



Basic Organic Gardening Information

Central Texas is blessed with a year-round growing season. January-March and September-October are the two primary planting times, but you can plant and harvest something nearly every month of the year here! In order to make the most of both primary planting seasons, below are some helpful suggestions on how to start and manage an organic food garden. Don't be afraid to start small! You can always expand when you're ready

PREPARING GARDEN BEDS

- Choose a site that gets at least 6-8 hours of sunlight per day and where water is easily accessible.
- Do a rough sketch of how you want to lay out your beds and what you will plant where.
- Make sure soil is moist before beginning; it's easier to work when the ground is soft.
- Loosen the soil with a spading fork (also called a garden or digging fork; this is different from a pitchfork). Be careful not to step on the turned soil, so you do not compact the ground you have just loosened.
- Remove grass roots and weeds with seedpods from each forkful as you dig it up and break it apart.
- Decide where to place pathways. Be sure you can comfortably reach all areas of the bed from the pathways.

COMPOST

Compost is the end product of a natural process that turns leaves, weeds, grass clippings, food scraps, and other organic matter into a dark, crumbly, soil-like substance. Compost provides numerous benefits for the garden by adding nutrients to the soil. It enhances soil aeration and water retention and helps prevent erosion.

A compost pile needs four elements to successfully decompose: carbon, nitrogen, water and air. This can be achieved by layering green matter (e.g. food scraps, lawn clippings) in between layers of brown matter (e.g. leaves, paper, yard waste) and then watering it. A successful compost pile will be 30-40% green matter and 60-70% brown matter.

If you want to speed up the decomposition process, be sure to turn (stir) your compost pile often, and add water as necessary until the pile is as damp as a squeezed-out sponge. You may also choose to have a "slow" compost pile, which requires little maintenance, but takes longer to produce finished compost. Compost is ready to add to gardens when its ingredients are no

longer identifiable. It is best to sift compost through a screen before spreading it on your garden beds.

PLANTING

- Follow recommendations on the seed packets for seed spacing and sunlight. For gardening intensively in small spaces, check out the books *Square Foot Gardening* by Mel Bartholomew and *How to Grow More Vegetables* by John Jeavons.
- During germination, keep the soil in your garden beds moist.
- Once plants emerge, thin your garden by pulling out plants that are crowded together.
- http://www.sustainablefoodcenter.org/_files/_English_Vegetable_Varieties_for_Travis_County2.pdf
- http://www.sustainablefoodcenter.org/_files/TravisCountyPlantingCalendar_09-10.pdf

WATERING

- Water plants and seed immediately after planting and water them daily until they germinate.
- Once plants are established, watering less often and for longer is better in order to help plants develop deep roots.
- Water beds gently using a spray nozzle so that you do not wash your seeds away or damage your plants.
- Water needs vary depending on the plant.
- A layer of organic material such as compost and mulch around plants will help to prevent evaporation.

MULCH

Mulch is a layer of nonliving material that covers the soil surface around plants. Mulch helps inhibit weed growth and improve soil moisture retention. It also helps insulate plant roots from cold in the winter and heat in the summer. Materials such as compost, hay, leaves, chopped up wood, newspaper, or burlap sacks can be used to mulch.

WEEDING

- Hand-pull weeds as much as possible.
- Feed your soil with compost to improve soil health. Healthy soil helps prevent weeds.

- Mulch all bare soil in beds to prevent weeds from growing in those areas.
- DO NOT use synthetic herbicides.

CONTROLLING PESTS AND DISEASES

Not all bugs in the garden are bad. Observe your garden frequently to find out what changes are occurring and what bugs might be living there. Often insects and diseases are signs that a plant is not growing in the ideal condition. If you start to notice the following symptoms on your plants, your garden may need attention.

- Chewed up leaves, or leaves with holes in them
- Black spots, mildew, or yellowed leaves

Consider handpicking harmful insects off of plants, try soaps and sprays, or introduce beneficial insects. The best method for dealing with pest and disease problems is to improve the soil.

FREE OR LOW-COST RESOURCES

- **Free mulch**
 - HOW Foundation
<http://howfoundationsa.org/>
 - other tree-trimming organizations
 - Austin Resource Recovery Center
<http://austintexas.gov/department/resource-recovery-center>
- **Free organic fertilizers**
 - Austin Resource Recovery Household Hazardous Waste Facility
(512) 974-4308
- **Low-cost/free lumber/materials**
 - Habitat for Humanity Re-Store
<http://www.re-store.com/>
 - Austin craigslist
<http://austin.craigslist.org/>
 - Austin Freecycle

<https://groups.freecycle.org/AustinMN/description>

- **Free fruit trees & native shade trees**
 - **TreeFolks**
<http://www.treefolks.org/>
 - **Keep Austin Beautiful**
<http://www.keepaustinbeautiful.org/>

- **Discounts** may be available at local nurseries, including The Great Outdoors & Natural Gardener

- **Tools available for lending**
 - **Keep Austin Beautiful**
 - **Austin Parks Foundation**
<http://www.austinparks.org/tools.html>

- **Volunteers**
 - **Green Corn Project**
<http://www.greencornproject.org/>
 - **Travis County Master Gardeners**
<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/master-gardeners/>
 - **American Youthworks**
<http://www.americanyouthworks.org/>
 - **Austin Permaculture Guild**
<http://www.austinperm.com/>

- **School garden curriculum, materials, and community resources**
 - **Greening Your Schoolyard from the Children in Nature Collaborative of Austin (CiNCA)**
<http://greeningyourschoolyard.com/>

RESOURCES FROM TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION IN TRAVIS COUNTY

<http://travis-tx.tamu.edu/horticulture/>

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Servicestaff in Travis County provide a high level of expertise in horticulture and other service areas. AgriLife Extension in Travis County provides the following:

- Junior Master Gardener (JMG) curricula - consultations with teachers and admin about curricula and certification
 - <http://jmgkids.us/>
- JMG gardening activities at Extension and community events
- Free spent coffee grounds (incredible soil amendment) through Ground to Ground
- Curriculum: Broccoli to Butterflies School Garden Templates
 - <http://horttest.tamu.edu/travis/files/2012/12/Broccoli-to-Butterflies.pdf>
- Master Gardener Horticulture Hotline - call with any gardening question - (512) 854-9600 Monday - Friday
- Master Gardener speakers available to present a variety of horticulture topics (such as rain water harvesting, composting, vegetable gardening, etc.) to school gardening teams for free. Send request to speakerbureau2011-tcmga@yahoo.com at least one month in advance. Include date and time of requested presentation, club name, and topic of interest in your request.
- Garden site assessment, teacher training, and seasonal garden mentorship.

ASSISTANCE FROM CITY OF AUSTIN SUSTAINABLE URBAN AGRICULTURE & COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM

The Sustainable Urban Agriculture and Community Garden (SUACG) program's purpose is to establish a single point of contact for community gardens within the City, and to streamline the process for establishing community gardens and sustainable urban agriculture on city land. The SUACG program is housed within the Parks & Recreation Department. SUACG staff assists with the following:

- Finding city-owned space for community gardens and assists with establishment of license agreements to use city land for community

- Provides City Endorsement for community garden projects on city or non-city land, allowing certain water installation fees to be waived
 - Serves as liaison with city departments related to the establishment of community gardens
 - Connects community garden groups to educational opportunities and resources offered by other organizations in the Austin area
 - Consultation on community garden project planning
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Recommended Gardening Books

- Alexander, Rosemary. **The Essential Garden Design Workbook**. Portland: Timber Press, 2004.
- Appelhof, Mary. **Worms Eat My Garbage**. Michigan: Flower Press, 1997.
- Ashworth, Suzanne. **Seed to Seed: Seed Saving and Growing Techniques for Vegetable Gardeners**. Iowa: Seed Savers Exchange, Inc., 2002.
- Bartholomew, Mel. **Square Foot Gardening**. Pennsylvania: Rodale Press, 1981.
- Beck, Malcolm & Howard Garrett. **Texas Bug Book**. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999.
- Bradley, Fern Marshall. **Rodale's All-new Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening**. Pennsylvania: Rodale Press, 1992.
- Campbell, Stu. **Let IT Rot! The Gardener's Guide to Composting**. North Adams, MA: Storey Publishing, 1998.
- Coleman, Eliot. **The New Organic Grower**. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 1995.
- Ellis, Barbara & Fern Marshall Bradley. **The Organic Gardener's Handbook of Natural Insect and Disease Control**. Pennsylvania: Rodale Press, 1996.
- Garrett, Howard & Malcolm Beck. **Texas Organic Vegetable Gardening**. Texas: Gulf Publishing, 1999.
- Garrett, Howard & Malcolm Beck. **Texas Bug Book**. Texas: University of Texas Press, 2005.
- Hemenway, Toby. **Gaia's Garden: A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture**. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Co, 2000.
- Hutson, Lucinda. **The Herb Cookbook: A Complete Guide to Cooking and Gardening with Fresh Herbs**. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing, 1992.

- Jeavons, John. **How to Grow More Vegetables**. California: Ten Speed Press, 2002.
 - Jeavons, John & Carol Cox. **The Sustainable Vegetable Garden**. California: Ten Speed Press, 1999.
 - Lancaster, Brad. **Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands & Beyond, 2nd Edition**. Arizona: Rainsource Press, 2013.
 - Mollison, Bill. **Introduction to Permaculture, Revised Edition**. Ten Speed Press, 1997.
 - Morrow, Rosemary. **Earth-user's Guide to Permaculture, 2nd Edition**. Permanent Publications, 2010.
 - Sperry, Neil. **Neil Sperry's Complete Guide to Texas Gardening**. Texas: Taylor Publishing. Co., 1991.
 - Texas Agricultural Extension Service. **Junior Master Gardener Health and Nutrition from the Garden**. Texas: Agricultural Communications Texas A&M University: 2001.
 - Travis County Master Gardener Association. **Garden Guide for Austin and Vicinity**. <http://www.tcmastergardener.org>
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Local Garden Stores

Great Outdoors Nursery & Landscaping

2730 South Congress Avenue

Austin, TX 78704

Ph: 448-2992

Specialize in hard-to-find native plants. Lots and lots of pots for your ceramic pleasure, along with trees, shrubs, and organic products. Enjoy the waterfall as you stroll through the garden.

East Austin Succulents

801 Tillery St.

Austin, TX 78702

512-947-6531

Jardineros Nursery

2320 East Cesar Chavez

Austin, TX 78702

512-774-7443

Natural Gardener

8648 Old Bee Caves Road

Austin, TX 78735

Ph: 288-6113

Anything and everything you ever needed for an organic garden, flowers, xeriscape plants, vegetables, trees, herbs, organic products, tools, and books. Stroll through the demonstration vegetable garden, fruit orchard, butterfly garden, and herb area.

Shoal Creek Nursery

2710 Hancock

Austin, TX 78731

Ph: 458-5909

Good variety of seasonal vegetables, herbs, fruit trees, seeds and gardening supplies. This nursery and its staff have been serving the local community since 1992.

Pots and Plants

5902 Bee Caves Road

Austin, TX 78746

Ph: 327-4564

Home of the pink flamingo. Specialize in native and adapted plants, especially deer-resistant varieties. Large selection of orchids.

It's About Thyme

11726 Manchaca Road

Austin, TX 78748

Ph: 280-1192

Although herbs are their specialty with over 200 varieties, they also sale trees, xeriscape plants, antique roses, vegetables, and organic products.

Callahan's General Store

501 Bastrop Hwy

Austin, TX 78701

Ph: 385-3452

Good variety of sturdy garden tools, spring & fall transplants, organic amendments. They also sell chickens, guineas, and rabbits and feed.

Buck Moore Feed & Supply

5237 N Lamar Blvd

Austin, TX 78751

Ph: 451-3469

Family business that opened up in 1972, still has the famous antique cash register that has been featured as one of KUT's sound bites. One of the only places in town to purchase organic chicken feed, they also offer spring transplants, some organic amendments and bulk seed.

Online Gardening Resources

LOCAL:

Austin Organic Gardeners

www.main.org/aog

Information on organic gardening techniques and planting calendar for Travis County. Learn about monthly meetings with guests speaking about organic gardening topics.

Coalition of Austin Community Gardens (CACG)

www.communitygardensaustin.org

The Coalition of Austin Community Gardens webpage includes a map of community gardens and basic information about most community gardens in the Austin area. Any Austin-area community garden is welcome to add a profile page to the website.

COMFOOD Listerv

<https://elist.tufts.edu/wws/subscribe/comfood>

Discussion forum of the former Community Food Security Coalition. Excellent source of information and news about food policy and the good food/local food movement.

Central Texas School Garden Network (ASGN)

austinschoolgardennetwork@googlegroups.com

Google Group of the Central Texas School Garden Network, which strives to connect community resources and information to teachers and other school garden leaders to promote the social, nutritional, environmental, and academic benefits of school and youth gardening programs.

City of Austin GIS (Geographic Information Systems) Viewer

<http://austintexas.gov/department/gis-and-maps>

Find information about parcels of land, including ownership, tree cover, proximity to floodplain, and topography. GIS software is not needed to use this viewer.

City of Austin Watershed Protection Department

www.austintexas.gov/department/watershed-protection

Information on gardening techniques that protect Austin's watershed.

Downloadable guides including: Grow Green Gardening Guides

Fact sheet: Six easy steps to build a rain garden

Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

www.wildflower.org

A botanical demonstration and research center, in Austin, TX, dedicated to native plants. The mission of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is to increase the sustainable use and conservation of native wildflowers, plants and landscapes.

National Gardening Association

www.garden.org/home

Regional and national gardening information for home gardens, community gardens, and school gardens. Free e-newsletter, community forum and searchable database of garden information.

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service

<http://attra.ncat.org>

Managed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology, ATTRA provides information and technical assistance for individuals involved in sustainable agriculture.

Organic Gardening

www.organicgardening.com

Published by Rodale, this monthly publication offers free gardening advice online.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension in Travis County Central Texas Horticulture Blog

www.aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/travis/

Loads of information about food gardening in Central Texas and about educational opportunities offered by AgriLife Extension.

Texas A&M University Plant Answers

aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/plantanswers/index.html

Plant Answers is a searchable database of information on plants, from vegetables to roses.

Texas Parks and Wildlife

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/>

Information on native and naturalized plants used for landscape restoration, erosion control, and wildlife use.

Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

www.tofga.org

Information on organic gardening & sustainable farming in Texas.

The Dirt Doctor - Howard Garrett

www.dirtdoctor.com

Information on organic gardening in Texas, including pictures, an interactive forum, books for sale, and links to organic gardening sources near you.

Travis County Master Gardener Association

www.tcmastergardeners.org

Educational opportunities offered by the Master Gardeners are posted here, as well as instructions to sign up for the yearly Master Gardener training program.

Travis CAD

www.traviscad.org

Find landowners of property in Travis County, plat maps and more! From the homepage, click on appraisal roll. You can search by account number, owner's name, or property address.

NATIONAL:

American Community Gardening Association (ACGA)

www.communitygarden.org

An organization promoting the creation and sustainability of community gardens in the United States and Canada.

Garden Web

<http://forums.gardenweb.com/forums/commgard>

This forum is for the discussion of all aspects of organizing and participating in community gardens.

YOUTH GARDENING-SPECIFIC:

American Horticultural Society

www.ahs.org/youth_gardening/index.htm

The American Horticultural Society offers financial resources, a national list of youth gardening organizations and curriculum, and a national registry of youth gardens.

The Edible Schoolyard

www.edibleschoolyard.org

The brainchild of local food movement pioneer Alice Waters, this youth education program teaches children all about food, from field to table.

Junior Master Gardeners

<http://jmgkids.us/>

An international youth gardening program of the University Cooperative Extension network, JMG provides tools to teach the world of gardening to youth in grades 3 - 8.

National Gardening Association- Kids Gardening Page

www.kidsgardening.org

Kids Gardening is a resource for teachers, parents and the community with information on grants for youth gardens, curriculum, activities, and tips for parents.

School Garden Wizard

www.schoolgardenwizard.org

Offers resources and a step-by-step template for teachers interested in starting a school garden.

Edible Landscaping Companies

Edible Yards

Ph: 512.743.5526

Email: EatWild@gmail.com

Web: www.edibleyards.com

Edible Yards is a full service edible landscaping company that offers design, installation and maintenance services for vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, bee hives and chickens. Edible Yards also offers workshops and mentoring services for people interested in learning how to grow organic food.

The Kitchen Gardener

Email: contact@theaustinkitchengardener.com

Ph: 512.632.9235

Web: <http://www.theaustinkitchengardener.com/>

Design and install organic, edible gardens at homes. Austin native passionate about helping people grow their own food.

Resolution Gardens

2205 W.35th St.

Austin, TX 78703

Ph: 512-743-4245

Web: www.resolutiongardens.com

Full spectrum hardscaping, native plants, fencing and more – with a focus on veggies.

Yard Farm

Ph: 512.961.7117

Email: info@YardFarmAustin.com

Web: www.yardfarmaustin.com

Yard Farm Austin provides Affordable Organic Garden Design, Consultation and Installation to help you grow your organic lifestyle. We're not a typical landscaping company - we are gardeners that have a passion for vegetables, flowers, native plants and edible landscapes - but primarily we like to grow food.

Yard to Table Gardens

Ph: 512-931-4796

Email: Yard2table@gmail.com

Web: www.yardtotablegardens.wordpress.com/

Offering ecological landscape design, installation and care-taking services that let you be part of the solution. Creating infrastructure to hydrate our land, build soil, reforest, harvest healthy, local food, and heal ourselves as much as our ecology is my passion.

Other Austin-area Food Gardening Organizations

Compost Coalition

www.compostcoalition.com

We are working to keep organic materials out of landfills and return the nutrients back to our soils by connecting those producing "waste" with those that can use it.

Green Corn Project

www.greencornproject.org

The Green Corn Project educates and assists Central Texans in growing organic food gardens at homes, schools, and community centers.

East Side Compost Pedallers

<https://www.compostpedallers.com/>

The East Side Compost Pedallers is a 100% bike-powered compost recycling program that collects compostables from east side homes and businesses and pedals them directly to nearby urban farms and community gardens to grow more local food for our community.

Food is Free Project

<http://foodisfreeproject.org/>

The Food is Free Project grows community and food, while helping gain independence from a broken agricultural system. We teach people how to connect with their neighbors and line their street with front yard community gardens which provide free harvests to anyone.

Urban Patchwork

www.urbanpatchwork.org

Urban Patchwork is Austin's first non-profit neighborhood farm network. We work with neighbors to turn unused yard space into farmland that provides fresh, organically grown produce and eggs to the nearby residents of each neighborhood farm.

Urban Roots

<http://www.urbanrootsatx.org/>

Urban Roots is a youth development organization that uses sustainable agriculture to transform the lives of young people and increase access to healthy food in Austin.