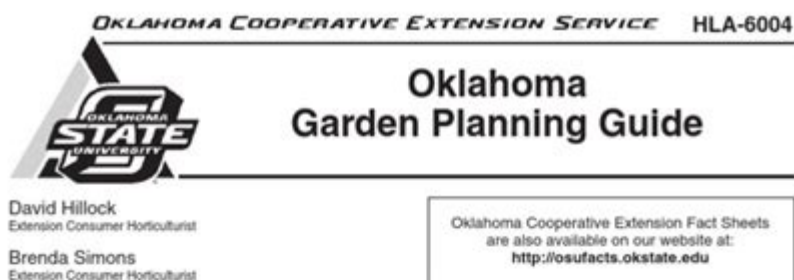


# Oklahoma Garden Planning Guide



Well-planned, properly managed home gardens can furnish Oklahoma families with flavorful, high quality, fresh vegetables from spring through fall, as well as for processing or storing for winter.

The amount of money invested in seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, and a few tools is more than offset by the enjoyment, healthful outdoor exercise, and fresh "homegrown" flavor.

## Choosing the Site

The selection and preparation of the garden site is an important key to growing a home garden successfully. An area exposed to full or near full sunlight with deep, well-drained, fertile soil is ideal. The site should also be located near a water supply and, if possible, away from trees and shrubs that would compete with the garden for light, water, and nutrients.

While these conditions are ideal, many urban gardeners have a small area with a less than optimal site on which to grow vegetables. Yet, it is still possible to grow a vegetable garden by modifying certain cultural practices and types of crops grown. Areas with light or thin shade can be used, such as those under young trees, under mature trees with high lacy canopies, or in bright, airy places which receive only one to two hours of direct sun per day. There are several vegetables which will grow under these conditions, including beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, chard, kohlrabi, leaf lettuce, peas, potatoes, radishes, rhubarb, spinach, and turnips. Unfortunately, few vegetables will grow well under full, dense shade. If the site is not well drained or if the soil is thin, the use of raised beds can help with this problem.

## Planning the Garden

The accompanying chart should be of help in determining family requirements of the different vegetables.

Perennial vegetables (asparagus, rhubarb, winter onions, etc.) should be planted at one side or end of the garden for efficient operation. The hardy vegetables planted early in the season should be planted together, so they may be followed with late season plantings of the same or other vegetables. Vegetables requiring similar cultural practices should be grouped together for ease of care.

The chart groups vegetables as cool season or warm

season crops, indicating under which conditions they grow best. Crops classed as cool season may be planted earlier in the season and thrive best under cool conditions (average daily temperatures of 70°F or less), while those grouped as warm season crops grow better during warm temperatures (average daily temperatures ranging between 70 to 90°F).

Based on the temperature that the plants will withstand, vegetables are hardy, semi-hardy, tender, or very tender. Hardy types may be planted before the last killing frost. The semi-hardy ones will be injured by a hard frost, but will grow in cool weather and not be harmed by a light frost. Tender plants are injured or may be killed by a light frost but can withstand cool weather, while the very tender are injured by cool weather.

Differences in suggested planting dates range from the earliest for southeast Oklahoma to the latest for the northwest part of the state.

## Gardening Tips

In order to have a successful garden, the gardener must follow a few rules. The following tips may help to prevent some common garden problems from occurring, or help overcome those that do arise:

- Sample soil and have it tested every three to four years.
- Apply fertilizers in the recommended manner and amount.
- Make use of organic materials such as compost where available.
- Use recommended varieties.
- Thin plants when small.
- Use mulches to conserve moisture, control weeds, and reduce fruit rots.
- Avoid excessive walking and working in the garden when foliage and soil are wet.
- Examine the garden often to keep ahead of potential problems.
- Keep the garden free of weeds, insects, and diseases.
- Wash and clean tools and sprayers after use.
- Rotate specific crop family locations each year to avoid insect and disease buildup.
- When possible, harvest vegetables during the cool hours of the day.

**Oklahoma garden planning guide** is an essential resource for both novice and experienced gardeners looking to cultivate a thriving garden in the unique climate and soil conditions of Oklahoma. This guide will provide you with a comprehensive overview of the key factors to consider when planning your garden, including climate, soil types, plant selection, and effective gardening techniques. Whether you're aiming for a vegetable garden, flower beds, or a mixed landscape, this guide will help you establish a flourishing green space.

# Understanding Oklahoma's Climate

Oklahoma experiences a diverse climate, which can significantly influence your gardening plan. Understanding the climate will help you select the right plants and establish a successful garden.

## Climate Zones

Oklahoma is primarily located in USDA Hardiness Zones 6-7, which means:

- Zone 6: Average annual minimum temperatures range from -10°F to 0°F.
- Zone 7: Average annual minimum temperatures range from 0°F to 10°F.

## Seasonal Considerations

- Spring: Typically, spring arrives early in Oklahoma, with the last frost occurring around mid-April. This is the ideal time to start planting cool-season crops.
- Summer: Oklahoma summers can be hot and dry, which necessitates careful watering and plant selection.
- Fall: Fall is a great time for planting perennials and preparing for winter.
- Winter: While winters can be harsh, many plants can survive with proper care.

## Soil Types and Preparation

Soil is the foundation of any successful garden. Understanding the types of soil in Oklahoma and preparing them accordingly will ensure healthy plant growth.

## Common Soil Types in Oklahoma

1. Clay Soil: Heavy and dense, clay retains moisture but can lead to poor drainage.
2. Sandy Soil: Drains quickly but may not hold nutrients well.
3. Loamy Soil: A balanced mixture of sand, silt, and clay, loamy soil is ideal for gardening.

## Soil Testing

Before planting, it's crucial to test your soil. This will help you understand its pH and nutrient composition.

You can obtain a soil test kit from your local extension office or garden center. Here are the steps for testing:

1. Collect soil samples from different areas of your garden.
2. Combine samples in a clean bucket.
3. Follow the instructions for the soil test kit.
4. Amend your soil based on the test results.

## **Improving Soil Quality**

- Add Organic Matter: Incorporate compost or well-rotted manure to improve nutrient content and soil structure.
- Use Mulch: Applying a layer of mulch can help retain moisture and suppress weeds.
- Rotate Crops: Change your planting areas each year to prevent soil depletion and reduce pest buildup.

## **Choosing the Right Plants**

Selecting the right plants is crucial for a successful garden. Here's how to choose plants that thrive in Oklahoma's climate.

## **Vegetable Selection**

When planning a vegetable garden, consider the following:

- Cool-Season Vegetables: Plant these in early spring for a spring harvest.
- Examples: Lettuce, spinach, peas, and radishes.
- Warm-Season Vegetables: Plant after the last frost for summer harvest.
- Examples: Tomatoes, peppers, corn, and squash.

## **Flower Selection**

For flower gardens, consider native plants that are well adapted to Oklahoma's environment:

- Perennials:
- Black-eyed Susan

- Coneflower
- Daylilies
  
- Annuals:
- Zinnias
- Marigolds
- Sunflowers

## Herbs for Your Garden

Herbs are easy to grow and can enhance your cooking. Some suitable herbs for Oklahoma include:

- Basil
- Oregano
- Thyme
- Rosemary

## Garden Layout and Design

Once you have selected your plants, it's time to design your garden layout. A well-planned garden can maximize space and ensure healthy growth.

## Garden Bed Types

1. Raised Beds: Ideal for controlling soil quality and drainage.
2. In-Ground Beds: Traditional method; good for large spaces.
3. Container Gardens: Great for small spaces or patios.

## Design Principles

- Sunlight: Ensure that taller plants do not shade shorter ones.
- Spacing: Follow recommended spacing guidelines for each plant to avoid overcrowding.
- Accessibility: Create paths for easy access to all areas of the garden.

# Watering and Irrigation

Proper watering is vital for plant health, especially in Oklahoma's hot summers.

## Watering Techniques

- Drip Irrigation: Efficient and conserves water by delivering it directly to the roots.
- Soaker Hoses: Great for garden beds, allowing for gradual moisture.
- Hand Watering: Useful for smaller gardens or container plants.

## Watering Schedule

- Frequency: Water deeply but less frequently to encourage deep root growth.
- Time of Day: Water early in the morning or late afternoon to minimize evaporation.

# Pest and Disease Management

Caring for your garden also involves managing pests and diseases. Here are some strategies:

## Preventive Measures

- Companion Planting: Some plants can deter pests when grown together.
- Crop Rotation: Helps prevent the buildup of pests and diseases.

## Organic Pest Control Methods

- Neem Oil: Effective against various pests.
- Insecticidal Soap: Can manage soft-bodied insects like aphids.
- Hand-Picking: For larger pests, physically removing them can be effective.

# Seasonal Maintenance Tips

Caring for your garden throughout the seasons will help ensure its success.

## Spring Maintenance

- Prepare garden beds and amend soil.
- Start planting cool-season crops.

## Summer Maintenance

- Regularly check for pests and diseases.
- Consistent watering is crucial.

## Fall Maintenance

- Harvest vegetables and flowers.
- Begin planning for winter protection.

## Winter Maintenance

- Mulch perennial beds to protect roots.
- Plan for spring planting during the off-season.

## Conclusion

Creating a thriving garden in Oklahoma requires careful planning and consideration of the unique conditions in the state. By following this **Oklahoma garden planning guide**, you can cultivate a beautiful and productive garden that flourishes throughout the seasons. Remember to stay informed about local gardening practices and connect with fellow gardeners to share tips and experiences. Happy gardening!

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What are the best vegetables to plant in Oklahoma gardens?

Some of the best vegetables to plant in Oklahoma gardens include tomatoes, peppers, okra, squash, and beans, which thrive in the state's climate.

### When is the best time to start planting in Oklahoma?

In Oklahoma, the best time to start planting is typically in early spring, around mid-March to late April, depending on the specific region and frost dates.

### How can I improve soil quality in my Oklahoma garden?

To improve soil quality in your Oklahoma garden, consider adding organic matter such as compost, manure, or peat moss, and testing your soil pH to ensure it is suitable for your plants.

### What are some common pests to watch out for in Oklahoma gardens?

Common pests in Oklahoma gardens include aphids, spider mites, and squash bugs. Regular monitoring and using organic pest control methods can help manage these pests.

### How can I create a drought-resistant garden in Oklahoma?

To create a drought-resistant garden in Oklahoma, choose native plants, use mulch to retain moisture, and implement drip irrigation systems to conserve water.

### What are the benefits of companion planting in Oklahoma?

Companion planting can enhance growth, deter pests, and improve yields. For example, planting marigolds with vegetables can help repel harmful insects.

### What native plants should I consider for my Oklahoma garden?

Consider native plants such as prairie coneflower, black-eyed Susan, and switchgrass, which are well-suited to Oklahoma's climate and require less maintenance.

### How can I plan for seasonal changes in my Oklahoma garden?

To plan for seasonal changes, research the specific growing seasons for your plants, rotate crops annually, and consider using cold frames or row covers to extend the growing season.

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