



How to Start a Garden

Starting a garden should be a fun and exciting activity. This guide will help you begin your project and get you thinking about all of the necessary elements that should be considered when planning a garden.

LOCATING A SITE

Location: Consider locating garden beds in front of a backdrop such as walls, woodland edge, fences, shrubs or in the middle of lawn areas.

Anticipate four season use. Consider the following:

- ✿ **What is the garden's purpose?**
Add color, screen an unsightly area, invite visitors in, visual only, enhance a building or area.
- ✿ **How many hours of sunlight?**
Make notes when sun/shade/shadow is on plot.
- ✿ **What is the condition of the soil?**
Take a sample, look at the layers – is it sand/silt/clay?
- ✿ **How is the drainage?**
Dig a test hole, fill with water and time how long it takes to drain.
- ✿ **What is overhead? Underneath?**
Trees, building overhangs, wires, underground utilities, etc.
- ✿ **Traffic - pedestrian and/or vehicular**
Do you need to redirect traffic or work around it?
- ✿ **Consider hardscape elements**
- Light poles, walkways, benches, & gazebos, playgrounds, drainage, walls, etc.
- Is there a water source near the site?
- ✿ **Are there heavy winds?**



LAYING OUT YOUR GARDEN

Choose your design and then:

- ✿ **Mark the garden perimeter using hose, string or a chalk wheel**
Define the shape: circular, rectangular, kidney, etc.
- ✿ **Define the edge with brick, stone, wood or a trench**
Think maintenance, what is adjacent to the edging?
- ✿ **Site structures**
Such as benches, birdbaths, gazebos, trellises, sculptures, paths, signs
Place structures first then plant around them.
- ✿ **For an in ground garden:**
- Remove grass or cover with paper and add soil
- Amend the soil -- add compost.
- ✿ **For a raised planter:**
- Add gravel for proper drainage
- Fill with at least 10" of a mix of topsoil and organic matter



1 square = _____ feet

Start your plan

CHOOSING PLANTS

- Choose appropriate species for location (sun, shade, zone 5/6)
- Assess plants in area, neighborhood, micro-climate
- Choose flowering plants for bloom sequence, colors, variety and diversity
- Create seasonal interest by choosing plants with unusual foliage, interesting bark, winter berries, plant bulbs, etc
- Remember plants grow – anticipate mature growth
- Choose low maintenance species
- Use native species and non-invasive plants
- Buy Local!
- Seasonal Interest: Will there be lights on trees or structures? Is there access to electricity on-site?

ARRANGING PLANTS

- Place potted plants in desired location to visualize garden design
- Consider contours, slopes & berms
- Consider height of mature plants
- Create depth. Tallest in rear, annuals in front and edges
- Groupings of same plants, masses for impact
- Avoid blocking structures
- Avoid planting in drip lines of roofs, trees, etc.

PLANTING YOUR GARDEN

- Dig the hole a little deeper and wider than the plant pot.
- Water and remove plants from pots right before planting.
- If roots are dense and growing together - tickle the roots to tease them apart.
- Add soil amendments (compost, terra-sorb)
- Bury the plant to the depth it was in the pot. Too deep and the stem will rot; too high and the roots will dry out.
- Shape topsoil in a ring around the plant to form a well to hold rain water.
- Water plants after planting.



A Word on Composting

Compost can be manures (aged cow, horse, sheep, goat, chicken, rabbit).

A compost pile can be started anywhere with grass clippings, leaves (chop with mulching mower), pulled weeds, vegetation from deadheading, pruning (avoid diseased) and food waste.

Good Sources:

- * kitchen
- * schools
- * restaurants



Great gardens start with great soil!

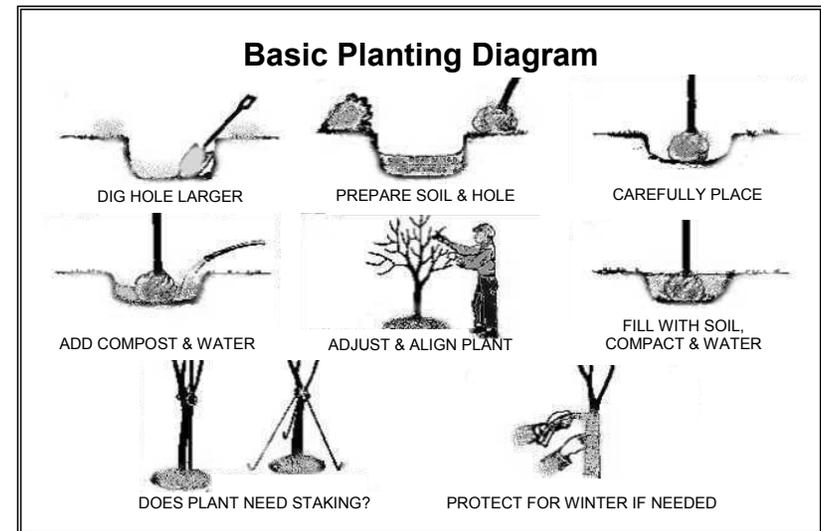


MAINTAINING YOUR GARDEN

- **Prepare a maintenance schedule.** Who will water, prune, mulch?
- **Water**
 - Good deep watering for the first weeks.
 - Drip/soaker hoses, sprinkler system, water truck
 - Plants require at least 1" of water a week; consider a rain gauge.
 - Early morning is best — avoid midday watering
 - Water the roots, not the foliage (hose to ground).
- **Mulch**
 - Sources of wood chips: municipalities, tree cutters, bagged, bulk.
 - Temporary mulch – dry grass clippings.
 - Add at least 3" of mulch to help retain moisture and reduce weeds.
 - Avoid direct contact with plant stems and tree trunks to reduce pests and rot.
- **Weeds & Flowers**
 - Remove weeds as soon as you see them. Smaller weeds are easier to pull than large ones. Hoe soil surface for large areas
 - Deadhead flowers to keep them blooming. With most flowers, the more you prune spent blossoms, more will bloom!
 - Stake and support taller plants.



ENJOY YOUR BEAUTIFUL GARDEN!



This brochure was originally compiled 02/07 by **Vivian Multari-Ginsberg** and **Jill M. Weyer**.
Revised May 2010

Vivian Multari-Ginsberg is the Sullivan Renaissance Community Liaison, assisting projects with horticultural and natural resource needs. She can be reached at 295-2445 or 295-2503.