

10 Garden Planning Tips Non-Gardeners Need



Garden planning may be a foreign term to you. Are you a non-gardener? Is your idea of gardening throwing some radish and lettuce seeds on top of some dirt? I will confess that I consider myself a non-gardener. You might be thinking, but, you have a farm and grow vegetables and herbs every year. I want to be a gardener, really, I do. But, the truth is I am haphazard at it at best.

Garden planning eludes me year after year, I read about gardeners planning all winter. Some even plan years ahead. I "plan" in the spring when I see the nursery's getting

seedlings in stock. I buy what looks healthy from the garden center or the farmer's market. And I take care to get the seedlings planted as soon as possible. But, this does not always mean I do anything right. I seem to have good intentions in May, but by June, some disaster is happening in my garden and it seems to go downhill from there. And I often look at the beetle infestations and just raise my white flag. Good job beetles, you win again.

We have had good garden years

When we were first married, and childless, we had a few years of growing a really strong garden. And a few years while our kids were growing up, the garden produced plenty for us to eat, and to save for winter. What I want, is a garden that produces enough for us every year. Even if not every year is spectacular at least it would not be a disaster. So how does a non-gardener become a gardener? Here's my action plan for this year. I think it might be time to actually start with a plan.



How to Be Successful in the Garden With Garden Planning

1. Create a plan. Begin by planning the space for the garden or multiple garden plots. [Track the sun](#) and the shadows to make sure the chosen space will receive adequate sunshine. And now for the fun. Make a list of your families favorite vegetables. Next, look through all those inspiring garden catalogs that have filled your mailbox this winter.
2. Try to not overwhelm yourself with too large a garden at first. I have done this so many times it just isn't funny anymore. I think I will keep up with 1/4 acre. It is [tilled, planted, the plants start to grow](#) and everything is great. Until I take a few days and don't pull weeds. Or the rains come. Or a turtle, rabbit or groundhog gets involved. Then the weeds take hold. And I can't seem to keep up. So I weed the tomatoes. But when I go weed the beans, the tomato weeds return. Pretty soon, I am digging through weeds trying to find the vegetables. Try starting with a small manageable plot. This year I am planting a small kitchen garden that I can easily weed on my way to the car. In the farm area I am planting a 16 x 20 plot. I started with greens and cool weather crops like a row of broccoli and a row of beets. The potatoes are planted along the side so I can train them to grow outside the fence. I hope! As the season gets warmer, and the greens are done, I will start some zucchini and winter squash. I will continue to [rotate through](#). We can grow successfully through late September, sometimes longer. Another benefit to the garden being smaller, maybe I will feel up to doing battle with the non-beneficial insects.

Before You Head to the Garden to Plant

1. **Check the quality of the soil.** Add appropriate soil

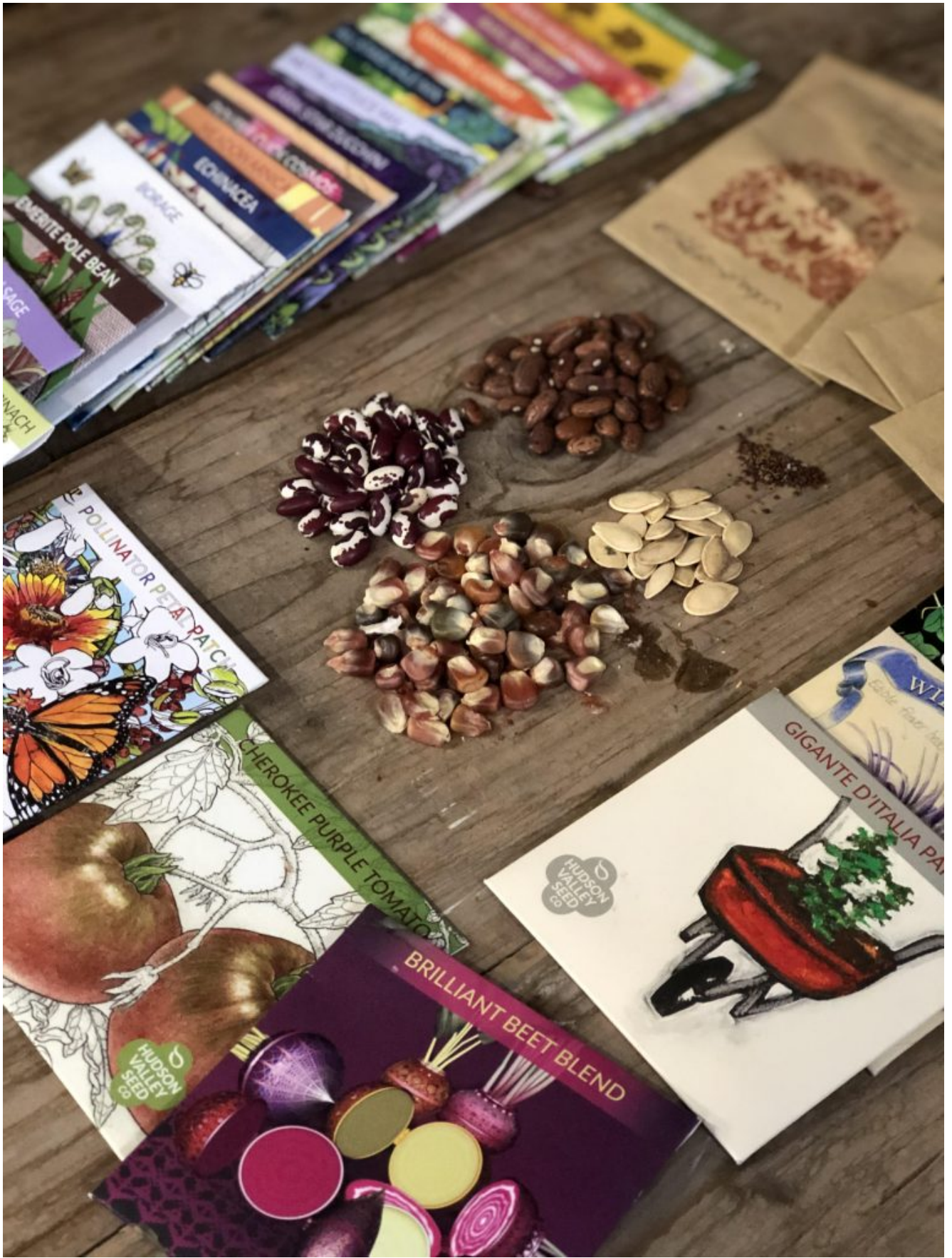
additives. Bring the soil pH up to what it should be I don't have any idea what that means but here's a great resource for [building soil](#). Start now, saving coffee grounds, egg shells, and other compost materials that help build good soil. You may need to think about what [type of manure to use](#) to add nutrients to the soil. [Read this](#) if your garden has been overgrown for awhile. And don't forget all that [rich chicken manure](#) if you are raising chickens, too.

2. **Start your seeds inside.** read more here on how to [test germination](#) by sprouting small seeds on a wet paper towel placed inside a small plastic zip lock baggie. Another method for frugal seed starting uses the [plastic cups](#) from the single serve coffee machines.

Once You get to the Garden...

1. **Direct sow seeds** that do well being [started in the ground](#). This is the simplest of methods.
2. **Thin seedlings.** This is always hard for me. I want to save them all. But they won't grow if they are crowded so thin you must.
3. **Install proper fencing.** A couple of years ago, one of our garden areas was doing really well. The soil was rich, the plants were healthy and the garden was flourishing. We got busy with other things before putting up a fence around the area. The deer came and ate just about everything. They left the turnips. No one in my family likes turnips. I don't know why we planted turnips. The pigs enjoyed the turnips that year. This year, each garden area will be fenced in.
4. **Spend a half hour a day checking for bugs,** pruning off dead shoots, picking produce, and pulling weeds. I will often check the kitchen garden as I am heading back in

to the house in the evening. I find it's a good time to do battle with the [harmful insects](#) as the heat of the day has passed. It's a quiet time and gives me a break before getting dinner ready.



And wrap up the season with

1. **Stay on top of the preserving,** as the produce starts to be harvested. After all, that was a lot of hard work and you want to enjoy all of the goodness throughout the winter. Aren't you glad you started garden planning, now?
2. **Keep your canning supplies organized and ready.** Doing a batch of produce each night and running the dehydrator during the day while you work on other things will help you avoid an exhausting day of canning. If everything is clean and ready, you can clean, blanch and fill jars while preparing dinner. Then pop the jars into the canner while you clean up the kitchen.



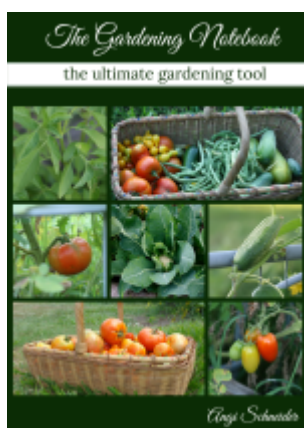
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Garden Planning Leads to Healthy Eating and Living

Gardening is a healthy pursuit. It keeps you active, and the reward is good food. The [whole family can help](#) in some way, in the garden. Using a garden planning notebook or journal will help you stay on the plan. So far this year I have written down what is planted, where it is located in the garden and sketched a diagram of the garden. As I [rotate the other crops into the garden](#), I will be making notes about how the variety did, about how much it yielded in produce and what I would try differently. The garden planning I am starting now should help me stay on course and be eager to start the garden planning again next year.

Are you interested in starting a garden journal? I recommend [this one](#) from Angi at Schneiderpeeps.com



Interested in being more self reliant with gardening and food preservation and storage? here's a great read from Daisy of [The Organic Prepper.](#)

