Introduction

Vegetable gardening is very fulfilling. The rewards of producing a successful garden include saving money in the family food budget, enjoying foods picked at their flavor peak, growing unique or unusual vegetables, and knowing the source of your food and how it has been treated.

This chapter is a comprehensive overview of planning, planting and care of the vegetable garden. Several different planting styles, such as small space and wide row, are also discussed. Growing time-specific vegetable families are included. Commonly encountered problems are also listed.

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the importance of site selection, soil preparation and proper planting for a successful vegetable garden.
2. Understand the importance of and identify successful varieties and cultivars of vegetables.
3. Understand crop rotation, mulching, composting, watering, fertilization, and other techniques to improve production.
4. Be aware of the reasons and discuss problems of growing vegetables for Minnesota conditions.

Planning Guidelines

When planning your garden, it is important to ask a few basic questions:

- Who will be doing the work?
- What kinds of vegetables do you like to eat?
- How do you plan to use the produce from your garden?
- How much space is available?

Be realistic about the amount of free time you have available. If you have limited time or this is your first garden, think small. There’s nothing more discouraging than facing a large mid-summer garden overrun with weeds. It’s better to have a small garden that’s well tended than a large weed patch. You can usually expand the garden space next year if you have the time. Limit a first garden to family favorites. There’s no point in raising a lot of something your family will not eat.