Master Gardener Article

**Vegetable planting is just around the corner**

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BY: Dottie Holman

It’s vegetable planting time in Lake Havasu. This is the month to start planning and planting your vegetable garden. To help you along your way, the Lake Havasu City Master Gardeners are presenting a Veggie Workshop on Saturday, September 22nd at the Mohave County Library in Lake Havasu at 9:30 a.m. The first part of this presentation will be on the various steps for a successful vegetable garden. Planning, planting, irrigation and fertilization will be discussed. The second part of the presentation will be on one of the most favorite vegetables, tomatos. Our workshop is free and open to the public.

If you are unable to attend this workshop, here are some pointers to help in the planting of your vegetable garden. Our weather has been hot, humid and over 110 degrees for over 30 days. Therefore, before planting any vegetables or flowers you will need to restore the nutrients that have been removed by both the previous plantings and our summer heat. Dry soil is difficult to work so it is best to water the area thoroughly subsequent to tilling the soil. Proper soil preparation provides the best basis
for seed and plant growth. There are three primary nutrients: nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. The need for these nutrients will depend on what you are planting. Vegetables have a high need. Fruits and annual flowers have a medium need. Herbs, perennial flowers and deciduous shrubs have a medium to low need. The best way to determine your soils needs is to have your soil tested. However, since we usually are not growing crops for market a good compost/organic matter will do the job. It is recommended that you **do not** apply manure as a source of organic matter since it typically contains a high amount of soluble salts. Since our water gives us plenty of this, we do not want to add more of it. So check your compost/organic bag to insure that manure is not present.

There are various tools, equipment and human muscle that can be used in preparing your garden. You can hand dig with a shovel and hoe or if your area is large, there is the rotary tiller. In Lake Havasu a raised bed works best for planting vegetables. The bed should not be more than 3-4 feet wide but it can be as long as you desire. It is also necessary that there is at least 6-8 hours of full sun per day and is somewhat protected from the winds. A drip or soaker hose irrigation system is considered the best way to water and the least expensive.

The next thing is to determine how you want your vegetable garden to look. Do you want it tailored with nice even rows, random broadcast planting or hill planting in mounds.

- **Row Planting:** stretch a string across the bed. Use a hoe to make a furrow and mound the soil. Be sure to leave enough room between the rows for growth of the crop. Once plants have grown to 4-6 inches tall, thin according to the seed packets' instructions.
- **Broadcast Planting:** measure out an area and rake so that the seeds scatter. Mix your seeds with some fine sand so that it is easier to disburse and place in an empty spice container. Sprinkle and rake in then cover with soil firmly. Carrots, lettuce, beets and radishes are well suited for this type of planting.

- **Hill Planting:** soil needs to be mounded and is usually used when planting larger vegetables such as melons, squash and cucumbers. 4-6 seeds per hill should be planted. Thin to 3-5 plants.

Interplanting can be fun also. Interplanting is growing of two or more types of vegetables at the same time in the same location. Carrots and radishes are a good example. Mix their seeds together and sow. The radishes will harvest first before they begin to crowd the carrots. Shade tolerant lettuce, spinach or celery can be planted in the shadow of taller crops.

Relay planting is another practice. Planting in two-week intervals allows you have a continuous harvest and therefore everything does not become ripe at once. This, without a doubt, will make your neighbors eternally grateful.

Be sure to not plant the same crops you had last year in the same area this year. Crop rotation is important so that nutrients are not diminished and any previous unbeficial organisms that invaded your crop last year do not invade you this year. Here is a list of the vegetables to plant. Cool season vegetables include beet, broccoli, cabbage, carrot, lettuce, onion, pea, potato, radish, spinach and turnip. Warm season vegetables include beans, cucumber, eggplant, melons, pepper, pumpkin, squash, sweet corn, sweet potato and tomato.

Hope to see you on Saturday the 22nd!
Dottie Holman is a Lake Havasu City Master Gardener. Contact the Master Gardeners by calling their Hot Line at 505-4105. Visit us at the Library on the 1st Tuesday of every month from 11:00-1:00 for Home Garden Day.

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