



A program of **CLIMATE ACTION EVANSTON**

Planning the Gardening Year

Edible Evanston's Vision:

Inspiring and supporting a culture
of sustainable food growing and
sharing throughout the Evanston
community

New Gardeners Class Series

February 2025

What we're covering

- The garden calendar
- Selecting what you want to grow
- Plan and prepare

The gardening year

January and February*

- review seed catalogs, order seeds, make your plan, get excited!

February and March

- start seedlings
- confirm garden site

March and April

- garden bed preparation
- planting cool-weather crops

May and June*

- plant warm season crops
- harvest cool season crops

July and August*

- More harvesting!
- plant succession crops & replant as desired
- monitor for diseases and pests

August and September

- keep harvesting
- start clearing out spent plants
- replant cool season greens etc.

October and November*

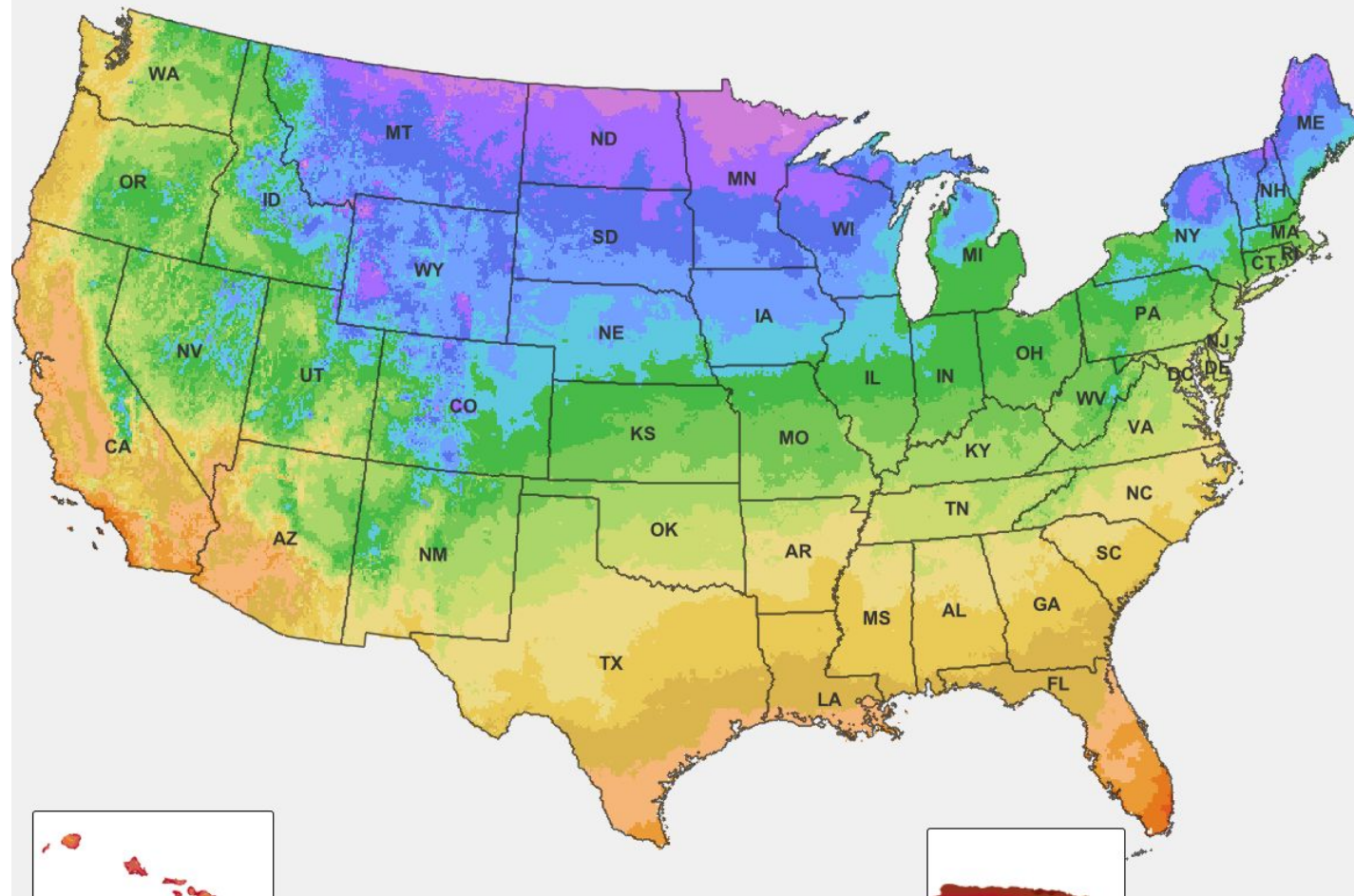
- complete your harvest & clean up beds
- plant bulbs (garlic)
- protect and prep soil

Overview of the gardening year in zone 6A



- What does “Zone 6A” mean?
- USDA established growing zones based on average extreme minimum temperatures
- Zones were updated in November 2023
- Changed from 5B to 6A

U.S. zone map 2023



| Temp (F) | Zone | Temp (C) |
|------------|------|----------------|
| -60 to -55 | 1a | -51.1 to -48.3 |
| -55 to -50 | 1b | -48.3 to -45.6 |
| -50 to -45 | 2a | -45.6 to -42.8 |
| -45 to -40 | 2b | -42.8 to -40 |
| -40 to -35 | 3a | -40 to -37.2 |
| -35 to -30 | 3b | -37.2 to -34.4 |
| -30 to -25 | 4a | -34.4 to -31.7 |
| -25 to -20 | 4b | -31.7 to -28.9 |
| -20 to -15 | 5a | -28.9 to -26.1 |
| -15 to -10 | 5b | -26.1 to -23.3 |
| -10 to -5 | 6a | -23.3 to -20.6 |
| -5 to 0 | 6b | -20.6 to -17.8 |
| 0 to 5 | 7a | -17.8 to -15 |
| 5 to 10 | 7b | -15 to -12.2 |
| 10 to 15 | 8a | -12.2 to -9.4 |
| 15 to 20 | 8b | -9.4 to -6.7 |
| 20 to 25 | 9a | -6.7 to -3.9 |
| 25 to 30 | 9b | -3.9 to -1.1 |
| 30 to 35 | 10a | -1.1 to 1.7 |
| 35 to 40 | 10b | 1.7 to 4.4 |
| 40 to 45 | 11a | 4.4 to 7.2 |
| 45 to 50 | 11b | 7.2 to 10 |
| 50 to 55 | 12a | 10 to 12.8 |
| 55 to 60 | 12b | 12.8 to 15.6 |
| 60 to 65 | 13a | 15.6 to 18.3 |
| 65 to 70 | 13b | 18.3 to 21.1 |

Chicago Metro Area



How to Make a Plan



Decisions to guide your gardening choices

- Where (and How)
- When
- What (and Why)

Where: bed use & site selection

Fulfill basic needs:

Water, sunlight, air, soil in place before start

- Where do you have available space?
- Study the sunlight and shade for your space
- How big? (Start small, you can always expand next year)
- How is the access to water?
- Keep in mind any rules and regs

What are your options?

- Lawn
 - Often has best sun
 - Competing uses
- Paved area like a patio: need containers, soil, and more watering
- Existing flower bed: can mix edibles in
- Alley: underused; less protected
- Parkway: limited, very social, expect some damage

At right:
Alley raised bed made of recycled play structure
lumber and “root pouch” fabric pot



Sunlight and shade

- Consider path of sun during year and objects casting shade
- 6 hours of sunshine a “minimum”

Have too much shade?

Greens need less sun than fruit, so grow kale, chard, collards, lettuce and skip tomatoes, peppers, squash



Raised bed, container, or in-ground?

Raised Bed Pros

- Drains better
- Warms up faster
- Helps areas which flood
- Looks “neater”
- Deters critters and dogs—a bit
- Heavy metals/contaminants
- Possibly less bending down

Raised Bed Cons

- Dries out faster
- Cools down farther/faster
- Can encourage slugs
- Extra expense
- Hard to source enough good soil

The best option may be a compromise:
Raised soil beds without sides



Converting lawns to productive vegetable gardens

Don't dig it up or remove turf!

“Lasagna mulch” it

- Mow close
- Cover with cardboard (no plastic tape!) or newspaper and wet thoroughly
- Cover that with a couple inches of compost or leaf mulch

Better compost=Better, faster results

June 22, 2019:



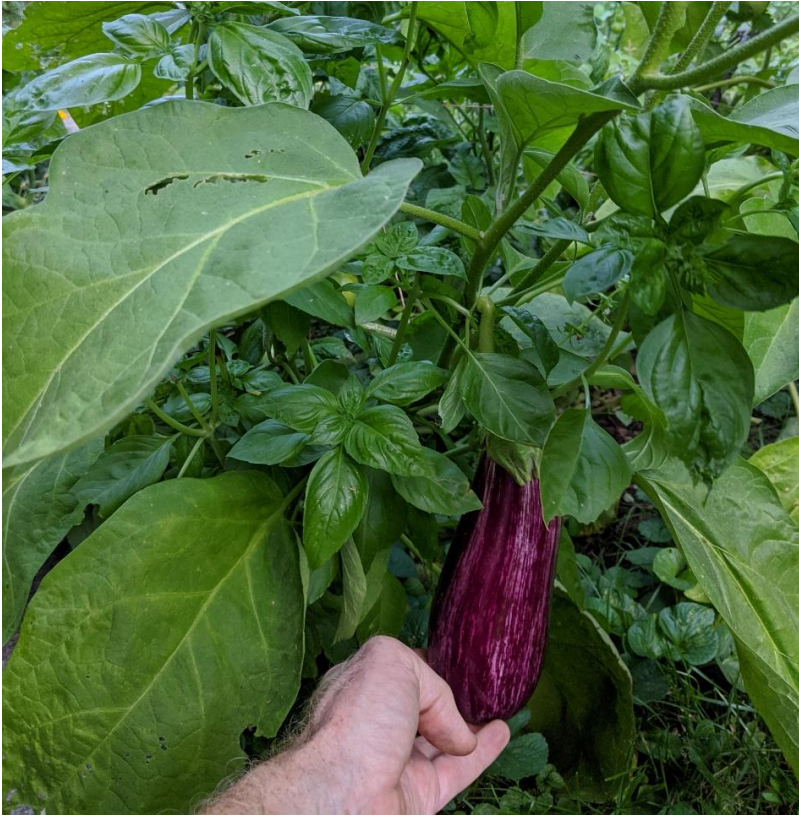
Growing food in paved areas and on patios



- Straw bale gardens
- Fabric pots
- Self-watering pots and wicking beds
- Other pots
- Trellises



What?



- What do you already eat?
 - Staples or hard-to-find crops?
- Who will be eating from your garden?
- Location limitations
 - How much sun do you have?
 - How much space do you have?
 - How close is your water supply?
 - What type of garden do you have?

When?

Cool Season Crops:
Plants that can tolerate
light frost

Warm Season Crops:
Plants that will be killed
by frost



Spring Sowing & Planting Dates

Vegetables

from www.johnnyseeds.com

| Enter spring frost-free date (include year): | | | | | 5/10/2016^ | |
|--|--|----------------------|--------|---|------------------|--------|
| Crop: Sorted by when to start | Number of weeks to start seeds before setting-out date | When To start inside | | Safe time to set out plants (relative to frost-free date) | Setting-out date | |
| | | From | To | | From | To |
| Onions | 8 to 10 | 2-Feb | 16-Feb | 4 weeks before | 12-Apr | |
| Parsley | 9 to 10 | 9-Feb | 23-Feb | 2 to 3 weeks before | 19-Apr | 26-Apr |
| Leeks | 8 to 10 | 16-Feb | 1-Mar | 2 weeks before | 26-Apr | |
| Peas* | 3 to 4 | 16-Feb | 8-Mar | 6 to 8 weeks before | 15-Mar | 29-Mar |
| Corn salad/mache | 4 to 6 | 16-Feb | 22-Mar | 3 to 6 weeks before | 29-Mar | 19-Apr |
| Spinach | 4 to 6 | 16-Feb | 22-Mar | 3 to 6 weeks before | 29-Mar | 19-Apr |
| Celery & celeriac | 10 to 12 | 23-Feb | 8-Mar | 1 week after | 17-May | |
| Collards | 4 to 6 | 1-Mar | 15-Mar | 4 weeks before | 12-Apr | |
| Kale | 4 to 6 | 1-Mar | 15-Mar | 4 weeks before | 12-Apr | |
| Kohlrabi* | 4 to 6 | 1-Mar | 15-Mar | 4 weeks before | 12-Apr | |
| Mustard* | 4 to 6 | 1-Mar | 15-Mar | 4 weeks before | 12-Apr | |
| Cabbage | 4 to 6 | 1-Mar | 12-Apr | 4 weeks before | 12-Apr | 10-May |
| Lettuce | 4 to 5 | 8-Mar | 22-Mar | 3 to 4 weeks before | 12-Apr | 19-Apr |
| Beets* | 4 to 6 | 15-Mar | 29-Mar | 2 weeks before | 26-Apr | |
| Broccoli | 4 to 6 | 15-Mar | 29-Mar | 2 weeks before | 26-Apr | |
| Swiss chard | 4 to 6 | 15-Mar | 29-Mar | 2 weeks before | 26-Apr | |
| Eggplant | 8 to 10 | 15-Mar | 5-Apr | 2 to 3 weeks after | 24-May | 31-May |
| Cauliflower | 4 to 6 | 15-Mar | 12-Apr | 2 weeks before | 26-Apr | 10-May |
| Artichoke | 8 | 15-Mar | | on frost-free date | 10-May | |
| Tomatoes | 6 to 8 | 22-Mar | 12-Apr | 1 to 2 weeks after | 17-May | 24-May |
| Peppers | 8 | 29-Mar | | 2 weeks after | 24-May | |
| Basil | 6 | 5-Apr | | 1 week after | 17-May | |
| Corn* | 2 to 4 | 12-Apr | 10-May | 0 to 2 weeks after | 10-May | 24-May |
| Okra* | 4 to 6 | 12-Apr | 10-May | 2 to 4 weeks after | 24-May | 7-Jun |
| Cucumber | 3 to 4 | 19-Apr | 3-May | 1 to 2 weeks after | 17-May | 24-May |
| Melons | 3 to 4 | 26-Apr | 3-May | 2 weeks after | 24-May | |
| Pumpkins | 3 to 4 | 26-Apr | 3-May | 2 weeks after | 24-May | |
| Squash | 3 to 4 | 26-Apr | 3-May | 2 weeks after | 24-May | |
| Watermelon | 3 to 4 | 26-Apr | 3-May | 2 weeks after | 24-May | |

* Usually direct-sown, but may be started indoors

** Specifically recommended for direct seeding outdoors

*** We have left current crop failures in the list because they may be available next year.

Note: Dates are the same from year to year, but this table requires a year for computation simplicity

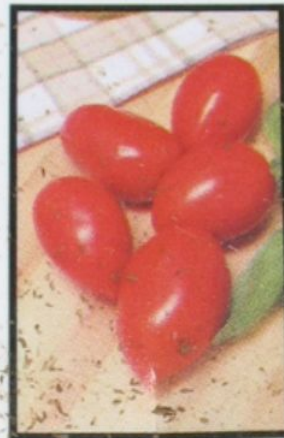
How to read a plant label

Variety

Disease
Resistance

Uses

ROMA



TOMATO

VF Pear- or plum-shaped fruit, solid with few seeds. Many uses.

MAT: 76 days.

HOW TO GROW:

Plant in full sun 24-36" (61-91 cm) apart in rows 36-48" (91-122 cm) apart.

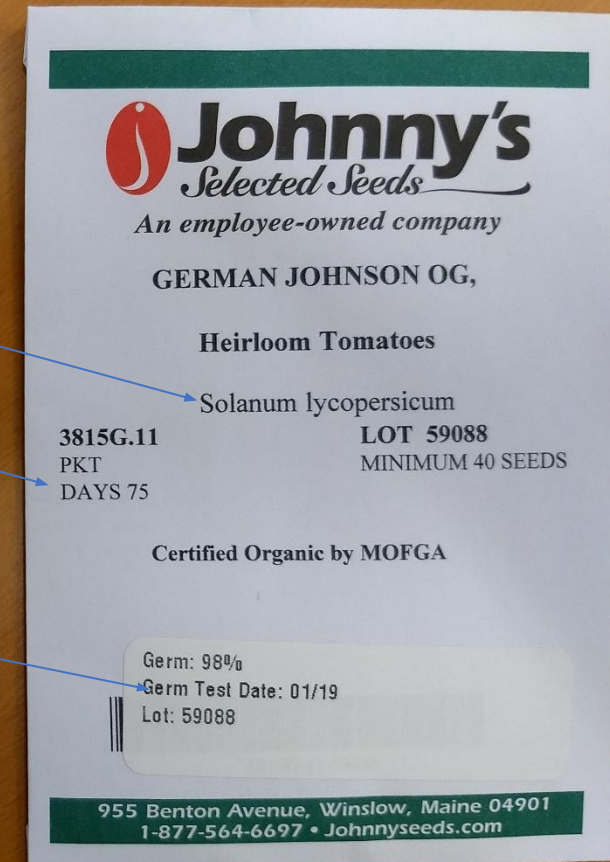
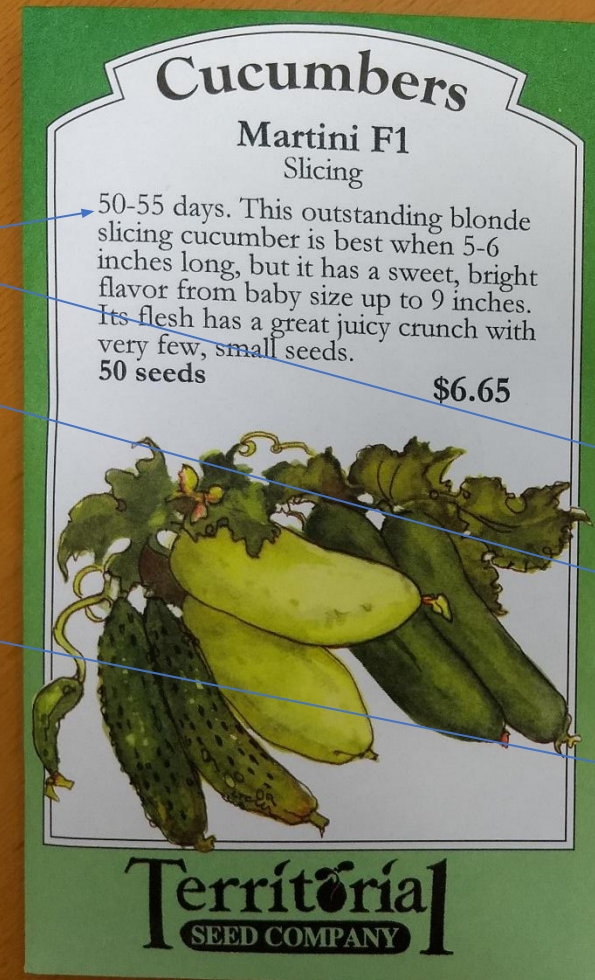
Days to
maturity

Sunlight

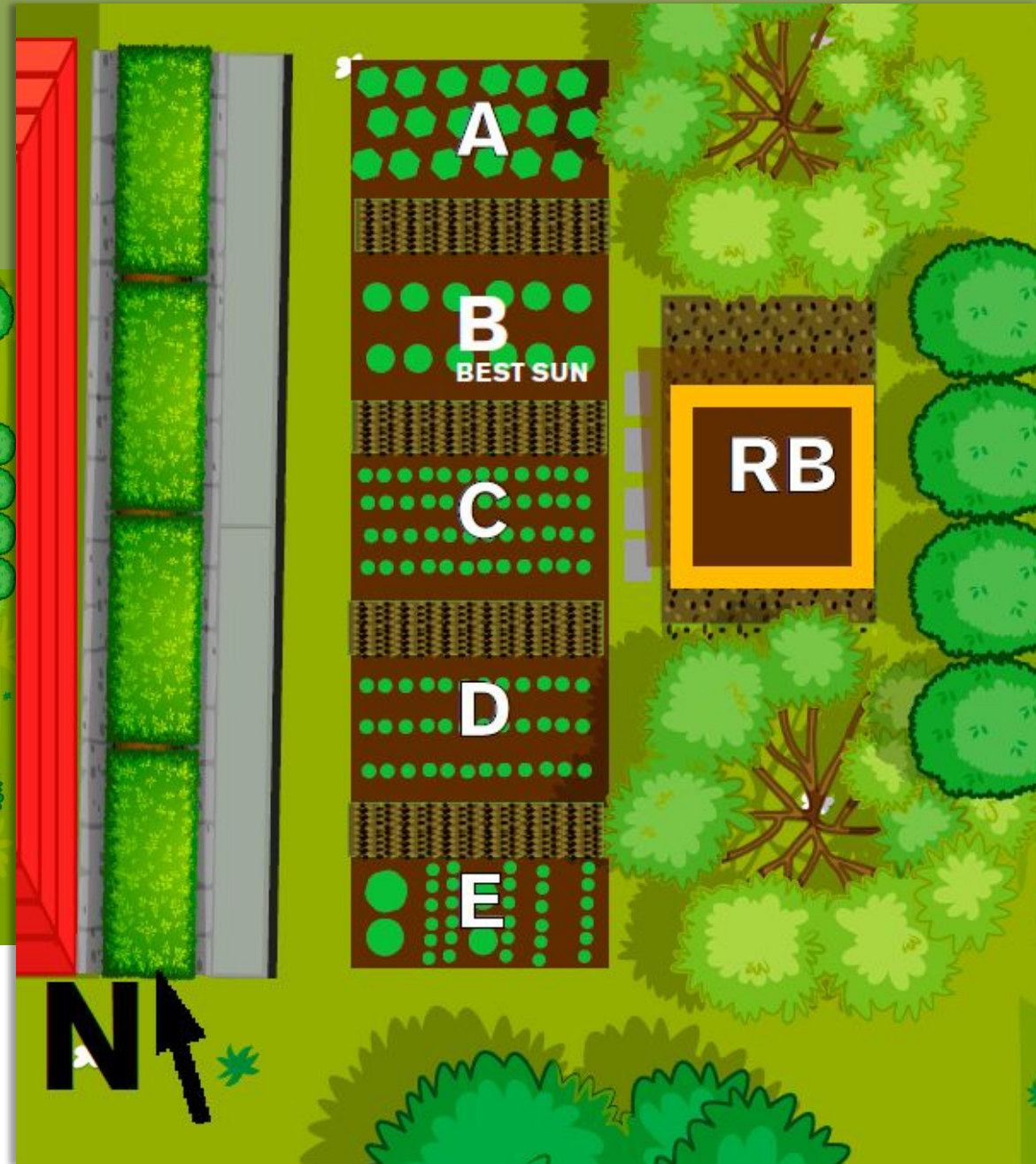
Spacing

How to read a seed packet

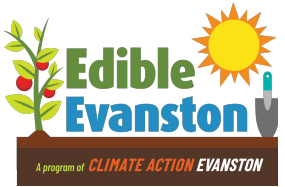
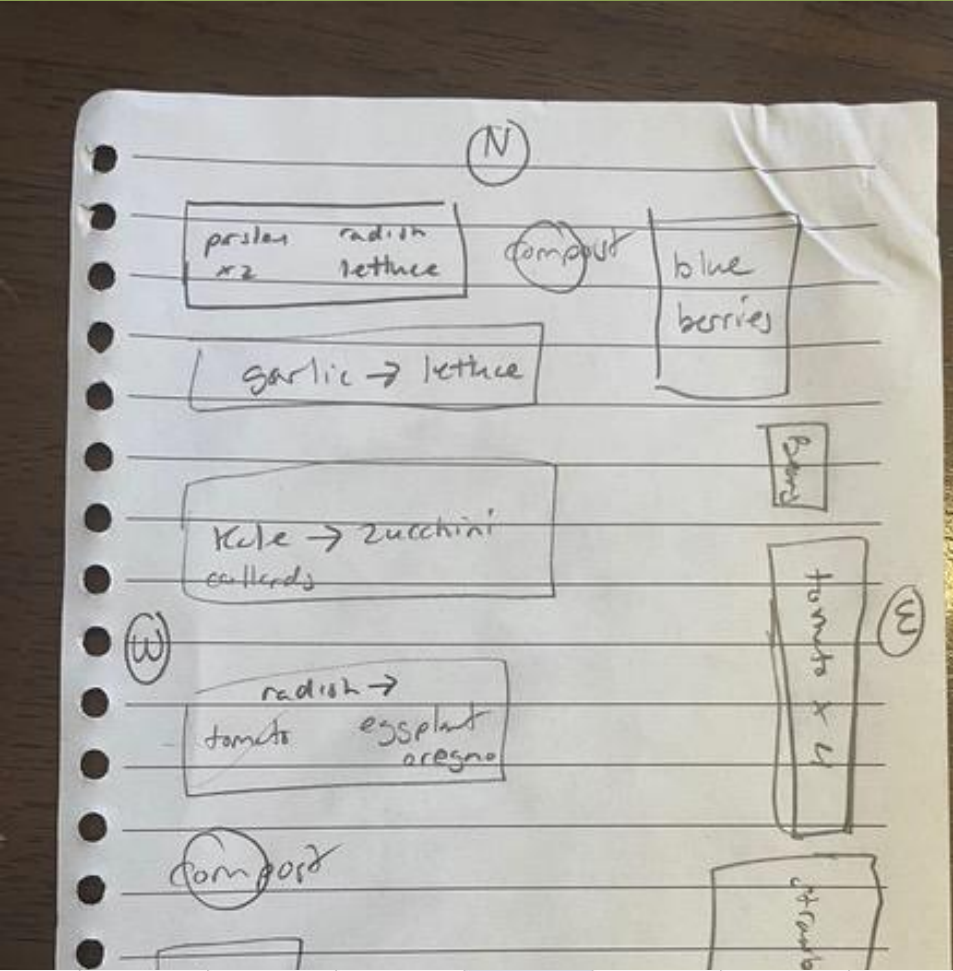
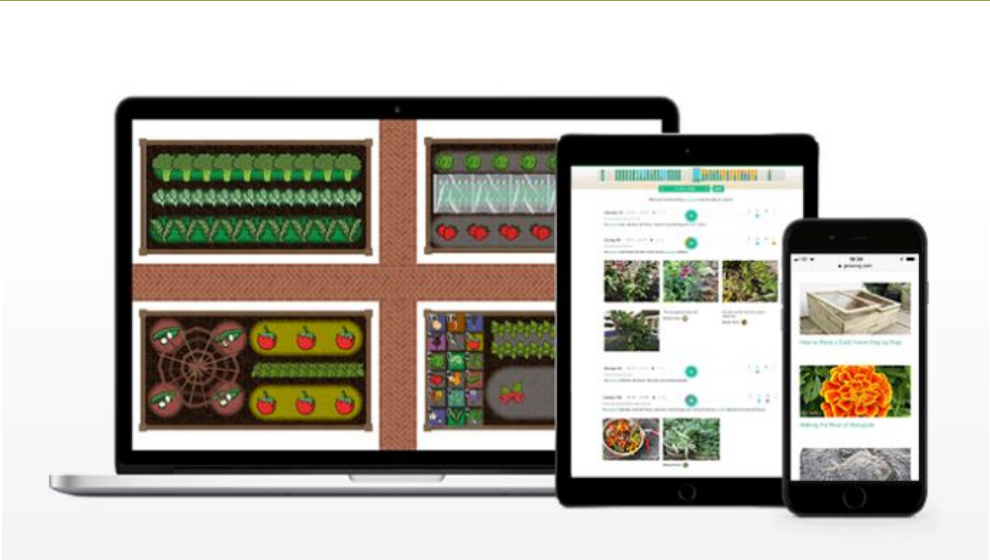
- Variety & Species
- Latin name
- Days to maturity
- Harvest tips
- Disease and pest info
- Germination test



Make a plan



Apps, napkins and notes, –or nothing!



| behind the bed | House | middle | Street | | | yes | | per ft | | no |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|---------------|--|------------|------------------|--|--------|-----|-----------|
| Tomato pot | 1 basil | onion | onion | | | eggplant | | 5 | 1 | 5 kale |
| | 2 | peppers | onion | | 78 squares | peppers | | 8 | 1 | 8 carrots |
| | 3 tomato | | eggplant | | | cucumbers | | 12 | 2 | 6 |
| | 4 | | chard | | | tomatoes in pots | | 6 | 1 | 6 |
| | 5 cherry tomatoes | eggplant | onion | | | chard | | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| Tomato pot | 6 | vine zucchini | onion | | | bush beans | | 18 | 9 | 2 |
| | 7 | vine zucchini | peppers | | | beets | | 45 | 9 | 5 |
| | 8 tomato | peppers | onion | | | basil | | 4 | 4 | 1 |
| | 9 | | onion | | | onion | | 99 | 9 | 11 |
| | 10 cherry tomatoes | eggplant | onion | | | vine zucchini | | 5 | 0.5 | 10 |
| Tomato pot | 11 | vine zucchini | onion | | | Sun gold cherry | | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| | 12 | vine zucchini | peppers | | | tomatoes in bed | | 5 | 1 | 5 |
| | 13 tomato | peppers | onion | | | | | | | |
| | 14 | | vine zucchini | | | | | | | 64 |
| | 15 cherrv tomatoes | eaaplant | vine zucchini | | | | | | | 58 |

Q&A

