Today, my friends
I beg your pardon, but
I’d like to speak of my Victory Garden.
With a hoe for a sword and citronella for armor,
I ventured forth and became a farmer ...

Ogden Nash 1943

Lay the Groundwork

Planning is an important and sometimes overlooked step in creating a successful vegetable garden. Measure the area you would like to use as a garden and draw your own planting plan. Take advantage of the winter season to flip through some seed catalogues for inspiration.

Location of a vegetable garden is important. Most vegetables need direct sun to grow properly. Leafy vegetables like kale tolerate partial shade. When preparing your garden, run rows from north to south to expose both sides of the plants to sunlight.

Research the hardiness and growing season of your area and look for plants that will grow in your climate.

Dig In

Prepare your garden plot by tilling the top layer. Don’t have a tiller? No problem! Use a shovel and the double dig method to prepare the soil for planting. Healthy soil is necessary for root development, soil fertility, aeration, and water absorption. Enrich the soil by cultivating the land, using compost and adding an organic-based fertilizer. Soil should not be plowed or worked while wet.

Plant your seeds according to the package directions. Be sure to consider the amount of sun each plant will receive. Spacing is critical, so thin the seedlings by pulling them out as they grow.

Water your seeds and remember to keep watering your garden as it grows.
The vegetables planted in the Smithsonian Institution’s recreated Victory Garden were commonly grown during World War II and can still be found through seed catalogues and nurseries.

**Victory Garden**

Smithsonian Gardens has recreated a World War II victory garden on the west terrace outside the National Museum of American History’s Stars and Stripes Cafe.

**What Is a Victory Garden?**

Victory gardens were vegetable gardens planted in the United States during World War II in order to ensure an adequate food supply for civilians and troops. The goal was for citizens to produce enough fresh vegetables through the summer for their immediate family and neighbors.

Government agencies, private foundations, businesses, schools, and seed companies all worked together to provide land, seeds, instruction, and educational posters for individuals and communities to grow food.

From California to Florida, Americans plowed backyards, vacant lots, parks, baseball fields, and schoolyards to set out gardens. Children and adults planted, watered, fertilized, and weeded in order to harvest an abundance of vegetables. Any excess produce was canned and preserved for the winter and early spring until next year’s victory garden produce was ripe.

**Spring Garden Tips**

For a head start on your garden, you may want to start some of your seeds indoors, usually 5-7 weeks before the last expected day of frost.

**Good plants to start indoors include:**

- tomatoes
- basil
- peppers

**January**

- review, research and plan for the upcoming growing season

**February**

- order seeds

**March**

- start indoor plants
- plant cool-weather greens

**April**

- continue planting outdoors
- begin to harvest early greens

**WWII-era vegetables**

- Carrot
- Amarillo
- St. Valery
- Lettuce
- Bronze Arrow
- Forellenschuluss
- Black-Seeded Simpson
- Tennis Ball
- Kale
- Red Russian
- Early Curled Siberian Kale
- Onion
- Red Wethersfield
- Siskiyou Sweet
- Peas
- Alderman Tall Telephone
- Come De Belier
- Green Arrow
- Radish
- Red Meat
- White Icicle
Plant in summer for fall harvest

A Summer Garden

**Summer Garden Tips**

**Harvest** crops often, as old vegetables left on the plant drain energy from new growth.

**Weed** your garden often. Vegetables need room to grow.

As your vegetables grow, **thin** the rows as needed by pulling out some of the seedlings.

What is Your Soil Type?

The type and texture of your soil will help determine the kinds of vegetables you will be able to grow successfully. Compare the amounts of sand, silt, and clay in your soil to determine if you need to add compost before planting by taking a soil sample and calling your local cooperative extension service.

The perfect garden soil has a texture known as loam.

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**Beans, Lima**
- Red Calico

**Corn, Popcorn**
- Strawberry

**Corn, Sweet**
- Stowell’s Evergreen
- Golden Bantam
- Texas Honey June

**Cucumber**
- Lemon
- Early Russian
- Suyo Long

**Eggplant**
- Black Beauty
- Rosa Bianca

**Muskmelon**
- Hale’s Best
- Pike

**Okra**
- Clemson Spineless

**Pepper**
- California Wonder (Sweet)
- Marconi (Sweet)
- Black Czech (Hot)

**Pumpkin**
- Rouge Vif D’Etampes

**Squash, Summer**
- Yellow Crookneck
- Cucozelle Bush

**Squash, Winter**
- Blue Hubbard

**Tomato**
- Yellow Pear
- Brandywine
- Mortgage Lifter
- Cherokee Purple

**Watermelon**
- Moon and Stars
- White Wonder

*Plant in summer for fall harvest

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**May**
- put out warm-weather plants
- prepare garden soil for summer crops

**June**
- pull cool-weather plants
- re-plant with more warm-weather plants

**July**
- weed the garden
- mulch around plants
- watch for garden pests
- water garden often

**August**
- begin to harvest and cook with your crops
- plant cool-weather greens
A Fall–Winter Garden

These plants, put into the ground in the late summer, can extend the growing season into cool weather. Some crops may continue to grow in mild winter weather.

Beets
- Detroit Dark Red
- Bull’s Blood
- Chioggia

Broccoli
- Calabrese

Cabbage
- Early Jersey Wakefield

Carrot
- Amarillo
- St. Valery

Cauliflower
- All-Year-Round

Lettuce
- Bronze Arrow
- Forellenschuluss
- Black-Seeded Simpson
- Tennis Ball

Kohlrabi
- Purple Vienna

Parsley
- Extra Curled Dwarf

Parsnip
- Sugar Hollow Crown

Radish
- Red Meat
- White Icicle

Spinach
- Viroflay
- Bloomsdale Long Standing

Swiss Chard
- Ruby

Turnip
- Purple-Top White Globe

Fall–Winter Garden Tips
When harvesting, create a compost pile of leftover (but not diseased) leaves and plants on the ground and use them as mulch.

Grow cover crops during the autumn and winter to help control erosion and add organic matter into the soil when the cover is turned over in the spring.

Cover crops include annual ryegrass, oats and barley.

Harvest More Information
To learn more about the Victory Garden or Smithsonian Gardens, contact:

Smithsonian Gardens
Smithsonian Institution
P.O. Box 37012
Capital Gallery
Suite 3300 MRC 506
Washington, DC 20013-7012
www.gardens.si.edu

September
★ final harvest of summer vegetables

October
★ clear out garden refuse and add to compost pile
★ add last season’s compost to soil
★ sow a cover crop to control erosion

November
★ put out frost protection

December
★ finish harvesting cool-weather plants
★ evaluate the success of this year’s garden

Poster, Office of War Information, 1943