

Crop Rotation: An Essential Part of Planning a Home Garden

Poring over seed catalogs trying to decide what to plant and sketching a layout for next year's vegetable garden are among the joys of gardening. When planning your vegetable garden, remember the importance of crop rotation. Planting crops in a different location as opposed to planting the same crop in the same spot each year can reduce problems with insects, nematodes, and diseases.

Disease-causing organisms and nematodes slowly accumulate in the soil over time.

Growing the same crop in the same location year after year will allow those organisms to reach levels that can cause infection of plants or simply kill them outright.

Another reason to rotate is that some crops use more of certain nutrients than others use. Growing the same crop in the same spot can deplete the soil of those nutrients.

When deciding how to rotate plants in your garden, remember many vegetables belong to the same family. For example,

Irish potatoes, eggplants, and tomatoes are all members of the nightshade family. Don't plant Irish potatoes this year in the same location that you planted eggplants last year.

The key to successful crop rotation in a home garden is knowing which plant families contain the crops that you are interested in growing. Below is an easy guide to grouping vegetables by families. Don't plant anything from the same family in the same location or in the same soil 2 years in a row.

Alliaceae (Onion Family)
Onion, garlic, leek, shallot, chive
Apiaceae (Carrot Family)
Carrot, parsnip, parsley, celery
Asteraceae (Sunflower Family)
Lettuce, endive, salsify, Jerusalem artichoke
Brassicaceae (Mustard Family)
Cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, turnip, Chinese cabbage, kale, collards, mustard greens, radish, rutabaga
Chenopodiaceae (Goosefoot Family)
Beet, Swiss chard, spinach
Convolvulaceae (Bindweed Family)
Sweetpotato
Cucurbitaceae (Gourd Family)
Cucumber, muskmelon, watermelon, summer squash, winter squash, pumpkin, gourd, honeydew melon
Fabaceae (Pea Family)
English pea, snap bean, lima bean, soybean, cowpea, field pea
Malvaceae (Mallow Family)
Okra
Poaceae (Grass Family)
Sweet corn, popcorn, ornamental corn
Solanaceae (Nightshade Family)
Tomato, pepper, eggplant, Irish potato, husk tomato



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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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