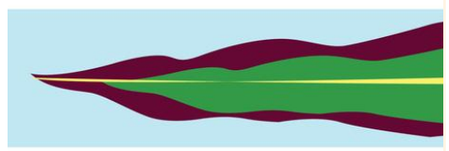
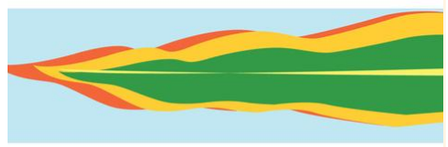
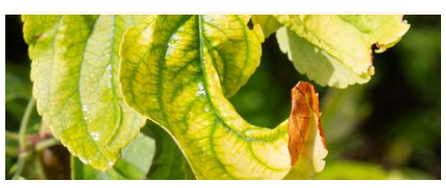
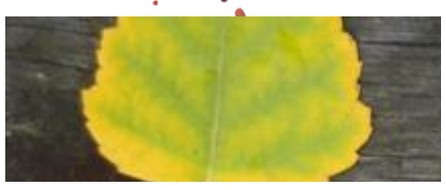
Plant Nutrients



Supplying the appropriate amounts of nutrients is vital to growing healthy plants. Unless a test analysis is done, most people do not know what their soil lacks until the plants start to show signs of nutrient deficiency. The ideal scenario is not allowing nutrient deficiency to reach this point as it will stunt plants and affect their development. But the truth is, most of us will see a nutrient deficiency in plants many times. Before determining that the plant is in fact lacking certain nutrients, it is important to analyze what environment the plant is in.

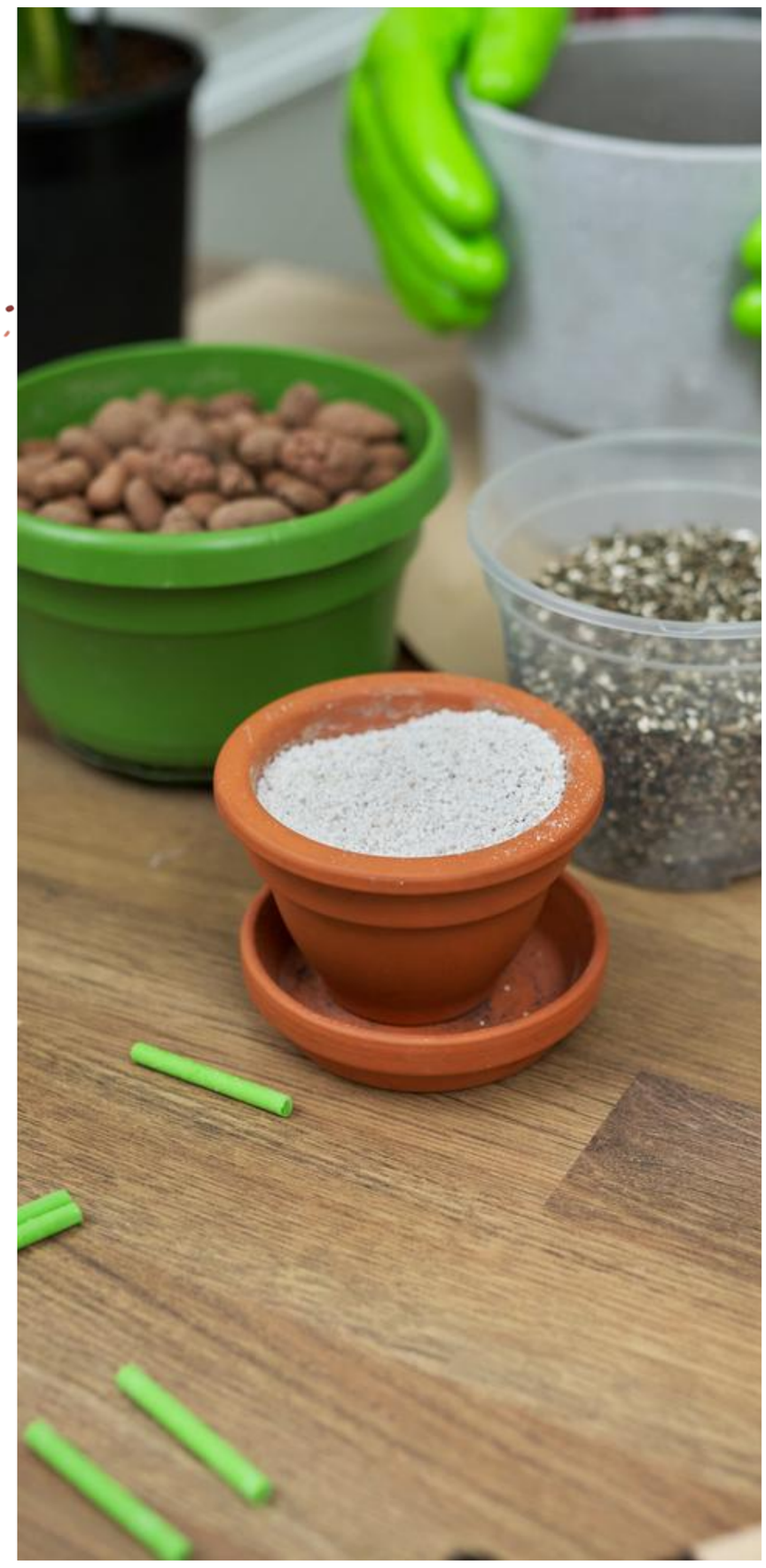
Inadequate sunlight, watering, chemical toxicity, insect damage, and others may be mistaken for nutrient deficiency. Before applying fertilizer to correct a possible nutrient deficiency, observe your surroundings to ensure that is the issue. "Removing" fertilizer from the soil may be almost impossible. An excess is also bad for nature as the fertilizer leaches and can reach the water table.

Plant Nutrients

Role	Nutrient	Deficiency signs	Picture
Primary	Nitrogen	General yellowing of leaves; growth stunting	
Primary	Phosphorus	Old leaves turn yellow and brown spots in the leaves.	
Primary	Potassium	Marginal yellowing and browning of older leaves, as well as, new leaves.	
Secondary	Calcium	Deformed young leaves; marginal yellowing of young leaves; interveinal chlorosis of young leaves	
Secondary	Magnesium	Marginal yellowing of young leaves; Interveinal chlorosis of young leaves	
Secondary	Sulfur	Yellowing of young leaves	
Micro-nutrient	Iron	Fading of leaves colors	
Micro-nutrient	Copper	Loss of color between veins; wilting and dropping	
Micro-nutrient	Manganese	Young leaves - Overall palling with veins staying slightly darker	
Micro-nutrient	Boron	Buds turns pale, distorted and dropping	
Micro-nutrient	Zinc	Leaves pale, dark spots on leaf margins	
Micro-nutrient	Molybdenum	Yellowing of leaves; brown spot on leaves	
Micro-nutrient	Chloride	Dappled chlorotic spots	
Non essential	Silica	leaves, stems and roots malformation	

*It is important to notice that visual symptoms may vary greatly depending upon the species. The best way to access deficiency is by doing a tissue analysis. However, this is not viable for backyard gardeners. The ideal scenario is having a fertilizer schedule to avoid deficiencies.

Fertilizing



As plants grow, it depletes the soil of nutrients, so feeding the soil during and at the end of the growing season is vital to growing healthy plants. So how often and what kind of fertilizer should you use?

At the beginning of the season, I like to move the mulch to the top of my beds, add a couple of bags of quality compost, and use an all-purpose organic vegetable fertilizer on the beds (3-4-4 or 5-5-5). The back of the vegetable fertilizer should have very clear application rates, making it very easy to know how much to apply.

When transplanting seedlings, I recommend adding a handful of quality compost into the hole the seedlings will be transplanted along with mycorrhizal fungi into the roots. I recommend fertilizing the beds 2 to 3 weeks before transplanting the seedlings and I recommend covering the soil with mulch until it is time to plant. A light monthly application of all-purpose fertilizers also does wonders to keep the plants happy. Always apply less than you think you need, as your plant can survive with less but can die with more.

At the beginning of the growing season, I like to do a light application of fish emulsion every other week for a month or two to encourage the growth of the plants. Be careful with fish emulsion with root crops as it encourages the growth of leaves and stems. For crops such as carrots, we are interested in growing big tap roots, not greens.

Azomite is another soil amendment that we use once in a while to add micronutrients into the soil. To find out how much or how often to apply into your soil the label is the best guide. Azomite adds micronutrients to the soil so it is an important soil ammendment.

It is also important to notice that I recommended keeping the roots in the soil and not removing them when planting the new seedlings. I prefer not to till the beds as tilling breaks the soil structure, releases carbon into the atmosphere, and disturbs the microorganisms in the soil. So when adding fertilizer we just lightly sprinkle it on the top of the soil to incorporate the soil amendments.

Seeds

Remember when I said that your biggest expense will be soil? Well, forget about that, seeds will make your bank account go negative (Just kidding). But on a serious note, seeds can become very expensive very fast, especially if you look at all the different seeds websites. I think that every gardener experiments with fun varieties, but if you want to grow vegetables that grow well you will need to look into varieties that will do well in your area. Some varieties are more susceptible to some pathogens than others so looking into resistant varieties/cultivars may save you some headaches. For example, where I live root-knot nematodes can be a problem. Certain species of tomato, for example, are resistant to this pathogen. So looking for varieties that carry certain traits will save you some trouble. Now let's talk about certain terms in the seed world:

- Cultivar is a term that stands for cultivated variety. Cultivars are protected by those who create them. Selective breeding of different varieties creates a cultivar.
- Variety is a group of plants that has one or more distinguishing characteristics. A cultivar can be considered a variety but a variety can not be a cultivar.
- Heirloom seeds are open-pollinated varieties that have been passed down over generations.

Seeds

- Hybrid seeds are created by cross-pollinating two different species. Two different bred cultivars can also create hybrid seeds.
- GMO stands for genetically modified seeds that have specific genes added or subtracted from their genetic code. GMO seeds are not available for sale easily, and usually, only large-scale operations have access to them.
- Organic - organic seeds are grown using organic methods according to the USDA standards for organic.

Now that we know what the terms mean let's talk about seed suppliers. Most of you are probably familiar with some brands as they are available at big box stores year-round. I won't lie to you; I sometimes buy one or two seed packages at their seed section. But in general, I feel that they lack the quality and diversity of some online seed suppliers.

- Jhonny Seeds is my favorite seed supplier as they have many improved varieties and organic seeds. They are also an employee-owned company and sell wholesale.
- Bakers Creek is the place where you will have problems, and you may ask why? They have the most beautiful catalog, and it's very easy to overspend when shopping for cool-looking plants.
- Botanical Interests, it's a good seed place but doesn't have an extended list of seeds as the previous two, but it's worth checking it out.

Sowing your seeds

Some species benefit from indirect sowing, but others don't. Most root vegetables and cucurbits are either sensitive to root disturbance or impractical to transplant. I recommend direct sowing carrots, beets, parsnips, watermelons, melons, and squashes. If your growing season is short, you can start the cucurbits inside, but make sure you start the seeds in a 4-6 inches pot.

The ideal soil mixture for seeds started indoors is light and fluffy. We want to have a mix that seedlings do not have a problem emerging and spreading their roots in. I recommend using a seed starting mix instead of bagged soil. Bagged soils are denser and can carry the damping-off fungi. Seed starting mixes are available at most big box stores or online.

I like to pre moisten my mix and then fill the trays. The recommended sowing depth for each seed is different, but generally speaking, bigger seeds can be buried deeper than smaller seeds; your seed package will be your best guide to determining the proper depth. I use humidity domes to maintain even moisture until the seedlings sprout, and then I take them off. The light should be 2-4 inches above the seedlings; anything more than that will result in leggy seedlings.

Most seedlings should be sowed 4-8 weeks before being transplanted outside. It is important to harden off your seeds before transplanting them. You can do that by increasing the amount of sunlight exposure by one hour each day until you reach 6 hours. I also recommend using a fan for a couple of hours a day on your seedlings 1-2 weeks before transplanting to help build stronger stems.

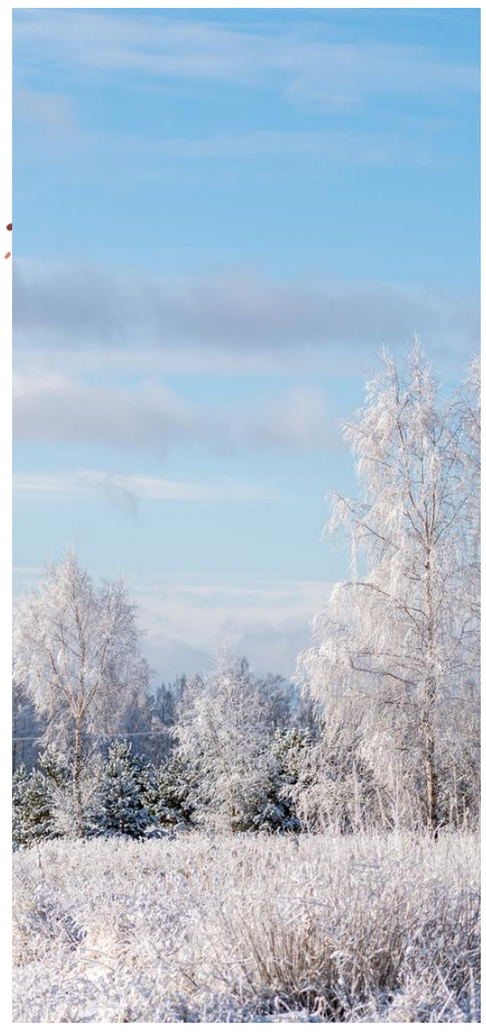
Irrigation

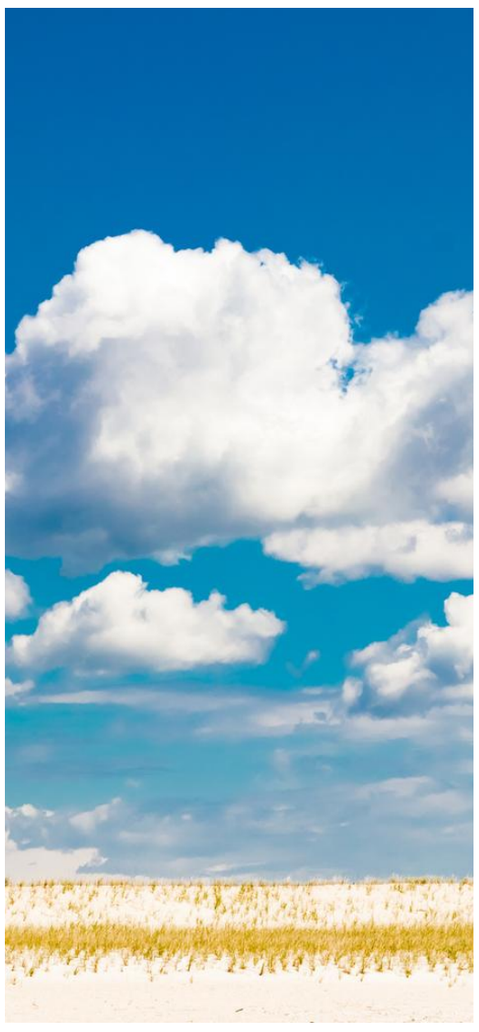
Another benefit of raised garden beds is you don't have to irrigate as often as other gardening methods. However, constant moisture contributes to better vegetables in general. So it is vital to think of how you will ensure that your beds are almost moist. We are currently undergoing the project of installing a drip irrigation system in our beds because hand watering takes so much time and effort.

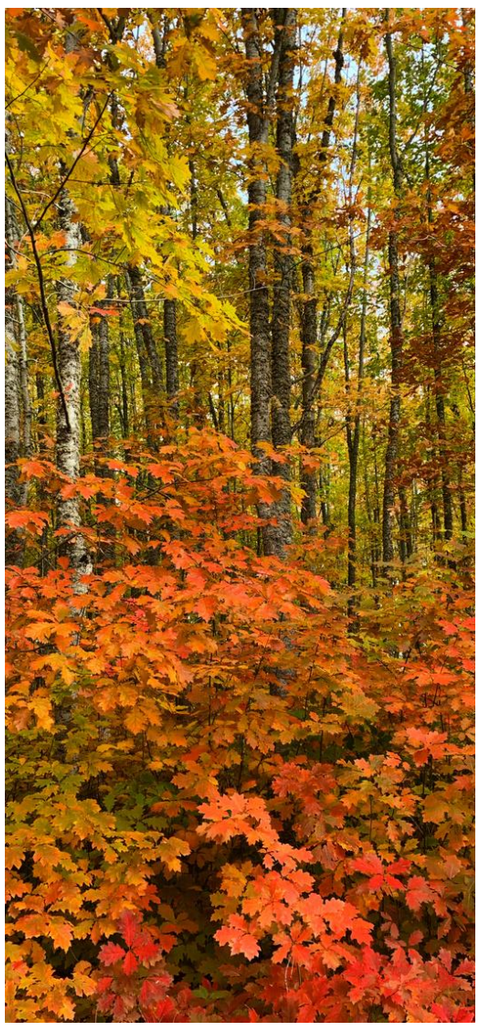
Many irrigation methods are available, such as hand irrigation, drip, overhead sprinkler, soaker hoses, and others. The least effective method when it comes to water conservation is sprinklers, it wastes around 25% of the water. Another issue with a sprinkler is that it wets the leaves of plants. Many crops are sensitive to the wetting of leaves increasing the likelihood of pathogens. An example is members of the cucurbits family that are prone to powdery mildew (fungi) when the leaves are wet.

My favorite irrigation methods for raised beds are soaker hoses and drip irrigation because they are the most water-efficient system and pretty simple to install. Both systems can be partially automated or fully automated. How often you have run, those will vary depending on your region and the time of the year. You can verify moisture by buying a moisture meter or by feeling the soil with your fingers. Your soil moisture should be around 50-75%.

Seasons







Gardening in Florida is totally different from Gardening in North Carolina, which is different from gardening in Colorado, and so on. Even within the same state gardening can change a lot as different elevations, proximity to large bodies of water, urbanization, and microclimates affect your garden. That is why it is important to know your seasons and from there, observe your particular microclimate.

Gardening year-round can be possible almost anywhere in the US (I am unsure about this statement in areas that receive extreme snow for long periods of time). How is that possible, you may ask? Looking for cultivars adapted to your area is one way, planting the right plant in the right place is another way, and extending your season is another way of gardening year-round.

First, let's talk about frosty tender and frosty hardy plants. Some plants are sensitive to frost while others will handle frost, so that will give you an idea of what to plant at different times of the year. I will give you some examples of heat-loving plants and "cold" loving plants.

Frost tender (aka warm weather lovers) :

- Tomatoes
- Eggplants
- Okra
- Cowpeas
- Corn
- Sweet Potatoes
- Cucurbits
- Peppers

Seasons

Frost Hardy plants (tolerates cool weather):

- Brassicas (Broccoli, kale, collards, Brussel sprouts, and cabbage)
- Amaryllidaceae family (green onions, leeks, and sweet onions)
- Spinach
- Cilantro
- Garlic
- Arugula
- Parsley
- Rosemary

Semi Hardy plants (can tolerate some cold up to 30F)

- Potatoes
- Lettuce
- Carrots
- Beets
- Cauliflower
- English peas
- Swiss Chard

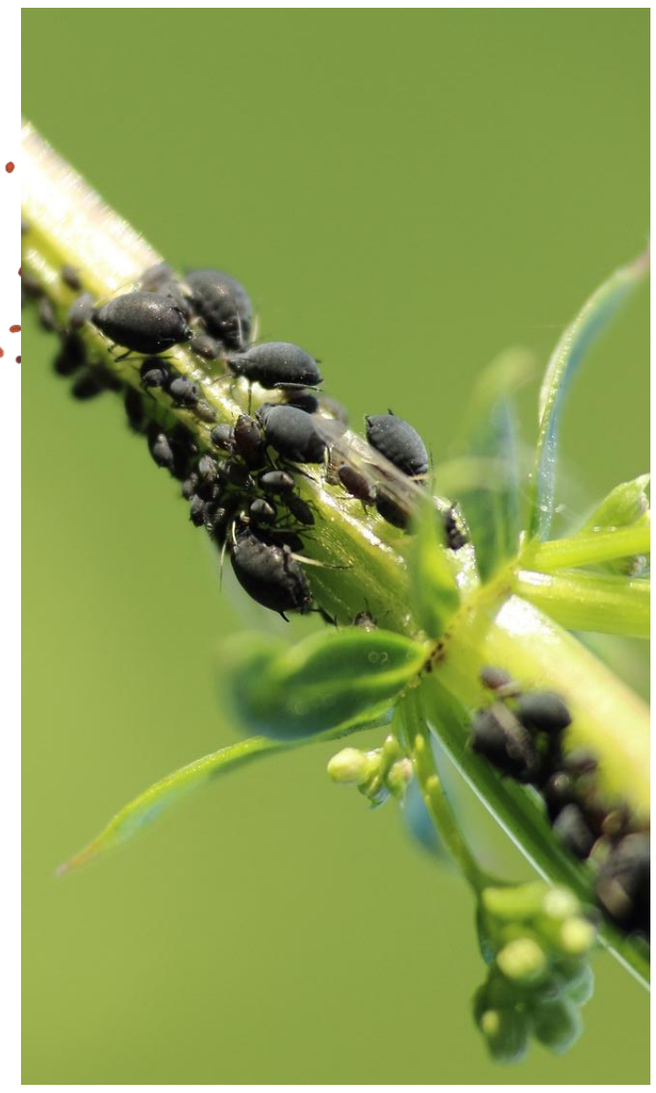
Now that we know when some of the most common veggies will thrive let's dig into extending the season so we can harvest them longer. Living in a place with extremely hot summers but very mild winters and living in an area with mild summers and extreme winters pose different advantages. I live in a place where winter is almost nonexistent; we have about a week or so out of the year where we get frost (of course, this number varies from year to year). When the majority of the US is covered in snow, we are outside in flip-flops. However, the heat in summer is so extreme that it makes me wonder if we have not moved a couple of miles closer to the sun. It is honestly a blessing and curse.

Tools to extend your season:

- Shade cloth
- Cold frame
- Starting seeds indoors
- Mulch

For example, if in your region the last frost date is late, what you can do to get ahead of the season is to plant some of the crops indoors and transplant them outdoor. If, after transplanting, frost is still a risk, you can cover your beds. You can also use cold frames if your region gets snow. In Florida, the heat is the problem, so we can extend our season by using shade cloth until the beginning of the summer.

Pests



A big fallacy that many beginners gardeners fall for is believing that their vegetable garden will be pest-free just because it is small scale and/or organic practices are used. You will notice that in your first-week gardening you will most likely encounter every single pest on earth (or that is how its going to feel). There are some pests that are more common than others, some plants are more prone to pest pressure than others, and more insects of a species than others.

In my first year of vegetable gardening, we got a little bit of everything. Our biggest enemy was armyworm caterpillars. In our first year growing cut flowers, beetles and caterpillars were our biggest challenge. My frustration turned into a manhunt for beetles by investigating almost every single flower and handpicking them. Below are the most common garden pests and how to handle them.

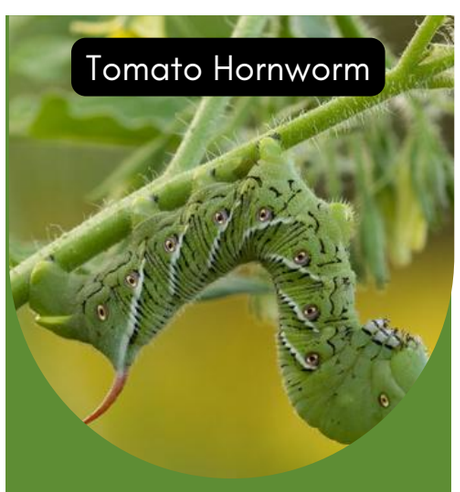
Common garden pests and how to handle them

Aphids

Sap sucking insects that reproduce very rapidly.

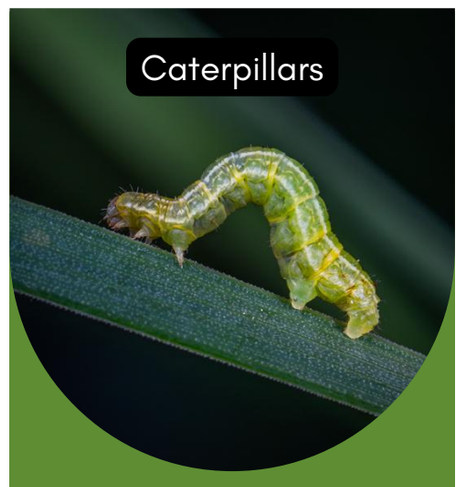
Mealybug

Sap sucking insects that secrets honeydew.



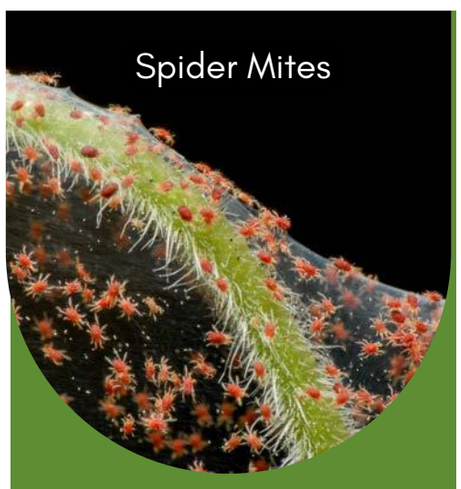
Tomato Hornworm

There voracious eaters can decimate a tomato plant overnight.



Caterpillars

Larval stage of butterflies, and moths.



Spider Mites

Small insects that are normally seen underneath plant leaves.

Thrips

3/16 inches long insects that normally eats fruits and flower buds.

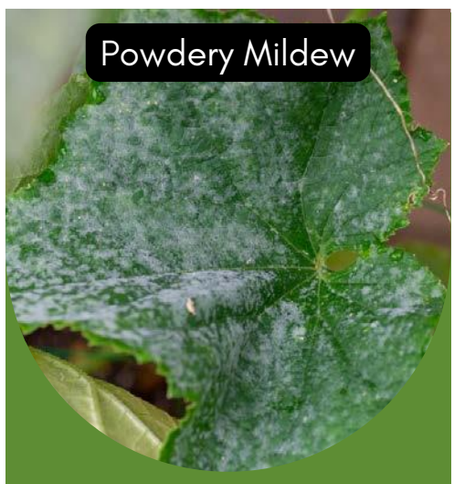
Scale

Sap sucking insects that can be armored or soft.

Leaf footed bug

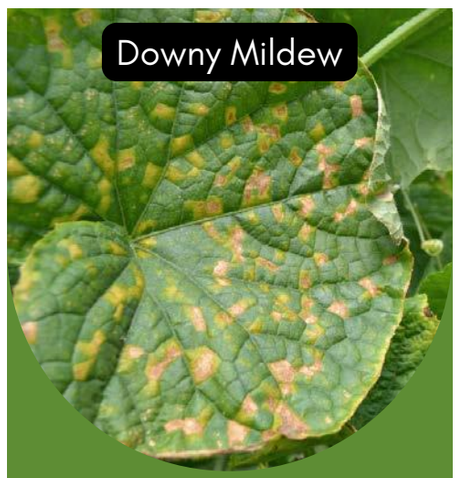
Feeds on fruits. This insect can spread viruses and bacterias.

Common garden pathogens and what cause them



Agent: Fungi
Cause: high humidity and low soil moisture.

Agent: Fungi
Cause: pathogen overwinter in soil and plant debris

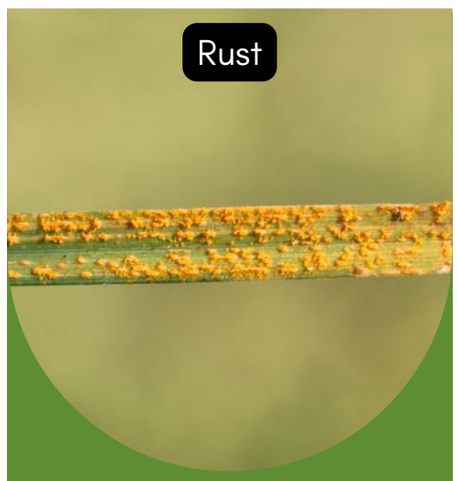


Agent: fungus like oomycete
Cause: wetting of the leaves contributes to spread.

Agent: virus
Cause: spread by contact insects, pollen and infected seeds

Agent: Fungi
Cause: thrives in cool and wet soils

Agent: Fungi
Cause: grows after sap sucking insects leaves honeydew in leaves



Agent: Fungi
Cause: high humidity and moderate weather

Agent: Fungi
Cause: spread through contaminated material

Common garden friends and what they prey

Warning! "Sting" can be extremally painful.

Preys on caterpillars, roaches, tomato hornworm and others.

Preys on aphids, mosquitos, loppers, caterpillars, beetles, and others.

Adult aids in pollination. Larvae preys on aphids, mealybugs, and scale.

Preys on flies, mosquitos and midges.

Aids in pollination. Preys on caterpillars. Some species feeds of aphids honeydew.

Preys on aphids and other soft bodied insects.

Hoverfly larvae preys on aphids and thrips.

Feeds on nectar and small insects like aphids.

IPM

Lacewing Larvae eating aphid

Now that you know some of the most common garden pests, pathogens, and garden friends, let's dig into IPM (Integrated Pest Management). This approach combines different common sense techniques to control pests economically and environmentally friendly. This method incorporates cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical control to handle pest pressure.

Taking the time to sit and observe your vegetable garden is not only relaxing but also important. When walking around your garden, take the time to inspect your plants to see what kind of insects are present, if any pest damage is occurring, or if any plants are showing any signs of disease. If any damage is present, what is causing it? Are you losing a lot of produce to insect pressure or only a few? Can the damage be prevented? If the answer is yes, but you still see the damage, let's explore how you can implement the IPM approach to reduce pest pressure.

- Cultural control reduces pest habitat by modifying the garden environment. This method includes sanitation, crop rotation, and using resistant varieties.
- Mechanical control uses physical means to control pests, such as roll covers.
- Biological control uses natural enemies of pests to eliminate or reduce pest incidents.
- Chemical control uses pesticides to kill pests. In our garden, we only use organic methods of pest control.

Chemical Control

In case cultural, mechanical, and biological control doesn't work, chemical control will take place. I only use organic pesticides. Let's talk about a few options and what pathogens or pests it targets.

- Neem oil - aphids, mealybugs, scale, whiteflies, mites, fungi, and others
- BT (Bacillus thuringiensis) is a naturally occurring bacteria in the soil - caterpillars
- Orange oil - aphids, mites, and fire ants
- Horticultural Oil - aphids, caterpillar eggs, leafhoppers, mealybug, mites, scale, spider mites, thrips, and whiteflies
- Copper Fungicide
- Soap (Castile) spray - aphids, mites, mealybugs, and whiteflies
- Homemade garlic spray - aphids, mites, caterpillars, armyworms, cutworms, beetles, slugs, mosquitoes, and flies.

Regardless of pesticide you choose to use, I recommend applying late in the afternoon as some of these pesticides may burn leaves when applied in the middle of the day. Applying natural pesticides in the late evening is also important as bees will retreat to their hive for the night at that point.

Final Thoughts

I hope that this e-book was helpful and inspiring for you! My main goal is to encourage as many individuals as possible to grow food. I believe that we can all make a difference by growing part of what eat, even if it's only a herb! Our bodies are sacred vessels and we should treat them like so by feeding them the best quality food we can.

Gardening is not only beneficial for our physical health by providing the best quality food possible but it is also beneficial for our mental health! Gardening is therapeutic! With every beneficial plant we add into our backyard we are making the world a better place for our insects, animals, and environment overall.

If this book was one of the tools that helped you get started I would love to hear from you and see what you have grown!

Happy gardening,
Stephanie (The Raised Bed Guide).

Follow me on social media

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Ready to learn more?

After reading the guide, if you find yourself hungry to dig deeper and sharpen your gardening skills, my Raised Bed Gardening Masterclass might be just what you need.

As a horticultural and landscape design technician, I'll be guiding you through over 50+ raised bed gardening video lessons, including helpful downloadable guides and exclusive live videos in our private Facebook group where you can follow along throughout the seasons, ask questions, and grow together with me. We will cover topics such as:

- Organic pest management
- A library of growing guides
- Plant spacing
- Variety selection
- Working with the seasons
- Companion planting
- Setting up your raised beds
- Automating your irrigation
- Soil health and fertilization
- Seed starting tips
- Plant supports
- And so much more!

THE RAISED BED GUIDE

MASTERCLASS

Watch Now

Resource Pages

In these pages, I will be adding the link to some of the products I use and some of the products I like from Amazon. The amazon links are affiliate links, when using them we earn a very small percentage (and it does not cost you anything!).

- All-purpose vegetable fertilizer - https://amzn.to/3jLAMoh
- Biochar/Humichar - https://amzn.to/3OfgeTk
- Seed Starting mix -https://amzn.to/3uNuvyX
- Azomite- https://amzn.to/3vmC26W
- Mycorrhizae fungi- https://amzn.to/3xy4MMO
- Nursery pot 6 inches - https://amzn.to/3vmBl8e
- Humic Acid - https://amzn.to/3KSplHi
- Neem Oil and sprayer - https://amzn.to/3EiVvtb
- Horticultural Oil- https://amzn.to/3M67D3m
- BT- https://amzn.to/3rxTEf0
- Worm Casting - https://amzn.to/3OgShuD
- Copper Fungicide - https://amzn.to/3KUyLSM
- Perlite - https://amzn.to/3vnSzY9
- Vermiculite - https://amzn.to/3L2z3H6
- Tumbling composter - https://amzn.to/3vqYHPd
- Worm bin - https://amzn.to/3JlPCGV
- Earthworms - https://amzn.to/3Olg7FY
- Fish emulsion - https://amzn.to/3M7VA5F
- Microbial innoculant - https://amzn.to/37VnGSG
- Seed Storage - https://amzn.to/37mzw8w
- Grow light - https://amzn.to/3uOd6G9
- Seed pots- https://amzn.to/3jKVO6B
- Seed Tray - https://amzn.to/3MbPD7G

Recommended Books:

- Teaming with microbes - https://amzn.to/3KSnm5N
- Teaming with fungi - https://amzn.to/3jH0ACa
- Teaming with microbes - https://amzn.to/3KPktmz

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Garden QA

How much work is it to upkeep?

Daily it's no more than 5 minutes (sometimes around 10 minutes). However, 3-4 times a year, it will take anywhere from 5-10 hours to re mulch areas, amend the soil with organic fertilizer, and do necessary pruning.

We did the hard part, so you won't need to worry about it.

What kind of plants do you have?

We have fruit trees, perennial plants, edible perennials, native flowers, butterfly host plants, and more.

What kind of irrigation system do you have?

We have a fully automated drip system in the food forest, in-ground beds, and raised beds. You can turn it on and off as you would like, or you can set up the timer, and it will irrigate automatically.

This system should last 10-15 years if upkept (and it's only one year old). The cool part about drip irrigation system is that is the most water-efficient irrigation (utilizing 90% of the water distributed by the system), and it reduces plant pathogens. If desired, it can easily be changed!

Do you have to replant your veggies?

We plant accordingly with the seasons, cool-season vegetables (carrots, leafy greens, and others) are cultivated in the cooler months; warm-season vegetables (tomatoes, peppers, and others) are cultivated in spring and fall; hot-season vegetables (sweet potatoes, okra, hot peppers) are cultivated on summer.

So yes, we replant these veggies every few months accordingly to the season.

What if I don't want to maintain the garden?

If you do decide to purchase our beautiful home, it's up to you to decide what to do with what we created.

Garden QA

How many fruit trees do you have?

We have around 15 trees (we said around because we could have missed something). All of our fruit trees are from species adapted to Florida. Meaning that we bought them in specialty nurseries that carry them. The fruit trees are:

-Banana Dwarf nam wah
-Banana Puerto rican plantain
-Banana Grand nain
-Peanut butter fruit (yes, it tastes like peanut butter)
-Florida hass avocado (grafted)
-Barbados cherry
-Florida plum
-Peach (Florida prince)
-Peach (Tropic beauty)
-Nectarine (UFBeauty)
-Lime (key lime)
-Passion fruit (yellow possum)
-Passion fruit (purple possum)
-June plum
-Mulberry (Sri lanka)

Why is the back area where the fruit trees are covered in mulch?

When designing our backyard, we considered things such as the level of maintenance, sustainability, and adaptability to Florida's climate. We created a food forest system due to their mimicking of natural ecosystems, resulting in sustainable, self-maintaining setups.

They leverage the principles of permaculture, featuring diverse layers of trees, shrubs, and ground plants that all serve unique roles in the system. With trees providing shade and leaf mulch, shrubs enriching the soil through their root systems, and ground plants deterring weeds, each layer contributes to the overall health of the forest.
Moreover, these systems can foster increased biodiversity, creating a robust environment that deters pests and diseases. This inherent resilience and interdependence within the food forest results in productive landscapes that require fewer external inputs over time, while providing food, materials, and habitats for local wildlife.

What kind of veggies do you grow?

We grow everything thing, but we plan accordingly with the season. Our last big harvest was 150 onions and 150 garlic. Yes, we do use most of it, but anything extra we share with friends and family!

Some of our garden harvest