

How to Grow Vegetables



Raise it Up

Raised beds make home gardens more accessible; they also improve drainage and allow the soil to warm up earlier in the season. Beds can be raised with the use of wooden boxes or simply by mounding up the soil within the area. When starting new beds, try to choose locations with full sun exposure and as much protection from the wind as possible.

Know your Soil

Newfoundland topsoils are generally very thin and often quite stony. Either synthetic or organic fertilizers are required to improve soil fertility. Amend naturally occurring soils with screened topsoil, peat, lime, and appropriate fertilizers. You can have your soil tested to determine how much fertilizer and lime to apply. The Provincial Government's Soil, Plant, and Feed Laboratory on Brookfield Road can perform this testing (contact them at 709-727-6738 for more details).

Start Early

Give your veggies a head start. Many crops are best started indoors or under cover. You can use artificial lighting if needed or simply a south facing window will do. Using seed-specific maturity dates (usually on the seed package) calculate from the last frost date to determine when to start your seeds and when to transplant them outdoors.

Choose Wisely

Dependant on your experience level, you should pick crops that are relatively easy to grow in Newfoundland. For instance, kale, arugula, and spinach flourish in cool wet weather (something we have plenty of). By selecting a mixture of both short season crops (radishes, beets, and leaf lettuces) and long season (warm weather crops (tomatoes, squash, and peppers), you can ensure a continual harvest right through the season.

Stay Diverse

Vary and alternate your crops within your garden and between seasons. This will keep pests confused and minimize the spread of disease. Also, consider 'companion planting' techniques that suggest compatible crops to plant close together. This can include the use of annuals, perennials, and herbs that discourage certain bugs. For instance, animals and insects are averse to the scent of marigolds and the roots will repel nematodes as well as other underground pests.

Get Mulching

Mulch around your plants will help keep weeds under control and help to keep your soil moist. While some opt to use plastic or paper mulches, grass clipping provide a readily accessible and free alternative.

Be Vigilant

Keeping a close eye on your plants throughout the growing season will allow you to stay on top of weeds, pest, and disease problems. Pulling weeds when they are small will help minimize labour. Common pests like aphids, caterpillars, and slugs can be easily dealt with if caught early, and signs of nutrient deficiencies in crops can allow you to make simple changes to your fertilizing regime that will alleviate these symptoms.

Enjoy the Fruits (and Veggies) of your Labour

Harvesting your own fresh food for use in meals is an extremely satisfying and rewarding activity. Find recipes that highlight your crops and allow you to savour their fresh flavours and textures. In this way you'll be sure to want to continue growing your own veggies year after year.