

Incorporating Vegetables into the Landscape

Would you like to grow vegetables but have no room for a traditional vegetable garden plot? Get creative by adding a few vegetable plants into your current landscape. Many vegetables are beautiful used as a single plant or as small groupings to complement your existing shrubs and flowers.



Vegetables in a border bed

You can train vine crops such as cucumbers and beans to climb a fence or trellis. Container plantings are attractive accents when placed in established beds or on the patio. These methods won't produce huge crops, but they can provide sufficient yields for your table and will delight you!

The following pages provide some basic guidelines for planting and growing vegetables in the Kansas City area as well as a list of commonly grown vegetables that should do well when incorporated into your landscape.

Where to Plant Vegetables

Look over your landscape for possible areas and evaluate their suitability for growing vegetables. Envision the sight of brightly colored greens such as lettuce or spinach tucked in between your shrubs or blooming okra plants in the center or back of a flowerbed. Use your imagination.



Okra in the center of an island bed



Leafy plants in a shrub bed

Consider the following when planning.

Sunlight Vegetables require six or more hours of sunlight each day.

TIP: Some areas may provide sufficient sunlight to grow cool season crops (see the next page) before shade trees fully leaf out.

Soil type Is your soil loamy, clay or sandy? Most soil in our area is clay and should be amended by adding compost into the area for better growing conditions.

Space Look for available areas of any size. They may be...

- Patches of soil as small as a square foot between current permanent plantings
- Areas in flowerbeds
- Areas along fence lines
- Larger areas such as border plantings in current beds or along walk areas

Be innovative. To conserve space, think “up.”
What can you grow on a fence, trellis or arbor?



Vine crop on a trellis

Moisture and drainage All plants need adequate moisture to grow but they also need good drainage so their roots won't rot. Don't plant them under a down spout where they will drown from rain runoff from your roof. When planting vegetables in a container, remember that it must have good drainage holes.



Cucumber in a container

Planting in containers Container planting can be a good home for a wide array of vegetables from root crops, leafy crops, and fruit crops to vines. Smaller, compact bush-type plantings generally work the best. Use potting soil mix as the growing medium rather than soil from your landscape. Keep the containers well watered. They dry out much more rapidly than the ground in your landscape plantings.

Select containers of sufficient size to accommodate your plant selection.

- Small 1-3 gal. pots for leafy greens
- Medium 3-5 gal. pots for bush beans, carrots, cucumbers, squash
- Large 5-10 gal. pots for tomatoes, peppers, vine crops

What to Plant

What vegetables appeal to your taste buds and are appropriate for the areas available? Remember to place the right plants in the right place where they will be happy and thrive. Smaller compact plants such as dwarf or bush type work well in landscapes.



Cool Season Crops		Warm Season Crops		Climbing Crops
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They can tolerate some frost and temperatures between 55 and 70°F • Fine for growing in spring and fall 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are readily harmed by frost and grow poorly in cold soil • They like temperatures between 65 and 80°F 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plants that will grow vertically • They need support such as a fence or trellis
Beets	Kale	Beans	Peppers	Cucumbers
Broccoli	Kohlrabi	Celery	Pumpkins	Muskmelon
Brussels sprouts	Lettuce	Corn	Squash	Pole beans
Cabbage	Onions	Cucumbers	Sweet potatoes	Red-stemmed Malabar spinach
Carrots	Peas	Eggplant	Tomatoes	Squash
Cauliflower	Potatoes	Malabar spinach	Watermelon	Tomatoes
Chard	Spinach	Muskmelon	Zucchini	
Collards	Turnips	Okra		

Temperature requirements

Plant cool season crops early in the season (usually in March or early April). They need time to mature before the heat of summer arrives. Most leafy and early cool season vegetables are only in the ground for 8 to 10 weeks. Plant them in the spring, follow them by flower transplants and warm season vegetable plants, and then follow them again by a fall planting of cool season veggies.

Plant warm season crops later (usually around Mother's Day). They need warmer soil and thrive in the heat of the summer.

Planting zone

Kansas City is classified as being in USDA plant hardiness zone 5.

Growing season.

The *average* last frost date in the Kansas City area is April 15, and the *average* first frost date in the fall is October 15. Average means the chances of a frost occurring are 50 percent with the chances decreasing beyond that date.

Good combinations

Plant root crops among flowers that tend to creep along the ground. As the crops mature and you remove them, the flowers will cover the holes and hide the bare spots. Seed the root crops first. Once they are well up, plant the vining plants. When placing vegetables in flowerbeds, be sure that all plants have similar soil needs and culture requirements.

Natural benefits

When planting vegetables among flowers, the vegetable yield may increase because the insects attracted by the nectar and pollen of the flowers can be beneficial in the pollination of the vegetable plants.

Sources and Resources

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REV 8/2015

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