

# Fresh Connections in Urban Agriculture

## From Seed to Shelf

*Tips on how to care for your growing garden*

### BASIC TOOLS AND SUPPLIES:

Watering can or hose (coiled ones save space)

Shovel

Rake

Gardening gloves

Garden hoe

Garden trowel

Yard cart

Soil Sample Kit

Mulch

Compost

Healthy soil

Container(s) if needed

Labels for plant rows

### THE BEGINNING

Use soil sample results to amend your soil then plant your seeds and plants according to the instructions on their label. Proper plant spacing allows for maximum growth and production to occur. You can use your hoe to make rows for seeds and your garden trowel or shovel to make holes for transplanting. Gardening gloves will keep your hands clean during planting, weeding and harvesting. Labeling your rows will be extremely beneficial. Knowing where all your plants are and where they are planted makes gardening much easier. Be sure to water your freshly planted seeds and plants with a hose or watering can.

Mulch is commonly used in between rows to decrease the amount of weed growth and hold moisture in the soil. Weed will use water and soil nutrients that we want for our vegetable plants. Therefore, the fewer the weeds, the healthier your garden, so hand weeding around plants is often needed. Gather weeds in your garden cart and transport to your compost pile.

### EVERY DAY CARE

Monitor your garden and care for plants daily to avoid problems and maximize your potential harvest.

Weeds should be pulled as soon as they appear, while they are still small and manageable. As mentioned before, mulching between rows reduces weed growth.

Watering as needed is also very important. Always water in the morning or in the evening. This allows more water to soak into the soil for use by the plants. Late morning through afternoon watering will result in more water being evaporated by the sun than actually being absorbed into the soil. Watering slowly allows more water to soak into the soil, minimizing run-off. Regular monitoring of your garden also allows you to detect pest and disease issues early, and to observe when your vegetables start to ripen.

### THE HARVEST

Daily checks on your garden allow you to notice changes in your plants and observe indicators of ripeness. For example, tomatoes should be picked when yellow or red depending on variety. Yellow and green beans are ready to pick when they easily break into two pieces. Corn is typically ready around 3 weeks after the silks form, around the same time that they start to dry and turn brown. Cucumbers, zucchini, and summer squash should be picked once they are about 7-9" in length. Peppers should be harvested when they are firm and have started to change colors. A gentle twist at the stem will usually disconnect the vegetable from its plant. Be careful not to pull or break the plant. Gently place in a basket or bag for transport to your kitchen!



*This fact sheet has been developed by the Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District with funding from the National Association of Conservation Districts Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant Initiative*