

CAN YOU DIG IT?

TIME TO START YOUR GARDEN

Q&A

- 1. What are the best barriers against rabbits and deer who eat plants and flowers? Do you recommend planting the container in the ground to prevent spreading/invasion?**

I use bird netting to protect from rabbits, deer and squirrels in my plantings. It lets the majority of light through it as well as rain and oxygen. I recommend that you remove the plant from the container prior to planting.

- 2. This is my first year growing vegetables in Ohio. What are the common pests I should be worried about, and what (preferably organic) defenses to you suggest to ward them off?**

There are a tremendous number of pests in the garden from bacteria, viruses, and fungal infections to insects to deer and groundhogs. Too many to list. All have their own treatments. I recommend that you read this [Getting Started Gardening Fact Sheet](#) as well as subscribe to [Growing Franklin](#) to keep learning and find out about more classes and events.

- 3. What plants do better in pots vs. in gardens?**

Almost any vegetable can be grown in a container that can be grown in the ground. The key is to make sure your container is large enough to support the plant and you select a variety of plant that is optimized for container production. It should say on the seed packet. Check back to [Growing Franklin](#) as I am adding a Container Gardening website post soon.

- 4. Is there a good online resource that shows images of common plants in various states of growth (what it looks like after germination, what it looks like a few weeks later, etc.) Often, I can only find images of plants showing what they look like full-grown.**

When I am doing an online search and want great information or pictures I type the word "extension" at the end of my search terms. That brings up websites from Land-Grant Universities which generally have the best information and pictures for growers.

- 5. Where can I find resources for weed identification and control? I have a few weeds in my yard I'd like to find a control. Also, how do I control "moss" growing in my yard? I have heavy shaded sections on north side of my home that aligns a woodland.**

OSU has [great perennial and biennial weed guide](#) online for you to use. For a dynamite book to purchase, check out the [2020 Weed Control Guide](#). There are many products available that are listed to control moss that you can purchase. [Moss Control Fact Sheet](#)

- 6. When starting a new vegetable garden, what is the timeline to prep the ground? How many times should you till and when should the plants be put in?**

Click on this great [Getting Started in Gardening Fact Sheet](#).

- 7. We would like advice about how to successfully transition seedlings from inside to outside.**

I recommend a period of gradual acclimation over about a 5-day period where the plants are outside during the day and overnight if weather permits so that they get used to their new outside home.

- 8. What are the preferred methods to send in soil samples to get them tested for pH and heavy metals?**

Right now with the University being closed and no in-person meetings I am recommending soil testing be done through [Spectrum Analytic](#).

- 9. 1.) How early can I begin planting in the ground outdoors? 2.) What can I plant now? 3.) When/how will I know if the ground is ready to begin planting? 4.) What would I need to do to start plants in the house?**

1., 2. and 3. depend on the plant, [CLICK HERE](#) for a spring planting website post on Growing Franklin. 4. Two links on Growing Franklin to help, a [Seed Starting Video](#) and a [Seed Starting Webinar](#)

- 10. What is the best way to start seeds in preparation for planting after the last frost in our area? What are the best things to plant on an outdoor balcony? Best methods? Processes? Success? Strawberries - planted last season - what needs to happen early this season and throughout the season??**

Lots of questions here: Check back to [Growing Franklin](#) as I am adding a Container Gardening website post soon for the balcony thing, you need sun foremost, the right sized containers, good soil, nutrition, etc. [Strawberry Fact](#)

[Sheet Link](#). For planting information for seeds, it all depends on the variety. The package usually has seed information plus this [Getting Stared Fact Sheet](#) has planting times.

11. I currently live in an apartment complex with raised garden beds; we also have a small tree stands surrounding the property. As I am assuming our resident deer family will want to partake in harvesting my garden this year, do you have any tips on how to guard my plants?

I use bird netting that is trellised around my plantings. Fencing is another option. Some repellants work if you are diligent. [Nuisance Wildlife LINK](#).

12. Can I get a soil test done by OSU?

Right now with the University being closed and no in-person meetings I am recommending soil testing be done through [Spectrum Analytic](#).

13. Should I compost, mulch, or place ground cover plants in my flower/shrub beds? I have started reading about no till planting. Placing cardboard down and soil on the cardboard and planting vegetables. Is this the best method for a garden?

Cardboard can take quite awhile to break down and may impede vegetable roots. I like the idea of compost and organic matter added and then mulch around your vegetables.

14. Can you mitigate the Walnut tree juglone in your soil in order to grow tomatoes? How do you test PH balance in your soil?

Right now with the University being closed and no in-person meetings I am recommending soil testing be done through [Spectrum Analytic](#). They will find your pH and give recommendations. I do not know how you would mitigate juglone. I recommend planting in a raised bed or container without contamination.

15. What would be your suggestion for preparing the soil in a garden space that was NOT tilled or used last season?

Make sure to prioritize weed control via herbicide, tillage or tarping. Then add organic matter and incorporate that into the soil. Then soil test through [Spectrum Analytic](#) to get fertility right.

16. What are some effective ways to keep animals away/out of garden, such as deer, groundhogs, rabbits, etc.?

I use bird netting that is trellised around my plantings. Fencing is another option. Some repellants work if you are diligent. [Nuisance Wildlife LINK](#).

17. Where can I get a good Columbus gardening calendar of when to plant seeds and when to start seeds inside?

This [Getting Started Fact Sheet](#) has planting times.

18. What are some Ohio-native plants that can improve backyard drainage and standing water problems? Any other tips for water control using plants or topography?

Some trees such as maples, willow and sycamore prefer wet feet or do well with wet feet. However, you may need to regrade the area if it drains poorly. I would consider contacting Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District.

19. Is there a reliable way to prevent Cucumber Wilt organically? I've never had much success with cucurbits of any kind.

It can be difficult to prevent as it is a bacterial disease vectored by cucumber beetles and they are resistant to many pesticides. Use of lightweight row cover can help initially but it needs to be removed to allow pollinators access.

20. What book or books would you recommend to a slightly advanced beginner gardener who has a full shade front yard and full sun backyard. Interested in both vegetable gardening and perennials.

I do not read many books anymore for gardening so I do not have a good recommendation. Most of the resources I use are online. Great ones are Growing Franklin and Ohionline. I recommend that when searching online that you add the word 'extension' to your search terms to get the best research based information.

21. I'm not able to plant in the earth, so large and small planters are my best option. Will this lecture assist me with pot planting? Is it recommended to start each growing season with new potting soil nutrient rich? Or may I blend old with new? I'm looking forward to learning. It's thrilling to grow herbs for cooking as flavor, freshness and quality supersede the common market options. Sorry for so many questions. Thanks so very much for hosting this lecture.

I will have a Container Gardening post online soon as well the second class in this series will be on Container Gardening.

22. I am trying to use some seed packets I have lying around. I don't have a good setup for starting them indoors. Any tips for direct planting seeds?

Your best bet is to follow the planting directions on the seed packet as it will tell planting depth and when to plant.

23. I live on a very busy street where cars playing loud music and police cars with their sirens on pass a few times per hour. I know that it will be impossible to completely get rid of this sound but I do want to plant some tall hedges that will be good for soundproofing and privacy. What would you suggest to plant?

I would suggest privet or arborvitae.

24. Brand new to gardening, would appreciate a dummy version weaved in if possible!

Will do, this is a perfect introduction class.

25. To use chicken manure as compost, how long must it not have any new manure added to be safe to use in a vegetable garden?

[Click Here](#) for USDA recommendations about manure and time to harvest.

26. This will be our second year gardening in a dedicated 20' X 10' space. 1. What is the best way to determine what soil to purchase? 2. Last year our harvest of carrots and bell peppers was really great, but we had trouble separating our arugula and spinach from the weeds. Any advice on how to best separate one from the other?

A soil test is your best guide to fertility and I highly recommend adding organic matter. There is no one best soil to buy that I can recommend. Weed control, especially with carrots is difficult so I suggest you get aggressive with pulling them when they are young.

27. I have a standard size (75 ft X 6 ft) vegetable garden. The soil type is "CLAY". In 2010, I mixed one truck TOP Soil. Last 10 years I have been separating all the stones & wood from the soil of the garden. Now what type of soil (except Miracle-Gro) can I mix to improve the quality of the soil & how to improve my harvest specially vegetables (Okra, Green Beans, Squashes, Tomatoes, Chili etc)?

I suggest adding organic matter to your soil. You can buy bagged or in bulk compost or humus from any number of companies locally.

28. Is there still time to start seeds indoors?

Depends on the variety. I am getting ready to start basil and another round of lettuce right now for instance. Probably too late for the spring brassicas. In that case I would purchase transplants.

29. Doing container gardening this year. What plants are best suited for that?

Any plant listed for container production would do best. Watch for our next class on Container Gardening.

30. Working in community gardens-things you need to know

Check out [this post on Growing Franklin](#) with my garden's recommendation.

31. I just moved and will be starting my garden for the first time - I am debating between tilling a new space or building a raised garden. Any pros/cons for these options?

I personally prefer raised beds as that allows you to concentrate your inputs like organic matter, fertilizer and weed control.

32. I have no idea what I'm doing at all. How do I start and maintain a successful vegetable garden?

This class will get you started!

33. What is the best way to prepare soil that was used for planting the previous year? Are there specific nutrients that need to be added?

A soil test will guide you towards what nutrients to add. I always try to add organic matter to my soil and that is the best soil amendment.

34. I live in a small apartment but have a patio. We are only able to have small boxes for any garden on the patio as it is not a large space. I would love to hear some tips for gardening in smaller spaces or how to decide what things to plant when you have limited space.

Watch out for our upcoming Container Garden class, lots of great small space information.

35. I am limited to an 8' x 12' raised bed. How do I replenish the soil each year?

I recommend a soil test for nutrient recommendations followed by an amendment with organic matter such as compost or humus.

36. Good technique for dividing indoor house plants like spider plants. Keeping tropical plants alive and flourishing year around.

I could not find a great OSU resource for you on houseplants but I did find [this PSU fact sheet on houseplant care](#).

37. Seeking tips to engage elementary age children in gardening. Growing herbs and veggies in outside containers.

School gardening is a great experiential learning activity for students. Contact me offline at mcdermott.15@osu.edu for assistance.

38. 1.) How soon can I start planning outdoors in the ground? 2.) What can I plant? 3.) How will I know when the soil is ready? 4.) What can I plant, when?

I have already put a ton of spring veggies and herbs in the ground. I have a post on what and when to plant [HERE](#), plus another post on what I planted [HERE](#).

39. I live in an apartment but still would like to grow some garden vegetables in small planters on the roof outside of my bedroom window. Do you have any recommendations for what vegetables I should try growing?

Make sure to pick ones that have a container listing plus watch out for our upcoming class!

40. When should I plant? How do I improve my soil? Should I do raised beds instead of my yard soil, etc.? What are the most foolproof foods to grow?

Plant depending on the variety with cool weather stuff like [THESE](#) now and summer things later. I prefer raised beds, especially for a new grower. All plants have their challenges, plant what you want to grow and eat and send me questions if you encounter problems.

41. Do garden boxes need fences around them to protect against animals?

Generally yes, I protect my container garden with bird netting.

42. I have had blight in my soil for the last couple of years impacting my tomatoes. I have had a black tarp over the garden for the winter, reading that the heat may help destroy the fungus. Is there anything that I can do to prep my soil to reduce or eliminate blight?

[CLICK HERE](#) for a website post that I created last year to help with that exact question and some recommendations. If you can crop rotate and plant resistant varieties that helps as well.

**43. What do you think is currently the safe time to plant frost intolerant plants?
How should I prepare last year's tomato patch soil for tomatoes again?**

Way too early for warm season planting. For your tomato patch, soil test for nutrient recommendations and add organic matter as well.

44. Any advice for apartment-dwellers who don't have a yard, but would still love to grow some produce this season?

I would contact your city or municipality to see if there is a community garden you could join with.

45. What is the best variety of tomato for container planting?

Lots of choices, I do not have a favorite, but I check to see that the label lists good for containers. You can also get a very large container and plant what you want.

46. What can I grow in pots on my patio?

Almost anything! Watch for our next class on Container Gardening.

47. Do you have tips for using a raised bed for a garden? Should you place cardboard on the ground (over grass), when building/starting a raised bed to help keep weeds down?

This class will help with that. A thin layer of cardboard or newspaper can help with weeds and will break down eventually to allow root growth.

48. Can you grow any vegetables in part shade sections of the garden?

You will need at least 6 hours, then lettuce, spinach, Asian greens, chives, parsley. If you have a half day, you can grow most veg but will have reduced production. Look for faster maturing varieties to get a harvest with reduced sun.

49. How often should you rotate where you plant tomatoes?

Good crop rotation would be at least three years from a spot.

50. What are the best ways to improve heavy clay soil?

The best way is to add organic matter such as compost or humus.

51. I'm a novice (using this time at home to start a garden), so any basic advice will be much appreciated!

This class should help!

52. What are a few vegetables that can be grown on a deck in partial shade?

You will need at least 6 hours, then lettuce, spinach, Asian greens, chives, parsley. If you have a half day, you can grow most veg but will have reduced production. Look for faster maturing varieties to get a harvest with reduced sun.

53. Under the topic of prepping your garden for spring: Any additional ideas outside manual labor and glyphosate to remove an overabundance of what looks like American Burnweed in a flower garden?

You could tarp the area and leave it fallow a few months to kill weeds. That is done in organic systems.

54. Is soil pH a factor worth amending for?

You bet. Nutrients are available at certain pH ranges. A soil test will guide you.

55. Do you recommend mixing diatomaceous earth into the soil to help control insects? If so, where is it available to purchase?

I do not recommend it.

56. I'd like to know more about creating raised beds.

This class should help with that!

57. Do I need to buy better dirt than what is in my backyard to have a successful crop? Last year my carrots were plentiful and tasted not good.

I would consider adding organic matter and soil testing to make sure you have the available nutrients to grow a great carrot crop.

58. 1. How do I maximize the garden space so that I can grow a productive garden? 2. I have a couple of peach and apple trees in my garden, how do I keep pests away from them this spring and summer? 3. Any advice on seedlings I started indoors, when to transplant, etc (this is my first year for seedlings).

I think raised beds maximize space best, this class will help on that. Here are fact sheets on [APPLES](#) and [PEACHES](#). Click [HERE](#) for a website video on seed starting and [HERE](#) for a seed starting class.

59. I've tried growing zucchini twice. Each time, the plant grew strong and healthy looking, flowers develop and little zucchini begin to form. Unfortunately, each time, every little zucchini would end up falling off or

disappearing before it was even 1/2 inch long. Can you tell me what might be wrong? (The plants are in a wire fenced area and none of my other veggies have been eaten by wildlife so I don't think that's the problem. There's no other evidence of critters either.)

It sounds to me like they are not getting pollinated. Do you use any pesticides on your plants?

60. I have a garden on an incline. I'm trying to decide where to plant certain veggies, knowing that those at the top usually get less water than those at the bottom of the slope. Are there any veggies that specifically prefer wetter/drier environments?

Sort of, except they prefer them on their own terms, not on Mother Nature's terms. I would consider terracing the garden or putting in a series of raised beds.

61. Can you talk about alternating growing years in garden plots (growing tomatoes every year in one bed versus alternating each year with another veg or herb). Why is this best for soil and what combinations should you alternate?

The best crop rotation is every three years. We will talk about that in class.

62. I have a vegetable garden & plant lots of annual flowers. My one big question is with keeping begonias alive. They are beautifully bloomed when you buy them at the nurseries but after about a month, they rot at the stem and die for me. I know that sounds like overwatering, but I am careful about that. I've tried sun and I've tried shade and I've tried sun/shade. Pretty much I've tried everything and they have died every year for at least 10 yrs. I always say I'm not going to buy them again, but each year I fall for their beautiful blooms. Any help would be appreciated.

I found a [Fact Sheet from UMN](#) that should help. Also, those symptoms sound like disease, make sure to use sterilized pots and new soil so that the plants do not get early exposure.

63. Best plants to put in an area with about 6-8 hours of direct sun a day versus full day sun.

If you have at least 6 hours, then lettuce, spinach, Asian greens, chives, parsley. If you have a half day, you can grow most veg but will have reduced production. Look for faster maturing varieties to get a harvest with reduced sun.

64. I'm starting seeds indoors for the first time this year. I've read that a heating pad can help germinate the seeds. I'm using whatever supplies I can find around the house and I have a heating pad that I could put under the container/box in which holds the plants. I don't know how much heat is ideal and I don't have a thermometer. Should I put the heating pad on low? (My plants are in an egg carton, which is in a thick cardboard box, lined with plastic sheeting in case it gets wet.

[CLICK HERE](#) for a great seed starting video. [CLICK HERE](#) for a seed starting class! [CLICK HERE](#) for Seed Starting problems to watch for. Some plants like tomatoes like heat to increase germination, some cool weather crops like spinach and lettuce would not like it.

65. I am really interested in understanding what the novice gardener can do to appropriately address soil preparation. I tried my hand at basic gardening last year (tomatoes) and ended up with poor results. Based on what happened to the plants I was told there were soil deficiencies. I would love to know what the beginner gardener can do to get a great "foundational" start this year!

Your first step is a [soil test](#). That guides what nutrients to add.

66. Any information you can provide about herb-gardening would be great!

Great idea for a class! Keep an eye on [Growing Franklin](#).

67. I attempted indoor seed starting with grow lights for the first time this year, but it did not go well, and am struggling to "harden off" the few that did okay. Any tips for seed starting indoors with grow lights, and making the transition to outdoors?

[CLICK HERE](#) for a great seed starting video. [CLICK HERE](#) for a seed starting class! [CLICK HERE](#) for Seed Starting problems to watch for.

68. Any tips on growing tomatoes in containers?

Pick a variety labelled for container production, get a large enough container and maintain the fertility needed for this heavy producing vegetable over the season. Check back to [Growing Franklin](#) as I am adding a Container Gardening website post soon.

69. I have trouble with squirrels, chipmunks and other critters (raccoons?) eating my tomatoes. Is there such a thing as an easy cage system to buy and set up to keep them away from my plants?

I use bird netting over PVC pipe to protect my container garden from critters.

70. When can I start vegetable seeds outdoors? When is it too late to start vegetable seeds outdoors? Why won't my zucchini grow zucchinis? My zucchini plant flowers, but never produces the zucchini. Should I use mulch or peat moss on my vegetable garden?

It depends on the variety. [CLICK HERE](#) for spring planting advice. I grow vegetables outdoors 12 months of the year so you always have a chance to plant something. It depends on the variety. If you get flowers but no zucchini, you are not getting pollination. Make sure to protect and provide for your pollinators.