

Pine River Library Program in a Bag: Grow a Vegetable Garden!



Why grow a vegetable garden?

- It helps you eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Gardening is an effective workout that uses many different muscle groups while also increasing flexibility.
- Gardening is also something that just about anyone can do at any age!
- You can directly monitor what kinds of fertilizers and pesticides come in contact with your food.
- Vegetables that ripen in a garden have more nutrients than some store-bought vegetables that must be picked early.
- Many find spending time in tending a garden to be calming and enjoyable.
- It's fun!

A few general tips

- Start small.
- Plant things you'd actually like to eat!
- Choose a spot with at least six hours of sunlight and easy access to a watering system.
- Check soil moisture regularly. Water your garden when the top 2-4" of soil is dry to the touch rather than on a strict schedule. Vegetables will often need to be watered daily during the summer (unless it rains), and seed beds may need to be watered twice a day.
- A south-facing, slightly angled area is ideal for receiving maximum warmth in spring and remaining frost-free later in the fall.
- Use contaminant-free soil.
- Consider using a raised garden bed- this allows you to control the blend of soil and nutrients.
- Talk to local farmers or other backyard gardeners in your area to get a sense of what grows well in your area and when.

Specific tips for our area

- Don't plant seeds outside before Memorial Day.
- Most mountain soils need significant additions to provide good growing conditions for vegetables. Compost and aged manure are the best additions to add (incorporate 1 inch per every 4 inches of soil depth).

- Many mountain gardens have just one warm season rather than three distinct growing seasons found in other climates (two cool seasons in spring/fall and a warm summer season). Many cool season vegetables will mature in 25–60 days such as lettuce, spinach, and radishes so to prevent an overabundance of one crop which could lead to bolting, you can plant smaller amounts every two weeks or so in a method called "succession planting".
- Floating row covers are a great way to add a couple weeks of growing on either side of the season. These lightweight, spun polyester fabrics allow sun and rain in, don't need venting, provide frost protection down to 24° F (depending on the thickness of the fabric), and will help keep out insects and animals like rabbits and deer. You can place these covers directly over the plants.

Questions?

Contact the Pine River Garden Club on Facebook @Pine River Garden Club or by email at pinergc@gmail.com.

Helpful Resources

- La Plata County CSU Extension
www.co.laplata.co.us/departments/csu_extension_offices/horticulture.php
- Farmer's Almanac Planting Calendar
www.almanac.com/gardening/planting-calendar/CO/Durango
- *Rocky Mountain Garden A Survival Guide* by Susan Tweit
- *Guide to Rocky Mountain Vegetable Gardening* by Robert E. Gough
- *Organic Gardener's Companion: Growing Vegetables in the West* by Jane Shellenberger
- *Rocky Mountain Gardener's Handbook: all you need to know to plan, plant, & maintain a Rocky Mountain garden* by Mary Ann Newcomer

Sources:

- www.health.harvard.edu/blog/backyard-gardening-grow-your-own-food-improve-your-health-201206294984
- www.extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/vegetable-gardening-in-the-mountains-7-248/

