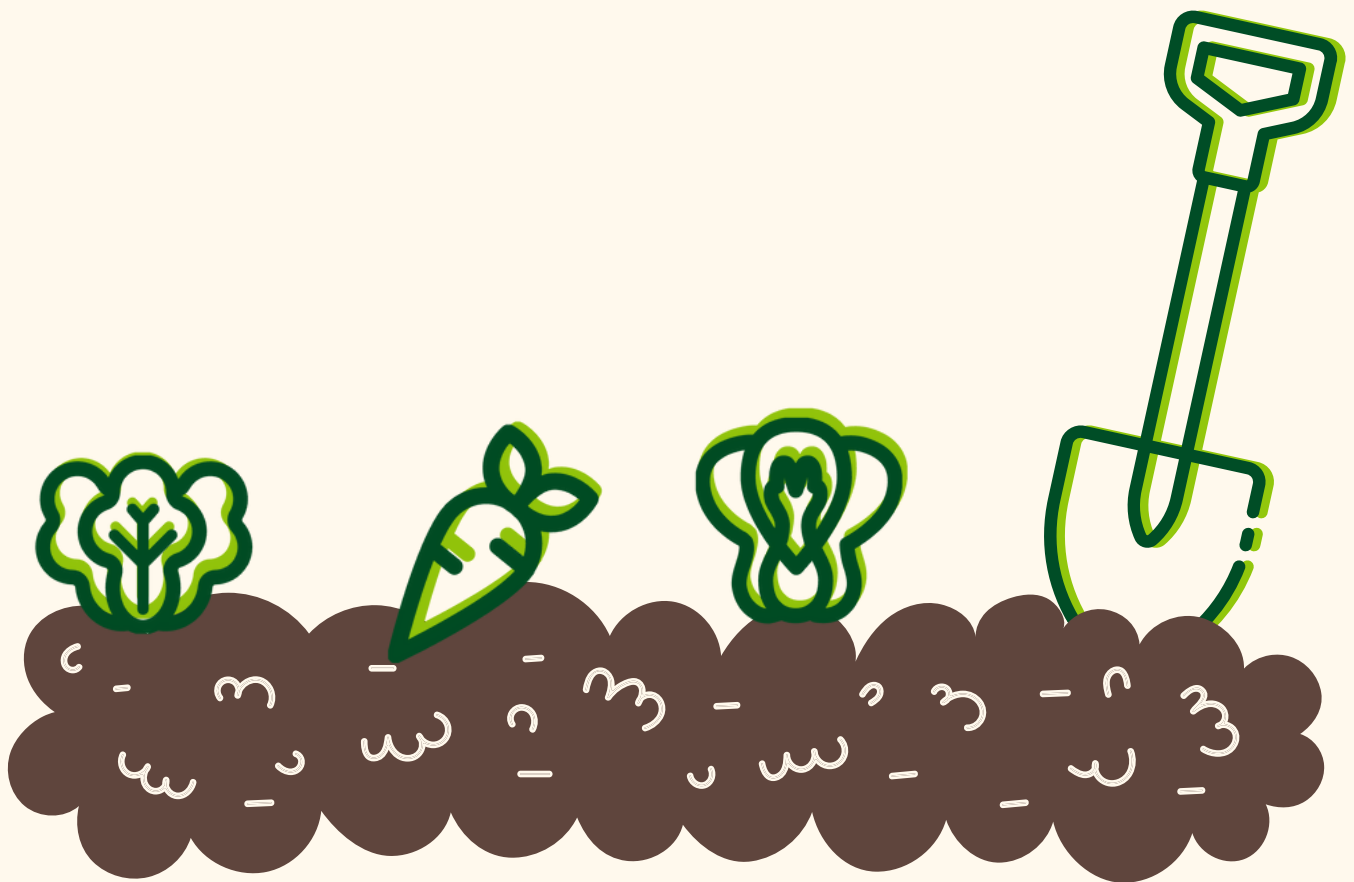


GROW YOUR OWN GARDEN



uOttawa



Lakehead
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Rivers of Plenty

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Beginning your own garden is a great adventure! It can also be hard, too.

The best resources are the people who have been gardening on the island. This guide draws from their knowledge.

Good luck, and have fun!

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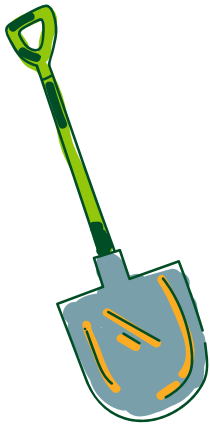


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Helpful Tools



Before you get started, here are some tools that will come in handy for your new garden.



Shovel

Multi-purpose tool for digging and turning soil.



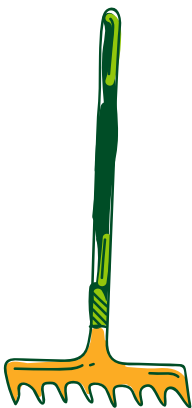
Gloves

Important for protecting your hands.



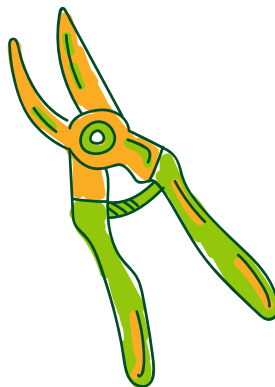
Garden Fork

Good for breaking up soil and mixing in compost.



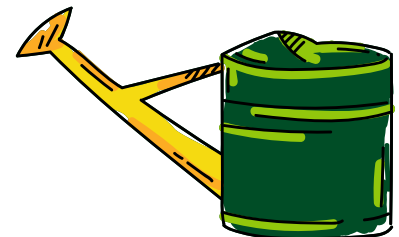
Rake

Use to level soil and remove debris.



Hand Pruner

Trim plants and cut dead growth.



Watering Can

Allows you to gently water your plants.

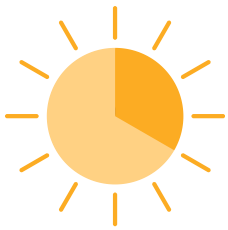
Preparing Your Plot

Selecting and preparing your plot is an important first step to starting your new garden.

Choose the right location

It is ideal to find a spot that is easy to access, gets enough sunlight, and has good drainage.

Most vegetables need at least a few hours of direct sunlight each day, although some plants prefer more light than others.

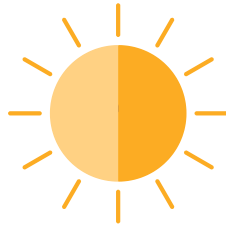


3-4 hours of sun

Leafy vegetables like lettuce, spinach, swiss chard

5-6 hours of sun

Root vegetables like carrots, potatoes, beets, onions



7-8 hours of sun

Plants like tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, squash, beans



Clear the Area

Remove grass, weeds, and large rocks. Covering the area with tarp or cardboard for a couple weeks will help kill persistent weeds.

Improve the Soil

Loosen soil and add organic matter. We will talk about compost later!

Preparing Your Plot



Choose your adventure!

Raised beds often have better drainage and require less weeding. They can also be easier to work with, as they require less bending or kneeling.

However, they have a higher initial cost, require more watering, and the frame will need maintenance over time.



To make a raised bed, you will have to build frames from wood or stone and top them up with high quality soil.

Level & Water

Smooth the soil and water lightly, then let your garden settle for a few days before planting.

In-ground planting doesn't require you to build or buy extra materials. It is also great for larger gardens and allows for deep root growth.

You may have to spend more time weeding, though.



Remember to create pathways to avoid stepping on and compacting your soil!

Tips for Starting a New Garden

Now that you've prepared your plot, here are some tips to help you begin.

Maintenance is key

- The first year of a new garden is always the weediest! **Regular weeding** gives your plants the best chance at success.
- Keeping soil loose helps roots develop and your plants thrive. **Don't step** in your garden bed, as this will compact the soil.

Feed your garden

- Compost is a great addition to your soil! If you don't have a compost, try sprinkling coffee grounds and crushed eggshell on the soil.
- Fish scraps also offer wonderful nutrients. Bury the scraps at least 12 inches deep to keep away furry friends.

Compost Do's

- Vegetable peels
- Rotten fruit
- Coffee grounds
- Tea leaves



Compost Don't's

- Dry leaves or grass
- Paper products
- Rice, pasta, breads, oils, fats, dairy, nuts

Have fun!

Don't get discouraged! Experiment and enjoy your time in the garden.

Planting



Here comes the fun part: Planting!

What to plant

Potatoes, beets, turnips, and other root vegetables are good to plant in new gardens, as they help break the soil up. But leafy greens like kale, lettuce, and herbs may also grow well!



Potato



Carrot



Beets

How to plant

Seed packets and plant labels contain planting and care instructions, such as:

- Estimate of the plant's mature size
- Growing season
- Sun tolerance
- Water requirements
- Harvest details

This information will help you decide if, when, where, and how to plant!



Planting



Seeds or seedlings?

One of your first decisions as a new gardener will be if you want to begin planting with **seeds** or **seedlings**. There are pros and cons to both, and you should choose what feels right for you!

	Pros:	Cons:	Try:
Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- More variety- Cheaper- Stronger root systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Longer growing time- Higher risk of failure	Lettuce, carrots, radishes, beans, squash, corn
Seedlings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Faster and easier- Higher success rate- Better for short growing seasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- More expensive- Limited selection- Risk of transplant shock, disease, or pests	Tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, cabbage, broccoli



Planting



Starting indoors

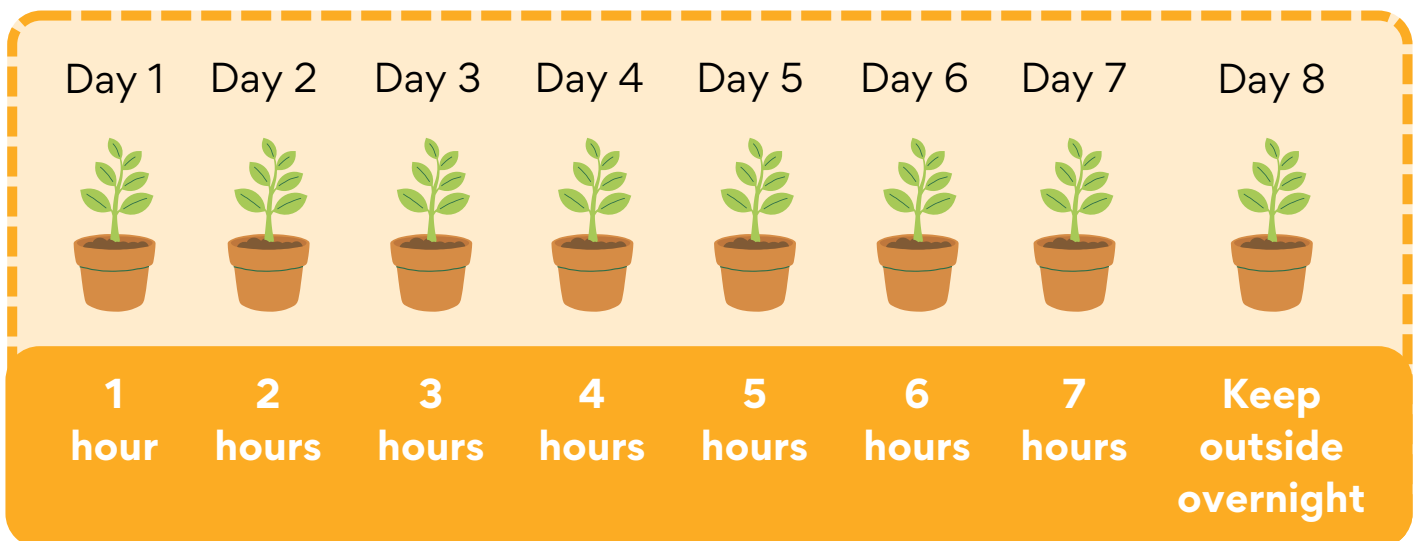
To reduce the risk of failure when growing from seed, people will often **start indoors**.

This involves sowing seeds in a small container, placing it in a warmer location indoors, and following the appropriate care instructions.



Once your seeds sprout above the soil, they will need light – either natural or artificial.

One week before planting outside, you need to ‘**harden off**’ your seedlings. This means getting them accustomed to the outdoor conditions by placing them outside for a couple hours a day.



Planting



Depth & spacing

The suggested planting depth and spacing is different for each plant. However, a general rule of thumb is the larger the seed, the deeper it should be planted.

If you aren't sure, you can always look it up – WestCoastSeeds.com is an excellent resource.



After planting, lightly cover with soil. Be careful not to compact the seeds.

Small seeds



1/4" to 1/2"
deep

Medium seeds



1/2" to 1"
deep

Large seeds



1" to 1.5"
deep

Thinning

When your seeds germinate and grow into seedlings, they may be too crowded.

If this happens, it's a good idea to thin your garden. This involves removing the weakest seedlings to give stronger ones more space.

Crowded



Thinned





Watering



Just like you, plants need water to survive! However, too much water can cause stunted growth, root rot, and plant death.



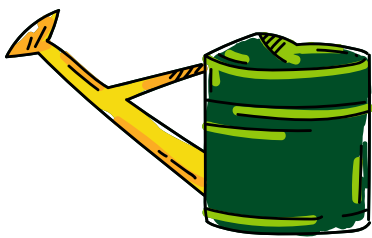
When to water

Plants tell us when they're thirsty. Wilted or droopy leaves are a sign that you need to water – keep an eye out, but try to stay ahead of the wilt.

You can also check if you need to water by sticking your finger into the soil up to your first knuckle. If your finger is dry when you pull it out of the soil, then it's time to water!

How to water

Give your plants an inch of water per week. This should include rainfall.



A **watering can** is best for targeted, gentle watering of smaller areas or delicate plants.



A **hose** is best for larger areas, though can be less precise and may lead to overwatering or plant damage.



Using **barrels** to collect rain is helpful when other water sources aren't conveniently located.

Weeding & Mulching



Weeding

Weeding, weeding, weeding, the gardener's constant chore. The earlier you get the weeds out, the better!

Many weeds just need the greens cut down. However, dandelions, quack grass, and horsetail need the roots pulled out.



Dandelion



Quack grass



Horsetail

Mulching

Mulch is a layer of material spread on top of soil its health.

Mulching your garden helps reduce weeds, retain moisture, regulate soil temperature, and add nutrients.

To mulch, place a layer of grass clippings or straw on top of the soil. Leave room between the plants and mulch for airflow.



Winterizing Your Garden



Winter in the north is harsh, but ‘**winterizing**’ your garden will help protect your soil and set the stage for a thriving garden come springtime.

Winterize your garden in the fall, before the first frost.

Here’s how:

- 1 Harvest everything from your garden.
- 2 Add compost to give your soil a boost next spring.
- 3 Plan next year’s garden! Think about what you’d like to try and order your seeds early.
- 4 Enjoy your harvest! Can, freeze, or dry for long-term storage.



Do you know when to harvest?

Different plants will need to be harvested at different times.

Check seed packets and plant labels for specific harvest instructions.

Things like colour and size can be helpful clues.

You should be checking your garden frequently to see how things are coming along.

When it comes time to harvest, use garden shears to cut vegetables from the plant at the stem.



Resources



West Coast Seeds is a Canadian company specializing in seeds. Visit their website to see growing guides, planting charts, and other educational resources to help gardeners succeed in different climates.



Although created for communities in the Northwest Territories, "**Northern Lights Gardening Manual**" offers practical advice on various aspects of gardening in northern climates, including understanding different soils and climates, garden layout, and best practices for successful cultivation.

Ecology North is an organization based in Northwest Territories that promotes sustainable living and environmental stewardship in northern communities. On their website you can find resources for building soil, composting, and preserving food.



The **Gardening in Northern Ontario** guide offers in-depth information about starting a garden in northern climates, including expected costs and how to extend the growing season.

Looking for a compost bin at a reasonable price? This guide will teach you how to **build a simple compost bin from old pallets**.

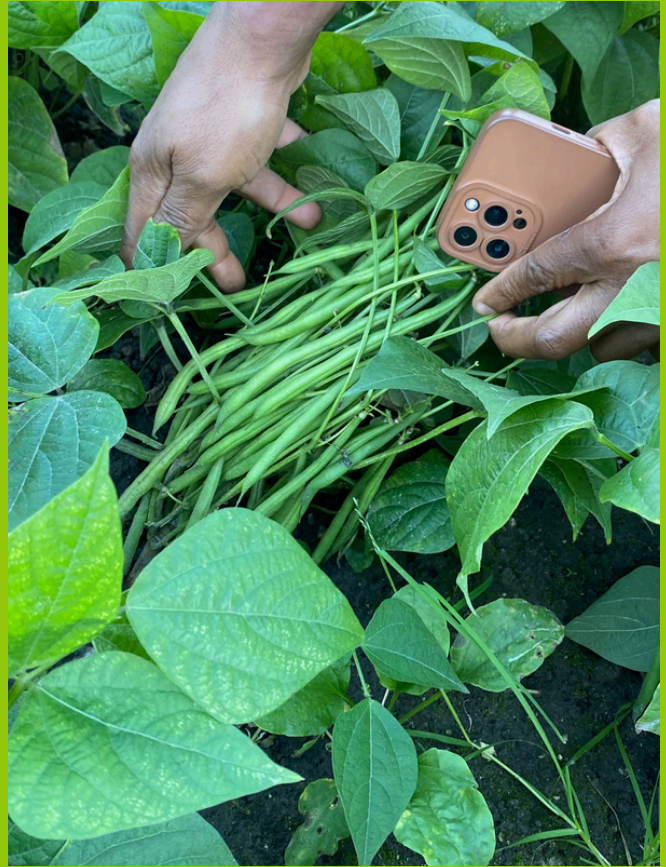


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Have questions or need a helping hand?
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