

Choosing The Right Vegetable Varieties

There isn't a single "best" variety for any of the vegetables we like to grow. What's best for our gardens depends on our garden goals. Choosing a "best" variety for your isn't so much about what someone else says is best, but about the way a variety grows (tall/short, fast/slow, vining/bushy) and how much space it occupies compared to how much produce it gives you and how many days that variety needs.

What Is Your Gardening Goal?

Do you want fresh veggies for the table during the summer and fall? With indeterminate tomatoes, pole beans, chard, slicing cucumbers and summer squash you can harvest a meal's worth of produce every day until frost if you give them good care.

Will you need a lot of just a few things for canning? Determinate tomato varieties and bush bean varieties will concentrate most of their production over just a few weeks, making it worth your time to get out the canner.

Are you a salad lover? Choose leaf lettuce, spinach and kale for your spring garden. They all do well with "cut and come again" harvesting in the spring.

Do you like to snack while you garden? Cherry tomatoes and small sweet peppers work well for gardening snackers.

Is your garden space limited? You can increase your garden harvest by choosing vegetables that give a continuous harvest in the space they use instead of veggies that take up space all season long but only give you only one or two harvests- think tomatoes/beans/summer squash versus corn/pumpkins/melons.

Do you want to keep your garden full all season long? You can do succession planting in the garden. Choosing varieties with shorter days to harvest will let you use the same garden space two or three times in the season. For example- short-season peas followed by green beans or squash and then by a fall planting of garlic will give you three crops from the same space.

Do you wish you could enjoy your favorite spring veggies for longer into the season? Use your garden space more efficiently by doing a small planting of peas, carrots, beets or other cool season crops every two or three weeks, beginning in early spring. As your first planting begins to play out the next planting will be ready to pick.

Also pay attention to the "days to harvest" information. By choosing a few varieties with different "days to harvest" for the same kind of vegetable, and doing smaller plantings of those varieties, you can extend your total harvest of that vegetable.