

## Preparing Your Vegetable Beds

**Select a sunny location** with well-drained soil. Most edibles like full sun, but a few like lettuce and spinach will tolerate some shade.

**Measure out a size and length** that will be accessible. Beds that are about 30" wide allow for reaching the middle from either side. Mound beds toward the center to improve drainage.

**Tip:** There are some sturdy no-tools-required raised beds that make planting and harvesting easier and more accessible to the small space gardener. If your soil is rock-hard, consider creating a raised bed or using containers.

**Test soil samples** from the area. You'll get a lot of information about your soil by sending samples to your cooperative extension service or using a test kit. If you already know your soil, just test the pH.

**Get rid of weeds, rocks and debris** before amending the soil. Loosen soil to a depth of at least 8" with a garden fork. Be careful not to till too often, too deep or too early in the season. Vigorously tilling soggy soil can cause it to become too compact.

**Add organic amendments to the soil** in a 3"-4" layer and work it into the soil with a garden fork. Organic compost or soil builder is wonderfully rich mixture that conditions your soil to create the best possible growing condition. Add any minerals based on your soil testing. You could work in organic fertilizer at the same time.

**Choose varieties** of vegetables that are well adapted to your region and known to be disease and pest resistant. Check with your local cooperative extension service for recommendations. Research companion plants, since some veggies do like to be planted right next to other types.

Choose cool-season or warm-season vegetables, depending on when you begin planting. Cool season vegetables are best planted in fall or early spring. Warm season vegetables are best planted in summer.

**Fertilize** evenly over the area and rake into the top 2". An Organic Tomato, Vegetable & Herb Fertilizer will feed the roots of your vegetable plants abundantly and consistently. Repeat application 2-3 months later depending on the length of the growing season.

**Encourage beneficial insects** such as ladybugs, lacewing flies and hover flies by not spraying broad-spectrum pesticides, by planting the plants that nourish them (such as dill and zinnia) and by releasing purchased insects into your yard.

