

# Got Bugs?



If you have garden pests (and you almost certainly will), first try picking

them off or washing with a strong water spray. It helps to plant recommended plants that have been bred for pest resistance. You might also use biological controls, such as beneficial insects. If you do decide to use chemicals, remember that this is food, and exercise extreme care. Spray *only* the crops listed on the chemical's container. For treatment options, go here:

<http://vegetableipm.tamu.edu/>

Identify garden insects before treating as there are more beneficial bugs than troublesome ones:

[texashighplainsinsects.net](http://texashighplainsinsects.net)

## Additional Information

Denton County Master Gardeners:  
<http://dcmga.com/north-texas-gardening/vegetable-gardening/>

Gardening Questions:  
[Master.gardener@dentoncounty.com](mailto:Master.gardener@dentoncounty.com)

Organic Gardening:  
[Aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/organic/crops/vegetable-gardening/](http://Aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/organic/crops/vegetable-gardening/)

## A Beginner's Guide to Vegetable Gardening in Denton County



Denton County Master Gardener Association  
April 2009

Our mission is to educate Denton County residents about safe, effective and sustainable horticultural practices that promote development of healthy gardens, landscapes and communities.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas cooperating



*Improving Lives. Improving Texas.*

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Website: [dcmga.com](http://dcmga.com)



# Getting Started

**Gardening in Texas can be a challenge.** High winds, extreme heat, drought in some years and floods in others, and garden pests will have you wondering if you will ever see results. Do not despair; it can be done! Have patience and know that our climate is less mild than it first appears.

## Step 1: Location

To ensure a successful outcome, look for a location that gets full sun for at least 8 hours a day. It should be placed where it will be easy to water and where your crops won't be competing with trees or shrubs for space and nutrients.



Tomatoes are not easy to grow in Denton, but the flavor is well worth the effort.

Container gardening is a great option if you don't have a backyard, or if you want to start on a small scale. For all you need to know about

container gardens go to:

[http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/files/2010/10/E-545\\_vegetable\\_gardening\\_containers.pdf](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/files/2010/10/E-545_vegetable_gardening_containers.pdf)

## Step 2: Soil

The ideal garden soil should be deep, well-drained and fertile. The easiest way to get going is to make raised beds and add good fluffy planting soil. The other way is to amend the soil you have.

Our soil tends to be either heavy clay or sand. Organic matter will improve either situation. It will help retain moisture in sandy soil; when added to clay, it helps loosen and provide aeration. For detailed information go to: [http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/organic/files/2011/03/E-284\\_soil\\_preparation.pdf](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/organic/files/2011/03/E-284_soil_preparation.pdf)

## Step 3: What to Grow

The rule of thumb is to grow what you will eat, but what will grow in Denton? For vegetable varieties that do well in Denton County go to: [http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/veg\\_variety/](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/publications/veg_variety/)

Once you decide what crops to grow, then you can figure out how much space you need. Cantaloupes can spread out to 8 feet, whereas a pepper will only take up 18 – 24 inches. A cucumber plant is a vine, so it can be grown on a support system and take up less ground space.

## Step 4: When to Grow

North Texas, has two growing seasons—spring and fall. Summer is not a growing season, but growing vegetables through the winter is possible most years. For the warm season crops our goal is to plant after our average last frost date of March 16. This would include: asparagus, beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, okra, onions, southern peas, peppers, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, summer squash, tomatoes and watermelon.



For detailed crop guides, go here: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/smallacreage/crops-guides/>

Cool season crops are started in August and grow till a hard freeze or beyond. This would include: beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts,

cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, Swiss chard, collards, garlic, kohlrabi, lettuce, mustard, onion, potato, radish, spinach, tomatoes, winter squash and turnips. Most of these (except tomatoes) will survive frost or even a hard freeze. With some frost cloth, you may be able to harvest these vegetables all winter.

## Step 5: Care & Maintenance

With all the hard work done, all that is left to do is water, fertilize and harvest.

The best way to water is to use drip irrigation so it directly waters the soil, not the plants or air. Deep watering (until the soil is damp 6 inches deep) is the preferred method so the plant roots grow deep and strong.

Use mulch around plants to help retain moisture in the soil, regulate soil temperature and cut down on weed growth.

How much fertilizer to apply is dependent on the type of soil you have. Consult the Texas Vegetable Grower's Handbook for specifics: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/guides/texas-vegetable-growers-handbook/>

Want to know more about your soil? Get it tested; download instructions and forms: <http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/webpages/forms.html>

Harvest vegetables at their peak maturity for the best flavor. For a complete handbook on growing vegetables the earthkind way, go to: <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/earthkind/ekgarden.pdf>

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Use yard waste to start a compost pile	Start seeds indoors	Avg. last frost 3/16. Begin planting; cover before frost.	Plant now!	Harvest cool weather veggies	Enjoy the fruits of your labor	Too hot to grow. Till beds and prepare for fall garden.	Plant cool weather vegetables for fall harvest	Watch them grow...	Yummy fall veggies	Avg. first frost 11/16. Harvest green tomatoes before frost.	Use frost cloth during hard freezes.