



Outdoor Gardening 101

We hope to make the GROW Whistler Greenhouse & Garden program a supportive and educational space for new gardeners. Here are some basic guidelines to help you get started on your gardening escapades!

Start with the Basics:

Soil

- Before planting, ensure that the soil is well mixed and healthy.
- Soil needs to be able to drain, so water does not 'drown' your plants, while simultaneously maintaining appropriate moisture for the plants. If it's too 'wet,' add some sand. If it's too dry, add some compost.
- Soil amendments are used to enhance and maintain the health of the soil. Amendments include: compost, organic fertilizer, manure, and seaweed. The timing of the application is key to its success. Know the amendment and the appropriate time and method to apply it to the garden and remember everything must be natural and organic.
- A key indicator of soil health is the presence of worms. Worms are a fantastic attribute for mixing the soil and further decomposing nutrients. You may want to add you own this year!

Sun

- The Cheakamus Garden gets plenty of sun, but some plants like beans and peas may shade out neighbouring plants. Be sure to plant tomatoes where they will get plenty of sun and cool weather plants like arugula where there is slightly more shade.

Water

- There are three water locations at Cheakamus. Plants need water, and it's often the amount of water that's available that will keep plants from wilting up in the summer sun and heat. In the summer, you may need to water your garden daily in order to keep plants happy.

Planting

We recommend square foot planting- an easy method for planting a garden in a small area (one foot at a time), which is less intimidating and provides high yields! Here are some tips to get you started:

- Know what is best to plant from seed, and what is best to plant from starts or tubers.
- Seed starts include: salad, kale, squash, cucumbers, peas, radish, beans, beets, carrots, spinach, parsnips and Swiss chard
- Plant starts include: broccoli, cabbage, fennel, leek, squash, cucumbers, bok choy, basil and parsley
- Tuber starts- sun chokes
- Keep in mind we are doing our very best to minimize bear attractants
- Choose plants that grow well in this region. Our season is pretty short and lacks the intense heat that allows certain plants to thrive. Melon, for example, will grow well, but may not fully ripen. On the other hand, kale can be planted throughout the season, and may even continue to grow through the winter.
- Timing is everything. Spinach grows well in the early spring and fall, but doesn't like the hot summer. Use garden charts for guidance in planning and planting. Seed catalogues have lots of great info in them. Many plants, including lettuce and radish, require re-seeding throughout the season to allow for continuous harvest.
- Plant starts on a cloudy day or later in the day so the intense sun doesn't shock them.

Organizing Your Square Foot Garden [what goes where, labels, calendar]

- Label plants and include the specific variety. This will help you remember what grows well, and learn from the gardens around you.

Depth

- Rule of thumb for seed planting depth: Plant a seed 3 times deeper than the width of the seed. Cover with a loose layer of healthy soil- no heavy lumps on top. Water immediately, and maintain moisture while seeds germinate. This is very important.
- For plant starts, dig a hole twice the size of the root ball.

Spacing

- Plant them right the first time- Give plants room to grow. Look on the package for distance recommendations.

Taking care of your plants

- Water plants as needed. More thorough watering less often encourages healthy root development.
- Thin plants to promote good root health and adequate ventilation (which helps prevent mildew).
- Keep weeds under control.
- Provide plant supports as needed. Take a look around the garden and check out some of the creative ways and materials gardeners have used to support their plants.
- The most important thing is to observe your plants on a regular basis and pay close attention to their growth. They have much to offer — from tips to care for them, to a delicious meal!

Harvest

There is nothing like the reward of eating delicious food you've grown yourself! Don't miss the short window when your fruits and veggies are at their prime. Left too long, peas and beans become tough, cucumbers bitter and tomatoes will split and get mushy. If you're not around to harvest your produce, be sure to enlist a neighbor or fellow gardener- they will most likely be happy to help, especially in exchange for some of what they've picked! Signs are available in the tool shed inviting help. The Foodbank is always in need of fresh produce so that is another excellent option.

Timing

Follow the directions on the seed packet for the maturation dates and be sure to record them on a calendar or in a gardening journal to plan accordingly. The following are rough estimations and assume a uniform spring planting start date.

Early Season

- Lettuces
- Arugula
- Radishes
- Garlic (if planted the previous fall)

Mid-season

- Peas
- Beans
- Beets
- Herbs
- Cucumbers

Late Season

- Tomatoes
- Squash
- Broccoli
- Brussel sprouts

Crops for mid-season planting:

Crop	Days to maturity	Cold hardiness	Crop	Days to maturity	Cold hardiness
Basil	30-60	Killed by frost	Green onion	60-70	Survives -1.5°C
Beets	50-60	Survives to -1.5°C	Kale	40-65	The hardiest - down to -6°C
Bush beans	45-65	Killed by frost	Kohlrabi	50-60	Survives light frost
Broccoli	50-70	Survives light frost	Leaf lettuce	40-60	Survives light frost
Brussels sprouts	90-100	The hardiest - down to -6°C	Mustard greens	30-40	Survives light frost
Cabbage	50-90	The hardiest - down to -6°C	Peas	70-80 (longer than if planted in spring)	Survives high -1.5°C
Cauliflower	60-80	Survives light frost	Radishes	30-60	Dig until soil freezes

Cilantro	60-70	Survives light frost	Spinach	35-45	Survives light frost; may overwinter
Collard greens	40-65	The hardiest - down to -6°C	Swiss chard	40-60	Survives light frost
Garlic	Harvest the following July	Winters over in ground	Turnips	50-60	Survives light frost

Techniques

- Like so many things, the trick is to be gentle, but firm.
- Take care to avoid damaging your plant.
- Wear gloves when handling prickly plants like cucumber and zucchini.
- Harvest peas right away to ensure the plant keeps producing more.
- Harvest tomatoes by gently breaking the stem just above the fruit. Always try to keep this bit of stem attached. Fruit will keep longer after picking.

Putting your bed to bed

In late fall:

- Be sure to remove all traces of mint if it's growing in your bed
- Remove dead plant material and cut up in 6" lengths to compost
- Remove all plant supports, signs and other materials from the bed
- Consider planting "green manure" to keep your box weed-free and add organic matter to the soil. Green manures include legumes such as vetch, alfalfa, clover, and peas; grasses such as annual ryegrass, oats, winter rye, and winter wheat; and broadleaf plants such as rapeseed and buckwheat. Sow seed thickly to create a cover that won't allow weeds to compete. Mow these crops down if they flower before they're killed by frost, to prevent them from self-seeding and becoming weeds. Turn dead plant material from green manures into the soil before sowing seed or planting seedlings.
- Add compost to the soil.

Still have questions?

When it comes to gardening, rolling up your sleeves and getting your hands dirty is really the best way to learn! There are many gardening resources available, and your fellow gardeners are one of the most valuable. Ask questions, experiment and enjoy what comes up!