



# Vegetable and Herb Growing

**Basic needs:** *What do vegetables and herbs need to grow successfully in WA?*

- Enough water (sometimes daily hand watering during summer)
- Good soil -replenished annually if needed
- Local varieties of seeds/seedlings and plant in season
- The right amount of sun (minimum of 6 hours for most vegetables and herbs)

## Enough water

- Water as the sun rises (in sand) as the sun sets (in clay), no more than 10mm. don't water leaves at night (reduces mildew and mould)
- Don't use grey water on vegetables and herbs.
- Mulch 5cm- 10cm thick
- Group water hungry plants together( leafy greens) and more water wise plants (rosemary, oregano)on the drier outer edges
- Larger plants (fruit trees, native plants) around the outer parts of the garden will protect the vegetables from drying winds.
- Mediterranean herbs and vegetables are more heat/drought tolerant
- Add wetting agent at least 3 times a year

## Good Soil

- Make your sand into soil with compost and bentonite clay (come to our soil workshop )
- Aim for 30- 40% sand, 30- 40% silt 20% clay, 5-10% organic matter
- Increase microbe (bugs) levels in the soil with compost and/or worm 'tea'.
- Aim for neutral pH, this makes most nutrients available to most vegetables
- Pots - half coir peat, half cheap potting mix plus a few handfuls of compost or worm castings.

## Seeds and Seedlings

- Plant according to the seasons for greatest success. Seedlings available in stores, not necessarily seasonal.
- Use a local planting guide to help with amount, when and frequency of planting
- Large seeds are planted directly into the ground, small seeds can be planted in pots then transplanted into the ground once there are two pairs of leaves
- Seeds are planted 2-3 times the size of the seed deep
- Use milk container covers for your seedlings until they are established

## Annuals and perennials - *Vegetables and herbs in particular*

- Annuals - replace every year. This applies to most vegetables and some herbs (eg parsley, basil)
- Perennials - don't need to be replaced, so find a permanent spot for them. Vegetables eg. rhubarb, asparagus, sweet potatoes, chokos. Herbs eg. oregano, thyme, rosemary, mint, sage, chives.
- Biennial - you can get two years from the plant sometimes- (eg capsicum, chillies, eggplant) but only if you protect them from frost.

## How much sun?

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- Protect from midday summer sun (approx. 10am to 2pm) so plant for 6 hours of morning 'full' sun if possible. Use tall climbing vegetables to help shade more delicate shorter ones
- *If you grow it for the fruit or the root - you need full sun.*
- *If you grow it for the leaves or stems or sprouts partial shade is all you need*

3 hours	<i>Some herbs - parsley, coriander, chives, mustard greens</i>
3- 4 hours	<i>Rocket, Kale, Lettuce, Mizuna, Spinach, Swiss Chard</i>
4-5 hours	<i>Beans, Beetroot, Carrots, Celery, Celeriac, Pak Choy, Peas, Radishes</i>
5 hours	<i>Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower</i>

### Crop rotation, succession planting, wilderness planting explained

- *Crop rotation* is about planting the same family of vegetables in a different place each year. This stops pests and diseases building up.
- *Succession planting* - plant a little of your needs at a time so that the crop production is spread out - refer to your planting guide for frequency of planting.
- *Wilderness planting* - plant your vegetable crops randomly so that no vegetables of the same family are close together - this confuses pests and doesn't use up all the nutrients from the soil in one season's crop.

### Uses of Seaweed concentrate in a vegetable garden

- Reduces transplant shock
- Helps plants through periods of drought and frost
- Use once a fortnight on seedlings at 30ml per 9 litres.

### Uses of worm 'tea' in a vegetable garden

- Gentle fertilizer for seedlings
- Adds microbes to the soil which makes it easier for the vegetables to easily take up the nutrients from the soil.
- Tea or castings can be added often. You will only be restrained by the amount your worms can produce.

### Other ideas

- Three sisters for use in a small garden - plant corn, then beans and pumpkin in the same plot. Beans will use the corn for climbing up and the pumpkin will have a little shade in the middle of the day. NB High nutrient content required.
- Plant beans in summer to shade other vegetables from the afternoon sun, place peas at the back of a plot to allow full sun to other vegetables in winter
- Most of the above applies to pots and raised garden beds too.
- Sprouts - mung beans and whole lentils - eat within a week.