

Vegetable Gardening Reminders

**Chip East
Commercial Horticulture Agent**

Soil Testing

I want to remind you to get your soil tested if you have not been doing so. It is as simple as collecting soil samples from several places in your garden spot or spots and sending them to Auburn for a nutrient analysis. After you send the soil sample and information on what crops you are growing to Auburn, it will be tested and you will receive information on what nutrients are in your soil, what to fertilize with, and when to fertilize. The cost is \$8.00 per sample.

Crop Rotation

We have all heard you need to rotate your vegetable crops, but what does that mean? It's not just planting a different vegetable where another was before. It's planting a different vegetable family where another family was before. Well, what's the difference? For example, cucumber and squash are in the same family. If you plant squash next year where cucumbers were this year you really haven't rotated. An easy way to do it is to keep the vegetable families together and rotate all of them to a new garden site each year. For example, tomato, pepper, and eggplant are in the same family. Plant them in the same plot together. Next year, move them to where the okra was and the okra could go where the tomatoes were. In order to do this you will obviously need more than one garden site. Some people have 3 or 4 small garden plots instead of one large garden. This way it could be several years before a vegetable family gets back to the same plot.

The following is a list of vegetable families.

Onion Family

Onion, garlic, leek, shallot, chive

Carrot Family

Carrot, parsnip, parsley, celery

Sunflower Family

Lettuce, endive, salsify, Jerusalem artichoke

Mustard Family

Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, turnip, Chinese cabbage, kale, collards, mustard greens, radish, rutabaga

Goosefoot Family

Beet, Swiss chard, spinach

Bindweed Family

Sweetpotato

Gourd Family

Cucumber, muskmelon, watermelon, summer squash, winter squash, pumpkin, gourd, honeydew melon

Pea Family

English pea, snap bean, lima bean, soybean, cowpea, field pea

Mallow Family

Okra

Grass Family

Sweet corn, popcorn, ornamental corn

Nightshade Family

Tomato, pepper, eggplant, Irish potato, husk tomato