



The Anglican Parish of
Burnside-Harewood

Grow Your Own Vegies – tips



Is it economic?

I have never done the sums. Maybe, maybe not; but it does give a sense of satisfaction and you can harvest vegetables when you need them knowing they are 100% fresh.

When to plant?

If you're planting seeds probably mid September, if plants October/November depending on whether they are frost sensitive or not. Christchurch growing season is from around Mid September to Mid March, maybe early April, but there is always a chance of a frost in October—even November.

Soil type

Much of Burnside is old Waimakariri river bed and the soil can vary quite a bit. Ours is really sandy, neighbours is quite stony.

Set up

Choose an area you can manage easily and border it off. A few years ago I made raised garden beds and they are much more easily managed than having the whole area in garden.

Seed packets

The price hasn't changed that much but the number you get in a packet has decreased significantly over the last few years. You used to be able to keep seed from one year to the next but in recent years germination of old seed has been much less reliable, so best to buy new seed each year.

What to plant?

Try whatever you want and see how it goes on your patch.

Beans

Frost tender. Climbing beans probably most prolific but dwarf green and butter beans provide variety. Best to buy seed and germinate in a seed tray, then plant out. Seeds can rot if they get too wet.

Carrots

Plant seed directly into the ground. They like sandy soil. When they are about 75 mm high thin them out to about one every 25 mm. Later you will need to thin again – maybe take out every second one. They usually grow pretty well but once you get carrot fly you might as well give up. You can still grow good carrots but end up throwing half of each away because they are riddled with larvae borings.

Cabbage/Cauli/Broccoli/Brussel Sprouts (collectively known as brassicas)

Best grown from plants and probably just as cheap to buy a tray of plants as grow from seed. You can buy combo packs which have two of each three of the above in which is good value for giving variety.

Cabbage

Usually pretty reliable; need to watch for aphids and white butterfly and spray or dust for them. You can grow different varieties and with some care have them into winter. I wouldn't plant any later than December.



Cauliflower

Never had much success with these but it probably depends on soil type.

Broccoli

Good for variety. In theory you can harvest the first head and others will grow but the succeeding heads are pretty small and go quickly to seed.

Brussel Sprouts

Slow growing but provide vege during winter. Very susceptible to aphid.

Lettuce

Pretty reliable. Once again you can get combo packs with different varieties/colours. The ones where you can just harvest a few leaves are good to have as well as the ones that heart up. Worth having a lettuce crisper in which a harvested heart will keep fresh for several days

Silver Beet

Plant either seed or plants. Good value and last through the winter. Probably plant plants a bit later than brassicas (late Oct/early Nov) so they don't go straight to seed. However when they do you can still use the leaves, They are very tender. There are now a number of different varieties around.

Potatoes

Probably economical but you need a reasonably big garden to make it worthwhile. Frost tender and prone to disease. Many varieties available; well described in most garden shops, Traditionally a crop for breaking in new ground.

Leeks

Good winter crop but I've never been able to grow them.

Root crops; Swede, Beetroot, Parsnip.

I've had limited success with these Occasional good root amid a lot of scrubby ones. Parsnip are very slow to germinate

and don't transplant well.

Tomato.

Frost tender and will pick up any disease that's going. Need a good sunny spot or a glasshouse. Many varieties available.

Courgette/Cucumber

Frost tender, Need a sunny, warm place or a glasshouse. Courgette take up a reasonable amount of space. If successful they provide a steady supply of vege but fruit tend to rot at the tip early in the season and leaves tend to get mildew late in the season. Cucumber take up less space if you string them up but also tend to get mildew.

Rhubarb

If you can get a root and have the space take it. You can cut stalks from late September and they go on into autumn. Remember you only eat the stalks not the leaves.

Corn

Best to germinate the seed in a tray then plant out. You need a good space to make it worthwhile and the plants are hungry and thirsty. Probably only for the enthusiast and I can rarely get more than two cobs per plant and sometimes only one good one so not very economical space-wise. But you can't beat corn straight off the plant. Put the cob with leaves still on straight in the microwave for 3 minutes.

Celery

Another plant that can be used through winter, just harvesting stalks not the whole plant. Can be prone to rust diseases and old shoots can get woody. Good for including in many dishes with carrot and onion.

Rocket

A great plant to grow to add to salads - as it grows really easily. It has a nice peppery taste to go with your lettuce or in a bun with some nice cheese and chicken.



It can go a bit mad in growing so here is a Rocket pesto recipe if you end up with a lot of it:

4 cloves garlic
1 cup rocket leaves
1/2 cup parsley leaves
grated rind and juice of a lemon
1 tsp salt
1/4 cup pine nuts
1/4 cup parmesan cheese grated
1/4 cup nice olive oil

Put everything but the olive oil into a food processor and blend it well, then while the processor is still going drizzle in the olive oil until you get a smooth paste. Then you are done.

Watering

Depends on the soil. Ours is very sandy and 30 minutes after a storm has passed you can work on it. Water drains straight through and probably needs a couple of hours every second day. Best to water in the evening or at night and that is made easier with a timer. If you're keen you can set up an irrigation system quite cheaply with the various styles of hose and jets. Watch nor'west days when evapotranspiration (loss of water from the leaves) is high. More frequent watering is needed under those conditions.

Planting seeds

Use seed raising mix rather than soil, which tends to bake hard in trays. Containers like ice-cream containers will do but make sure you drill some holes in them to allow for drainage. Keep the mix moist but not sodden. If you want to germinate them quickly put the container (covered with plastic to prevent water loss) in the hot water cupboard. But keep a close watch on them and remove to sunlight once shoots appear otherwise they will grow very leggy. For small seeds like cabbages,

best to prick out seedlings into another container when they are 2–3 cm high then plant into the garden when bigger. Beans and corn can be planted straight into the garden when big enough to manage easily.

Fertilisers/sprays/dusting

The reality is that if you want to grow healthy vegetables they are likely to need some help. It's your call as to whether you use organic fertilisers like compost or inorganic like superphosphate or a mixture. Regardless they are all chemicals—the only thing that is chemical free is a vacuum. Insecticides are another issue. I use when needed e.g. if I see an attack of aphid or white butterfly caterpillars on brassicas. For tomatoes you have to be more pro-active. Fact is if commercial growers did not use sprays the insect world would be very healthy and the number of starving humans would be significantly greater. It helps to know a little chemistry. E.g. Active ingredient in Natures Way insect spray for aphids, whitefly etc is potassium salts of fatty acids a.k.a. soap – a common folklore remedy for such pests, so you might as well use soapy water.

Useful internet links for more information:

Newspaper pots for growing seeds

You can make pots to grow your seeds out of newspaper and then just plant them later in your garden - still in the pot since the newspaper will degrade in the soil. They are simple to make and use up your leftover newspaper too. Here is a link to a site that tells you how to make them
<http://www.selfsufficientish.com/newspaperpots.htm>



Squarefoot gardening

Just because you have a small garden area - doesn't stop you from growing veges. Square foot gardening is a method that splits your garden up into 30cm squares and you plant each square with different vegetables. The idea is that since the plants are quite closely planted, weeds can't grow and it is supposed to be relatively easy care. When the vegies in a square are finished (or die :) you can put some fertiliser in that square and replant with another vegetable.

<http://www.squarefootgardening.com/>

Royal Horticultural Society in England

They have been doing some square foot gardening style beds. They have even planned plantings for spring, summer and autumn that you can view and download; <http://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/advice/veg3x3.asp>

Though if you read the article by Hugh below first you may change some of the vegies they suggest.

Good vegetable gardening tips sites

Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture

They have a number of handy tips on growing vegetables in their garden articles section (on the right hand side halfway down the list of links on their home page). <http://www.rnzih.org.nz/index.html>

Their great garden tips article has loads of ideas on all sorts of common garden issues like repelling pests and killing weeds. <http://www.rnzih.org.nz/pages/Garden-tips.htm>

Hugh Fernley Whittingstall

He is very keen on people growing their own vegetables and has all sorts of ideas about growing vegetables on your windowsill even. Here is a link to a piece written by him about what to grow in your

garden. He is writing for a UK audience so you need to adapt the seasons to New Zealand - good, encouraging information though.

<http://www.rivercottage.net/EdibleProjects~Garden/234/WhattoGrowinYourvegetableGarden.aspx>

Grow Your Own Vege

The BBC have made a series by this title. They have a lot of information on their website about the basics of growing various vegetables.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/tv_and_radio/growyourownveg_index.shtml

Sharing

Share your seeds with your friends so you all get more variety for less money.

Then when the vegetables are ready for cropping you can share them if you have too many.

You can also freeze some vegetables so you can have them in the winter. This link tells you how to freeze heaps of different vegetables;

<http://www.gardenguides.com/how-to/tipstechniques/vegetables/freezing.asp>

Kendal garden club

If you want to meet with other gardeners there is a garden club that meets at St. Timothy's hall on the last Monday of the month, 7:30 to 9:00 pm. They usually have speakers, they may have plants or items for sale. The sub is \$15 a year and they have a \$1 ticket raffle when they meet. They have a membership of about 25 and are affiliated to the Christchurch Horticultural Society.

www.burnside.org.nz

If you want to talk gardening and ask more questions - there will be a gardening forum on the parish forums. (follow the link from the website). This pdf will be in the downloads section of the website too.

