

PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS

Home Vegetable Gardening

10 Chapters

Philip Osztromok

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HOME VEGETABLE GARDENING

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Home Vegetable Gardening 🏆

Course 1 · Chapter 1 · Starting Out: Light, Space and the Year

Growing your own vegetables needs less than most people think: a few hours of sun, some soil or a big pot, and a rough idea of the calendar. This chapter covers what to grow first, how much light and space plants need, whether to use a plot or containers, and how the gardening year runs in a cool, northern climate. Later chapters cover soil, compost, sowing, planting out, watering, pests, easy crops and planning a full season.

What Do You Want to Grow?

Start with vegetables you actually eat. A crop you do not like is wasted effort, however easy it is. Some crops are also much more forgiving than others, so a first year goes better if most of what you grow comes from the easy end of the list.

Crop	Difficulty	Why
Radishes	Very easy	Ready in a few weeks from seed
Salad leaves	Very easy	Can be cut repeatedly; grow in a pot
Potatoes	Easy	Tolerate poor soil; can be grown in a bag
Runner and French beans	Easy	Large seeds, heavy crops
Courgettes	Easy	A single plant gives a lot of fruit
Carrots	Moderate	Need loose, stone-free soil
Tomatoes	Moderate	Need warmth and regular feeding; blight risk
Cauliflower	Harder	Fussy about water and spacing

> **Pick three, not twelve**
>
> A beginner who sows a dozen crops usually neglects most of them. Choose three or four, look after them well, and add more next year. (This is advice from general practice, not a rule.)

Light, Space and Shelter

Light is the one thing you cannot add later. Most vegetables want direct sun for much of the day: the figure usually quoted for fruiting crops such as tomatoes, beans and courgettes is at least six hours (check). Leafy crops and some roots cope better with part shade.

Sun

Watch the site for a day. Note which parts are sunny in the morning, at midday and in the afternoon, and when trees or walls cast shade.

Shelter

Strong wind damages tall plants and dries soil. A fence, hedge or wall that filters the wind helps, but avoid solid shade.

Water

Put the plot within reach of a tap or water butt. A bed you must carry cans to is a bed you will neglect in a dry spell.

Access

Beds should be narrow enough to reach the middle from the edge without stepping on the soil.

Sun changes with the season

A spot that is sunny in June may be in shade in March or October, because the sun sits lower in the sky in winter. Judge a site in the season you will be growing in. In the northern hemisphere a south-facing site gets the most sun (check).

Plot or Containers

You do not need a garden. Many crops grow well in containers on a patio, balcony or even a sunny windowsill, with the trade-off that pots dry out quickly and need more frequent watering and feeding.

Option	Good for	Drawback
Open ground	Potatoes, beans, courgettes, brassicas	Soil may be poor or weedy at first

Option	Good for	Drawback
Raised bed	Almost anything; good drainage, easy access	Cost of timber and soil to fill it
Large pots and bags	Potatoes, tomatoes, salad, herbs	Dry out fast; need regular feeding
Windowsill	Herbs, cress, microgreens, seedlings	Small harvests only

The Gardening Year

In a cool, northern climate such as Scotland the growing season is shorter than in the south, and the last spring frost decides when tender plants can go outside. Dates vary by place and by year, so the table gives only a rough pattern (check against local advice).

Season	Main jobs
Winter	Plan, order seed, tidy tools, dig or mulch beds if the soil is workable
Early spring	Sow tender crops indoors; chit early potatoes; sow hardy crops under cover
Late spring	Sow outdoors, harden off seedlings, plant out after the last frost
Summer	Water, weed, feed, harvest, and sow quick crops again
Autumn	Clear spent crops, lift roots, add compost, sow green manures

```
# a first-year notebook, one line per crop
crop      sown           planted out   first harvest
radish    April          (in place)    May
potato    April          (in place)    July
beans     May (indoors)  June          August
```

Keep a notebook

Writing down what you sowed, when, and how it did turns each year into data for the next. The dates above are my own illustration of the layout, not recommended dates for

any place.

Tools and Costs

A small kit is enough: a spade or fork, a hand trowel, a watering can with a rose, a rake, and a pair of secateurs or scissors. Seeds, compost and a few pots come on top of that. Costs vary by shop, so none are quoted here.

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** This chapter is written from general knowledge of vegetable growing; I did not read a specific source while writing it. Nothing here is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** The six-hour sunlight figure, the south-facing advice and the seasonal pattern for a cool climate. Check these against local advice, such as a local allotment society or a regional growing guide.
- **Illustrations.** The notebook dates are invented to show the layout.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

List five vegetables you actually like to eat. Using the difficulty table, mark which are easy, and pick your first three crops with a one-line reason for each.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Survey a possible growing spot (a garden corner, balcony or windowsill) at three times of day. Record how much direct sun it gets, what shades it, how sheltered it is and how far it is from water, then say whether it suits a fruiting crop.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Draw up a first-year notebook table like the one in the chapter for your three crops, with sowing, planting-out and first-harvest columns. Then decide whether you would use open ground, a raised bed or containers, and give two reasons.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Start with:** three or four crops you like to eat
- **Easy first crops:** radishes, salad leaves, potatoes, beans, courgettes
- **Light:** about six hours of sun for fruiting crops (check)
- **Site checks:** sun, shelter, water, access
- **Options:** open ground, raised bed, large pots, windowsill
- **Year:** plan in winter, sow in spring, tend in summer, clear in autumn

Coming next

Chapter 2 looks at soil: what it is made of, how to tell what you have, and how acidity and organic matter affect what grows.

Good soil does most of a gardener's work. It holds water and air, supplies nutrients and gives roots something to grip. This chapter covers what soil is made of, how texture and structure differ, what pH means, why organic matter matters so much, and how to run a few simple tests on your own plot. Chapter 3 then covers how to improve and feed it.

What Soil Is Made Of

Garden soil is a mix of mineral particles (sand, silt and clay), decaying organic matter, water, air and a huge number of living organisms such as worms, fungi and bacteria. The mineral part gives the soil its **texture**; the way those particles clump together gives it its **structure**.

Texture: Sand, Silt and Clay

Type	Feel	Drains	Holds nutrients	Warms in spring
Sandy	Gritty, falls apart	Very fast	Poorly	Quickly
Silty	Smooth, soapy	Moderately	Fairly well	Moderately
Clay	Sticky, rolls into a ribbon	Slowly	Well	Slowly
Loam	Crumbly, holds shape lightly	Well	Well	Reasonably

Loam, a balanced mix, is the gardener's ideal, but few plots are perfect. You cannot change texture much in practice; you improve a sandy or clay soil mainly by adding organic matter.

> **Do not dig wet clay**
>
> Walking on or digging clay when it is waterlogged squeezes out the air and can leave it hard as brick when it dries. Wait until it crumbles rather than smears.

Structure

Structure is how the particles join into small crumbs with gaps between them. Good structure gives both air and water space, so roots can breathe and drink. Compaction (from foot traffic, heavy machinery or digging when wet) destroys it. Organic matter and the activity of worms build it back up.

Good structure

Crumbly, dark, with visible worms and fine roots. Water soaks in without pooling.

Poor structure

Hard clods, a crust on top, or puddles that linger after rain. Roots stay shallow.

pH: Acid or Alkaline

pH measures acidity on a scale where 7 is neutral, lower numbers are acid and higher are alkaline. Most vegetables grow best in slightly acid to neutral soil, roughly pH 6.0 to 7.0 (check). Outside that range some nutrients become hard for roots to take up.

pH	Description	Typical response
Below 5.5	Strongly acid	Most vegetables struggle; lime is often added (check)
6.0 to 7.0	Slightly acid to neutral	Suits most vegetables
Above 7.5	Alkaline	Some nutrients locked up; brassicas cope better (check)

Test before you treat

Do not add lime or sulphur on a guess. A cheap kit from a garden shop will tell you where you stand first. Potatoes, for instance, are often said to prefer slightly acid soil, so liming is not always wanted (check).

Organic Matter

Organic matter is the dark, crumbly material left when plants and animals decay. It is the single most useful thing you can add to almost any soil: it opens up clay, helps sand hold water, feeds soil life and releases nutrients slowly. Sources include garden compost, well-rotted manure and leaf mould, covered in Chapter 3.

A Simple Soil Test

You can learn a lot about your plot without equipment.

```
# 1. The squeeze test (moist, not wet, soil)
Take a handful, squeeze it, then open your hand.
  falls apart at once      -> sandy
  holds, then crumbles     -> loam
  stays in a sticky lump   -> clay

# 2. The jar test (sand, silt and clay layers)
Fill a jar one third with soil, add water to near the top
and a squirt of washing-up liquid. Shake well, then leave.
  sand settles first (about a minute)
  silt next (a few hours)
  clay last (a day or more)
  measure each layer -> rough percentages

# 3. The drainage test
Dig a hole about 30 cm deep, fill with water, let it drain,
fill again and time the second draining.
  under an hour or so   -> drains freely
  many hours remaining  -> poor drainage
```

Record what you find

Add a short soil entry to your notebook from Chapter 1: texture, rough pH, drainage and any compacted patches. It tells you what to do in Chapter 3. The timings and depth in the tests above are rules of thumb from general practice (check).

Raised Beds and Bought Soil

If the ground is very poor, a raised bed filled with bought topsoil mixed with compost is a reasonable shortcut. Buy from a reputable supplier, since cheap topsoil can contain stones, weed seeds or little goodness. Even in raised beds, soil life and organic matter still need topping up every year.

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** The pH ranges, liming advice, potato preference and the test timings. Verify against local advice or the instructions on a soil test kit.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Do the squeeze test on soil from three places in your plot or from a bag of compost or topsoil. Record what you feel, which texture each is closest to, and what that means for drainage and nutrients.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Run the jar test on one soil sample and work out rough percentages of sand, silt and clay from the layers. Say which texture you have and which one habit (such as adding organic matter) would help most.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Write a one-page soil record for your chosen growing spot: texture, structure, drainage result, pH (from a kit, or planned) and what that suggests for your three first crops from Chapter 1.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Texture:** sand, silt, clay, or loam (a balance)
- **Structure:** crumbs with air and water gaps; protect it from compaction
- **pH:** about 6.0 to 7.0 suits most vegetables (check)
- **Organic matter:** improves every soil type
- **Tests:** squeeze, jar, drainage, pH kit
- **Never:** dig or tread on waterlogged soil

Coming next

Chapter 3 covers compost heaps, manure, mulch and fertilisers: how to feed the soil and the plants.

Chapter 2 showed that organic matter improves almost every soil. This chapter covers where to get it: how to make compost, how to use manure and mulch, and when a bought fertiliser is worth using. The idea throughout is to feed the soil first and the plants second.

Making Compost

Compost is plant material broken down by bacteria, fungi and worms into a dark, crumbly, sweet-smelling material. A good heap needs a balance of two kinds of ingredient, plus air and moisture.

Kind	Examples	Role
"Greens" (wet, nitrogen-rich)	Vegetable peelings, grass clippings, weeds before seeding, coffee grounds	Fuel the microbes; heat the heap
"Browns" (dry, carbon-rich)	Cardboard, scrunched paper, straw, dry leaves, woody prunings	Add bulk and air; stop sliminess

A rough starting guide is about equal volumes of each, or a little more brown than green (check). Too many greens make a wet, smelly heap; too many browns make it slow and dry.

Hot heap

Built all at once in a pile of about a cubic metre and turned. Fast (a few months) but needs effort.

Cold heap

Added to a little at a time in a bin. Slow (often a year or more) and easy. The usual choice for a home plot.

Keep these out

Cooked food, meat, fish and dairy attract rats and flies. Dog and cat waste carries disease. Perennial weed roots and diseased plants may survive a cold heap, so bin or burn them instead (check).

Troubleshooting

Sign	Likely cause	Fix
Wet, smelly, slimy	Too many greens; too little air	Mix in cardboard or straw; turn it
Dry, nothing happening	Too many browns; too dry	Add greens and water; cover
Ants	Heap too dry	Moisten it

Manure and Other Organic Materials

Animal manure from horses, cows or chickens is rich in nutrients and organic matter, but it must be **well rotted**, usually stored for at least six months, before use. Fresh manure can burn roots and may carry weed seeds (check). Chicken manure is much stronger than horse or cow manure and is best composted first. **Leaf mould**, made by stacking fallen leaves in a bin for a year or two, is a superb soil conditioner but contains few nutrients.

> **Ask where it came from**
>
> If you collect manure or straw from a stable or farm, ask whether the animals were fed on, or the fields sprayed with, weedkillers that persist. These can damage tomatoes, potatoes and beans even after rotting (check).

Mulch

A mulch is a layer, typically 5 to 8 cm thick (check), spread over the soil surface. It holds in moisture, suppresses weeds, protects soil from heavy rain and, if organic, feeds the soil as worms pull it down.

- **Best time:** spring, onto moist, warm soil, after weeding.
- **Materials:** garden compost, well-rotted manure, leaf mould, straw (good around strawberries and potatoes), grass clippings in thin layers.
- **Keep it off stems:** leave a small gap around each plant so slugs and rot are not encouraged.

Fertilisers

If the soil is well fed with organic matter, many crops need little else. Hungry crops (potatoes, brassicas, courgettes, tomatoes) may still benefit from extra feeding. Fertiliser labels show an **N-P-K** ratio: nitrogen for leaf growth, phosphorus for roots, potassium for flowers and fruit.

Type	Examples	Speed	Notes
Organic, slow	Blood, fish and bone; pelleted chicken manure; bonemeal	Slow	Feeds soil life too; hard to overdo
Organic, liquid	Comfrey or nettle feed, seaweed extract	Fast	Good boost; comfrey is high in potassium (check)
Synthetic	Granular general fertiliser, tomato feed	Fast	Follow label rates; easy to overdo

```
# A simple feeding calendar for a small plot
Late winter  spread 5 cm of compost or rotted manure on empty beds
Spring       rake in a general fertiliser at the label rate
              -> mulch once soil is warm and moist
Early summer hungry crops: liquid feed every 1-2 weeks
              -> tomatoes, courgettes, beans in pots
Autumn       dig or mulch in leaf mould; sow a green manure
              -> clover or mustard to cover bare soil
```

More is not better

Too much nitrogen gives lush leaves that attract aphids and slugs and can delay fruit. Always follow the label and water in well.

Signs of hunger

Pale yellowing older leaves often point to a nitrogen shortage; purplish leaves to phosphorus; scorched leaf edges to potassium (check). Treat these as clues, not diagnoses: water stress, cold and disease look similar.

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** The greens-to-browns ratio, manure rotting times, persistent weedkiller warning, mulch depth, comfrey claim and nutrient deficiency signs. Verify against local gardening advice or fertiliser labels.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

List everything you throw away in a week that could go in a compost bin. Sort it into greens and browns, note what must stay out, and say whether the mix needs more of either.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

A friend's compost heap is wet, smells bad and has flies. Diagnose the likely causes and write the steps to rescue it.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Using your soil record from Chapter 2 and your three first crops, write a feeding plan for the year: what organic matter you will add and when, where you will mulch, and which crops (if any) get fertiliser.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Compost:** balance greens and browns, keep moist and airy
- **Keep out:** cooked food, meat, dairy, pet waste, diseased plants
- **Manure:** well rotted only (about six months or more)
- **Mulch:** 5 to 8 cm in spring on moist soil, clear of stems
- **N-P-K:** leaves, roots, flowers and fruit
- **Rule:** feed the soil first; follow fertiliser labels

Coming next

Chapter 4 covers seeds and sowing: reading seed packets, germination, sowing indoors and outdoors, and thinning.

Chapter 3 covered feeding the soil. Now the crop begins: a seed is cheap, but sowing it at the right time, depth and temperature decides whether it becomes a plant. This chapter covers reading a seed packet, what seeds need to germinate, sowing indoors and outdoors, and thinning.

Reading a Seed Packet

A packet holds most of what you need to know. Read it before you buy, because the sowing window decides whether a crop suits your plot.

Packet says	Meaning
Variety name	The particular type; some resist disease or bolt (run to seed) later
Sow / harvest months	The window for the packet's climate; adjust for a cool, late spring
Depth and spacing	How deep to sow and how far apart plants should end up
F1 hybrid	Bred from two parents; reliable, but saved seed will not come true (check)
"Sow by" date	Seed loses viability with age; older seed gives patchier germination

What Seeds Need to Germinate

A seed contains a food store and needs only three things to wake up: **moisture**, **warmth** and **air**. Most do not need light until they emerge, though a few (some lettuce varieties, for example) germinate better near the surface (check). Each crop has a minimum soil temperature, and sowing too early into cold, wet soil is a common reason seeds rot instead of sprouting.

Sow indoors

For tender or slow crops (tomatoes, courgettes, beans) and to get a head start.

Sow outdoors

Direct into the bed for crops that dislike root disturbance (carrots, parsnips, radishes) or are hardy and quick (peas, salad leaves).

Needs a bright windowsill or a light, and later hardening off.

Sowing Indoors

- **Compost:** use fresh seed compost; it is fine and low in nutrients. Garden soil carries weeds and disease.
- **Containers:** trays, small pots or recycled yoghurt pots with drainage holes; clean them first.
- **Depth:** a rough rule is about twice the seed's width (check); tiny seeds are pressed onto the surface.
- **Water:** water from below or with a fine rose; keep damp, not soggy.
- **Light:** once seedlings show, give as much light as possible or they stretch and flop (called "leggy").
- **Prick out:** when the first true leaves appear, move seedlings into their own pots, handling them by the leaves, never the stem.

Sowing Outdoors

Prepare a fine, level seedbed by raking out stones and lumps. Draw a shallow groove, called a **drill**, with a stick or the edge of a hoe, water the drill, sow thinly, then cover and label. Sowing in straight rows makes it easy to tell crop seedlings from weeds.

```
# Sowing a row of radishes outdoors
1. Rake     the bed to a fine, level tilth
2. Mark     a straight line with a string
3. Draw     a drill about 1 cm deep -> water along it
4. Sow      seeds about 2-3 cm apart -> cover with soil
5. Label    with name and date -> keep the soil moist
6. Thin     once seedlings are up -> leave the strongest
```

> **Sow little and often**

A short row every two weeks gives a steady harvest of quick crops such as radishes and lettuce, instead of a glut all at once.

Thinning

Seedlings sown too close compete for light and water. **Thinning** means removing the weaker ones so the rest reach the spacing on the packet. Do it in stages, and water afterwards to settle the roots left behind. Pull or snip the extras at soil level; for carrots, thin in the evening or on a damp day, since the smell of bruised foliage attracts carrot fly (check).

Common failures

Seeds that never appear are often too deep, too cold, too dry or too old. Seedlings that vanish overnight are usually slugs. Seedlings that collapse at the base have "damping off", a fungus helped by wet compost, crowding and dirty pots (check).

Keep a sowing record

Note the variety, date, place and result. After one season this record is more useful than any packet.

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** The F1 hybrid saved-seed claim, light needs of some lettuce, the depth rule of thumb, carrot fly and evening thinning, and the cause of damping off. Verify against the seed packet and local advice.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Choose a seed packet (or look one up online) for one of your three first crops. Write out the sow window, depth, spacing and days to harvest, and say whether the crop should be sown indoors or outdoors, and why.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

A friend sowed carrot seed in March; nothing came up after five weeks. List at least four possible reasons and what you would check first.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Write a sowing schedule for your three first crops: dates, indoors or outdoors, container or drill, and when you will thin. Include one succession sowing.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Packet:** variety, sow window, depth, spacing, date
- **Germination:** moisture, warmth, air
- **Indoors:** seed compost, light, prick out by the leaves
- **Outdoors:** fine seedbed, drill, sow thinly, label
- **Thinning:** in stages to packet spacing, then water
- **Succession:** sow little and often

Coming next

Chapter 5 covers planting out: hardening off, spacing, transplanting and watering in.

Chapter 4 ended with seedlings in their own pots. Moving them into the garden is a shock: wind, cold nights, direct sun and rougher soil. This chapter covers hardening off, spacing, the transplanting itself, and watering in.

Hardening Off

Seedlings raised indoors are soft. **Hardening off** is a gradual introduction to outdoor conditions over about 7 to 14 days (check) so that leaves do not scorch and growth does not stall.

Days	What to do
1-3	A few hours outdoors in a sheltered, shaded spot; bring in at night
4-6	Longer outside, with some morning sun; still in at night
7-9	Full days in the open, more wind and sun
10-14	Out day and night if no frost is forecast; then plant

Tender crops such as courgettes, beans and tomatoes must not go out until the last frost has passed. In a cool climate that is often mid to late spring, later in cold districts (check your local last-frost date). Hardy crops such as peas and brassicas (cabbage family) can go out earlier.

Spacing

Crowded plants compete for light, water and food, and damp air between them encourages disease. Use the spacing on the packet or plant label; it is the distance between mature plants, so a small seedling looks lost at first. That is normal, and the gaps can be used for a quick catch crop such as radishes or lettuce between slower plants.

Too close

Right spacing

Small, spindly plants, more disease, more slugs hiding in the shade, and a poor harvest.	Air moves between plants, light reaches the leaves, and each plant has room for its roots.

Transplanting

- **Choose the moment:** a cool, overcast day or the evening, so plants are not hit by hot sun straight away.
- **Water first:** soak the pots an hour or so before, so the root ball holds together.
- **Dig the hole:** a little wider than the root ball and as deep as the pot.
- **Handle gently:** hold by a leaf or the root ball, never the stem.
- **Depth:** plant at the same depth as in the pot. Tomatoes are an exception and can be set deeper, since the buried stem grows extra roots (check).
- **Firm in:** press soil around the roots to remove air pockets, but do not stamp it down hard.

```
# Planting out one seedling
1. Water    the pot an hour before -> choose a cool, cloudy time
2. Dig      a hole wider than the root ball
3. Fill     the hole with water -> let it drain
4. Place    the plant at pot depth -> backfill with soil
5. Firm     gently -> water again to settle the soil
6. Label    with name and date -> protect from slugs
```

Watering In

Watering in means giving a generous drink straight after planting. It settles soil around the roots and removes air pockets. For the next one or two weeks, check the soil every day or two: new transplants have small roots and dry out fast, even if the surface of a bed looks damp. Water slowly at the base, not over the leaves, ideally in the morning.

> **Protect new plants**
>
> A cloche, fleece or cut-off plastic bottle shields young plants from wind, cold and slugs for the first week or two. Remove or vent it on warm days so plants do not overheat.

Common failures

Plants that wilt and brown after planting were usually not hardened off, planted in hot sun, or left dry. Plants that sit still and turn yellow are often too cold or planted too deep. Plants chewed to stumps overnight are slug victims (see chapter 7).

Transplant shock

A little wilting on the first day is normal. If plants recover by the next morning after watering, they are fine. Do not feed straight away; roots need to establish first (check).

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** The length of the hardening-off period, local last-frost dates, deeper planting of tomatoes, and delaying feeding after transplanting. Verify against plant labels and local advice.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Write a 10-day hardening-off plan for a tray of seedlings of one tender crop, saying which day each stage happens, and what you would do if a frost was forecast on day 8.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

A bed is 1.2 m wide and 2.4 m long. Using spacings from a packet or label, work out how many plants of one crop it holds, and sketch where they would go.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Two days after planting out, half your seedlings are wilting. List at least four possible causes, how you would tell them apart, and what you would do for each.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Hardening off:** 7-14 days, a little more outdoors each day
- **Timing:** after the last frost for tender crops
- **Spacing:** follow the packet; fill gaps with catch crops
- **Planting:** cool or cloudy time, water first, gentle handling
- **Watering in:** soak after planting, then check daily
- **Protection:** cloche or fleece against wind, cold, slugs

Coming next

Chapter 6 covers watering and weeding: how much and when, mulching, and weed types.

Chapter 5 ended with plants watered in. From here, two jobs fill most of the gardener's routine: keeping water supplied and keeping weeds in check. Both are easier with a few good habits than with constant effort.

How Much and When to Water

Most vegetables need roughly the equivalent of 2.5 cm (an inch) of water a week in the growing season, from rain and watering together (check). In practice, check the soil rather than the calendar: push a finger in to about 5 cm. If it is dry there, water.

- **Water deeply and less often.** A thorough soak every few days pushes roots down; a daily sprinkle keeps them near the surface and makes plants fragile in dry spells.
- **Water in the morning** if you can. Less is lost to evaporation, and leaves dry before night, which reduces slugs and disease. Evening is the second choice.
- **Water at the base,** not over the leaves, aiming at the soil where the roots are.
- **Containers dry out fastest.** In warm weather they may need water every day.
- **Collect rainwater** in a water butt where you can. Plants like it, and it is free.

Crop stage	Water need
Seedlings and new transplants	Frequent, gentle; roots are small
Leafy crops (lettuce, spinach)	Steady; dry spells make them bolt (run to seed) and turn bitter
Fruiting crops (tomatoes, courgettes)	Steady while flowers and fruit form; uneven watering can split fruit (check)
Root crops (carrots, beetroot)	Even moisture; big swings cause splitting
Established deep-rooted crops	Less often but deeply

Mulching

A **mulch** is a layer of material spread over the soil surface. Chapter 3 introduced it as a way to feed soil; it also saves water and suppresses weeds. Spread 5 to 7 cm of compost, well-rotted manure, leaf mould or straw on damp, weeded soil, leaving a gap around plant stems so they do not rot.

Bare soil

Dries out quickly, bakes hard, and is quickly colonised by weed seeds.

Mulched soil

Stays damp longer, stays cooler in summer, blocks light from weed seeds, and feeds worms as the mulch breaks down.

Mulch on soil that is already dry just seals the dryness in, so water well first. Fresh grass clippings work in thin layers but turn slimy if piled thick (check).

Weed Types

A weed is simply a plant growing where you do not want it. Knowing how a weed spreads tells you how to deal with it.

Type	Examples	How to deal with it
Annual weeds	chickweed, groundsel, shepherd's purse	Hoe or pull before they set seed; one plant can drop thousands of seeds
Perennial, taproot	dandelion, dock	Dig out the whole root; any piece left can regrow
Perennial, creeping roots	bindweed, couch grass, ground elder	Fork out carefully, removing all root pieces; persistence over months, or cover with a light-proof layer for a year or more (check)
Perennial, runners	creeping buttercup	Lift runners and roots; mulch to starve

```
# A weekly weeding and watering round (15 minutes)
1. Walk     the plot -> note dry soil, wilting, new weeds
2. Hoe      small weeds on a dry day -> they wither where they lie
```

```
3. Pull     weeds near crops by hand -> after rain the soil is soft
4. Dig      out perennials -> take the whole root
5. Water    where the finger test is dry -> deeply, at the base
6. Top up   the mulch -> keep it clear of stems
```

Little and often

Fifteen minutes with a hoe every week beats a whole weekend of clearing a jungle. Weeds are easiest to remove when they are seedlings, and hoeing on a dry, sunny day leaves them to wither.

Common failures

Weeds that are left to flower and seed give years of extra work. Perennial weeds chopped into pieces and dug in can multiply from every piece. Never compost seeding weeds or perennial roots in a cool heap (check). Overwatering is also a failure: constantly soggy soil starves roots of air.

Weeds as information

Some weeds hint at conditions: lots of dock or buttercup can suggest wet or compacted soil; very few weeds on bare soil may mean it is poor. Treat this as a rough clue, not a diagnosis (check).

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** The weekly water figure, effects of uneven watering on fruit, grass-clipping mulch, covering to kill creeping perennials, composting weeds, and weeds as soil indicators. Verify against local gardening advice.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

A warm week has passed with no rain. You have a raised bed of lettuce, a row of carrots and two tomato plants in pots. Write a watering plan for the week, saying how you would check each, when you would water and how much.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Describe how you would mulch a 2 m by 1 m bed of established vegetables: which material, how deep, when, and what you would do first and avoid doing.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

You find chickweed, a dandelion and bindweed in the same bed. Explain which type each is and what method you would use to remove each one.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Test:** finger 5 cm into the soil before watering
- **Method:** deep, less often, at the base, in the morning
- **Mulch:** 5-7 cm on damp soil, clear of stems
- **Annual weeds:** hoe before seeding
- **Taproot weeds:** dig out the whole root
- **Creeping weeds:** fork out all pieces, persist, or smother

Coming next

Chapter 7 covers pests and diseases: slugs, aphids, blight, prevention and organic controls.

Chapter 6 covered the routine care of watering and weeding. Even with good care, something will eat or infect some of your crops. The aim is not a spotless plot but keeping losses small, mostly by prevention and by catching problems early.

Prevention First

Healthy plants in good soil resist trouble better than stressed ones. Most of the best controls cost nothing and are done before the problem appears.

- **Look often.** A weekly walk round (Chapter 6) spots a few aphids or one blighted leaf while they are still easy to deal with.
- **Rotate crops.** Moving each crop family to a new bed each year stops soil-borne problems building up; Chapter 9 covers this.
- **Keep the plot tidy.** Remove dead leaves, rotting fruit and hiding places such as old boards and long grass, where slugs shelter.
- **Grow resistant varieties** where they exist; seed packets often say if a variety resists blight or another disease.
- **Do not overcrowd.** Good spacing (Chapter 5) lets air move and leaves dry quickly.
- **Invite helpers.** Ladybirds, hoverflies, ground beetles, frogs and birds all eat pests. Some flowers and a patch of rough ground encourage them.

Common Pests

Pest	Signs	Organic response
Slugs and snails	Ragged holes in leaves, silvery trails, seedlings eaten overnight	Collect by torchlight after dark or after rain; keep the plot tidy; protect seedlings with cloches or bottle covers; encourage frogs and beetles; beer traps help a little (check)

Pest	Signs	Organic response
Aphids (greenfly, blackfly)	Clusters of tiny insects on shoot tips; sticky residue; curled leaves	Squash by hand or rub off; wash off with a jet of water; leave ladybirds and hoverflies to eat them
Cabbage white caterpillars	Holes in brassica leaves; green caterpillars; yellow eggs under leaves	Pick off eggs and caterpillars; cover with fine mesh
Carrot fly	Rusty tunnels in carrots; maggots	Cover the crop with fine mesh; sow thinly so less thinning is needed, as the smell of bruised leaves attracts the fly (check)
Pigeons	Torn leaves on brassicas and peas	Net over a frame; shiny strips or discs help only briefly (check)

Barriers

Fine insect mesh, netting and cloches physically stop pests reaching crops. They work against caterpillars, carrot fly and pigeons, and need no spray.

Sprays

Even organic sprays can harm helpful insects as well as pests. Use them as a last resort, on the affected plants only, and read the label (check).

Common Diseases

Plant diseases are mostly caused by fungi, which thrive in damp, still conditions, and by viruses, which are often spread by sap-sucking insects such as aphids.

Disease	Signs	What to do
Potato and tomato blight	Brown or black patches on leaves, spreading fast in warm, damp weather; white fuzz under leaves; rotting tubers or fruit	Remove affected foliage quickly; harvest potatoes soon after cutting off blighted tops; grow resistant varieties; keep tomato leaves dry; bin infected material rather than composting it (check)

Disease	Signs	What to do
Powdery mildew	White powder on leaves, common on courgettes and squash in late summer	Water the soil well, mulch, space plants, remove badly affected leaves
Damping off	Seedlings collapse at the base, often in crowded, wet, cold trays	Sow thinly, use clean pots and fresh compost, water sparingly, give light and air (see Chapter 4)
Clubroot	Brassicas stunted and wilting; swollen, distorted roots	Rotate; raise the soil pH with lime if acid (see Chapter 2); buy clean plants; it cannot be cured once in the soil (check)

```
# Deciding what to do about a problem
1. Identify   what is it -> look at both sides of the leaf, and at the roots
2. Judge      how bad is it -> a few holes are normal; losing the crop is not
3. Prevent    barrier, tidy up, adjust watering -> first choice
4. Remove    by hand: pick, squash, cut off -> second choice
5. Spray      only if needed -> last, on the affected plants only
6. Record    note what happened and where -> it informs next year's rotation
```

Accept a little damage

A few chewed leaves rarely matter, especially on crops where you eat the roots or fruit. A small population of pests also keeps the predators fed. Act when damage threatens the harvest, not at the first nibble.

Common failures

Mistaking the cause leads to the wrong cure: yellow leaves can be pests, disease, drought or hunger. Leaving blighted material on the plot, or on the compost heap, helps it spread. Reaching for a spray for every problem kills the helpful insects that would have dealt with it. Always follow the product label if you do use one.

Blight and the weather

Blight spreads fastest when it is warm, humid and wet for several days. In such weather, inspect potatoes and tomatoes every few days, since early removal of the first affected leaves can save much of the crop (check).

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** Beer traps, the carrot fly and thinning advice, the effect of deterrents on pigeons, the use of sprays, handling of blighted material, clubroot control, and the weather conditions favouring blight. Verify against local gardening advice and product labels.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Your newly planted lettuce seedlings have ragged holes and silvery trails across the leaves each morning. Identify the likely pest and describe three things you would do, in order, to protect the crop without chemicals.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

After a warm, wet week, brown patches appear on your tomato leaves and a few potato leaves. Explain what you suspect, what you would do today, and how you would dispose of the affected material.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Design a prevention plan for a small plot growing carrots, cabbages and peas, listing one measure for each crop against its most likely pest, plus two general habits that

cover the whole plot.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **First:** prevent, with tidiness, spacing, rotation and barriers
- **Slugs:** collect at night, protect seedlings, attract predators
- **Aphids:** rub off or wash off; let ladybirds work
- **Blight:** act fast in warm, wet weather; bin affected material
- **Mesh:** stops carrot fly and caterpillars
- **Sprays:** a last resort

Coming next

Chapter 8 covers easy crops: salad leaves, radishes, potatoes, beans and courgettes.

Chapter 7 dealt with pests and diseases. Now for the rewarding part: five crops that forgive beginners' mistakes, give a quick return and suit a cool climate. Start with a few of these rather than a long list, and use the skills from Chapters 4 to 6 to grow them well.

Why These Five

Each is quick or reliable, needs little equipment and is hard to get badly wrong. Dates below are approximate for a cool, temperate climate and vary with your local frost dates (check).

Crop	Sow or plant	Ready in	Key points
Salad leaves	Sow outdoors from early spring to late summer; indoors or under cover for winter leaves (check)	About 3 to 8 weeks	Sow a short row every 2 to 3 weeks; harvest outer leaves and the plant regrows; keep moist; shade in hot spells so they do not bolt
Radishes	Sow outdoors from early spring to early autumn	About 4 to 6 weeks	Sow thinly where they are to grow; water regularly, since dry spells make them woody or hot; pull promptly (check)
Potatoes	Plant seed potatoes in spring, about 10 to 15 cm deep (check)	Earlies about 10 to 12 weeks; maincrops 15 to 20 weeks (check)	Chit (sprout) the tubers first; earth up as shoots grow; watch for blight (Chapter 7); grow well in large containers
Beans (runner, climbing French, broad)	Runner and French: sow after the last frost, indoors earlier; broad: sow in autumn or early spring (check)	Roughly 10 to 14 weeks (check)	Climbers need tall supports; pick often to keep plants cropping; they like well-fed soil and plenty of water when flowering

Crop	Sow or plant	Ready in	Key points
Courgettes	Sow indoors in mid spring; plant out after frost danger (Chapter 5)	About 8 to 10 weeks from sowing (check)	Need sun, rich soil and space; harvest small and often; one or two plants feed a household

Growing Each Crop

Salad leaves

Cut-and-come-again mixes give repeated cuttings from one sowing. Grow in a container, a window box or a spare corner. Succession sowing keeps the supply steady (Chapter 9).

Radishes

The fastest crop on the plot. Sow them between slower rows, such as parsnips, to use space that would otherwise be empty, and to mark the row.

Potatoes

Earthing up (drawing soil around the stems) stops tubers turning green, which makes them unfit to eat. Dig up a plant to test whether the tubers have reached size.

Beans

Beans fix nitrogen with the help of soil bacteria, so leave the roots in the ground when the plants are finished; they enrich the soil for the next crop (check).

Courgettes

Water at the base, not over the leaves, to limit mildew (Chapter 7). If the crop outpaces you, a marrow will form; picking regularly stops this.

```
# A beginner's first-season shortlist (a few square metres)
Salad leaves  one short row, resown -> every 2 to 3 weeks
Radishes      one short row between slower crops -> sown thinly
Potatoes      4 to 6 earlies in a large tub or a bed -> earthed up
```

```
Beans          a wigwam of canes with 6 plants -> picked often
Courgette      1 or 2 plants, well spaced -> harvested small
```

Match the crop to the time

If you have only a weekend a week, choose crops that tolerate neglect, such as potatoes and beans. If you are around daily, add the quick salad and radish rows that need regular watering and picking.

Common failures

Sowing a whole packet of salad at once gives a glut and then nothing. Letting radishes dry out or grow old makes them woody. Leaving potato tubers exposed to light turns them green; do not eat green tubers. Planting beans out before the last frost kills them. Overcrowding courgettes invites mildew.

The pick-often rule

Beans and courgettes are annuals whose purpose is to make seed. Pick them young and often and they keep producing; let a few pods or fruit mature and the plant slows down, believing its job is done.

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** Sowing windows, times to harvest, planting depth for potatoes, the details of each crop's care, and the nitrogen benefit of bean roots. Verify against your seed packets and local advice.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

You want fresh salad from spring to autumn from one short row. Describe a sowing and harvesting routine that avoids both a glut and a gap, including how you would pick the leaves.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

You have one large container and a sunny patio. Explain how you would grow early potatoes in it from seed potato to harvest, including what you would do about light and about disease.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

A friend's courgette plants have lots of leaves, a few huge marrows and white powder on the leaves. Name what went wrong in each case and what they should do now and next time.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Salad:** sow little and often; pick outer leaves
- **Radishes:** thin sowing, steady water, pull on time
- **Potatoes:** chit, plant, earth up; never eat green tubers
- **Beans:** after the last frost, strong supports, pick often
- **Courgettes:** sun, space, water at the base, harvest small

Coming next

Chapter 9 covers planning and rotation: beds, crop rotation, successional sowing and a planting calendar.

Chapter 8 introduced five easy crops. A little planning turns a handful of good crops into a steady supply year after year. This chapter covers laying out beds, moving crops around from year to year, sowing in stages, and putting it all on a calendar.

Laying Out Beds

Narrow beds are easier to look after than a big open plot. A bed about 1.2 m wide lets you reach the middle from either side, so you never walk on the soil and compact it (check). Leave paths of about 40 to 50 cm between beds for a barrow and your feet. Raised beds or plain beds edged with boards both work; what matters is that the soil stays loose, fed (Chapter 3) and weeded (Chapter 6).

```
# A small plot: four beds, each about 1.2 m x 2.4 m, with paths between
plot/
├── bed-A/   legumes: beans, peas
├── bed-B/   brassicas: cabbage, kale
├── bed-C/   roots: potatoes, carrots, beetroot
└── bed-D/   others: courgettes, salad, onions
```

Crop Rotation

Rotation means not growing the same crop family in the same place two years running. Pests and diseases that favour one family build up in the soil, and each family draws on different nutrients. Moving crops breaks the cycle and spreads the demand on the soil (check).

Group	Examples	What it does for or takes from the soil
Legumes	Beans, peas	Add nitrogen through root bacteria; leave the roots in (Chapter 8)
Brassicas	Cabbage, kale, broccoli, radishes	Hungry for nitrogen, so they follow the legumes; prone to clubroot, so the break matters (check)

Group	Examples	What it does for or takes from the soil
Roots	Potatoes, carrots, beetroot, parsnips	Prefer soil that was not freshly manured, which makes roots fork (check); potatoes are in a family of their own, with blight risk (Chapter 7)
Others	Courgettes, salad, onions	Fill gaps; onions and salad are fairly flexible

With four beds, move each group one bed along every year, so that each group returns to its first bed in year five.

```
# A four-year rotation (each group moves one bed on each year)
Year   Bed A      Bed B      Bed C      Bed D
1      legumes    brassicas  roots      others
2      others     legumes    brassicas  roots
3      roots      others     legumes    brassicas
4      brassicas  roots      others     legumes
```

> **Keep a garden notebook**
>
> Rotation only works if you remember what grew where. Sketch the beds each spring and write the crops in. A phone photo of the sketch is enough.

Successional Sowing

Quick crops such as salad leaves and radishes are best sown in small amounts every 2 to 3 weeks (Chapter 8), so harvests arrive in a steady stream. A second tactic is to follow one crop with another in the same space: early potatoes lifted in summer leave room for a late sowing of salad or quick-growing leaves (check). A third is intercropping, sowing fast radishes between slow-growing parsnips.

> **Common planning failures**
>
> Sowing everything on the first warm weekend and then having nothing to harvest later. Planting tall beans where they shade the salad. Forgetting which bed held the potatoes

and putting them there again. Filling every bed in spring with no space left for summer follow-on crops.

A Planting Calendar

A calendar shows each job in its month. The one below is a rough guide for a cool, temperate climate in the northern hemisphere; shift it by a few weeks to suit your own last-frost date (check). Chapter 10 turns it into a full plan.

Months	Main jobs
Feb to Mar	Plan the beds; chit potatoes; sow courgettes and tender crops indoors later in the spring (check); sow early salad under cover
Apr to May	Plant potatoes; sow salad and radishes outdoors; harden off seedlings (Chapter 5); plant out after the last frost
Jun to Jul	Water, weed and mulch; earth up potatoes; pick beans, courgettes and salad often; sow the second batch of salad
Aug to Sep	Harvest main crops; sow late salad and autumn crops; clear spent plants and sow a green manure or add compost (Chapter 3)
Oct to Jan	Tidy, mulch bare soil, order seed, review the notebook and plan next year's rotation

Plan on paper first

An hour with a pencil costs nothing. Moving a crop on paper is free; moving it after the seedlings are in is not.

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** Recommended bed width, the effects of rotation on pests and nutrients, the details of clubroot and manured root crops, follow-on cropping, and all calendar dates.

Verify against local advice and your own frost dates.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Last year beans grew in bed A, cabbages in bed B, potatoes in bed C and courgettes in bed D. Using the four-bed rotation, say what goes in each bed this year and give one reason for the move of the cabbages.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

You have a bed of early potatoes to lift in July and want to keep it busy. Describe how you would use the space for the rest of the season, and say what you would do to the soil first.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Draw up a simple plan for one 1.2 m x 2.4 m bed for spring to autumn, using at least three of the five crops from Chapter 8. State what goes where, and when you sow or plant each.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Beds:** about 1.2 m wide, with paths, so you never tread on the soil
- **Rotation:** legumes, brassicas, roots, others; move one bed each year
- **Succession:** sow little and often; follow early crops with late ones
- **Calendar:** plan, sow, plant out, tend, harvest, tidy

- **Notebook:** record what grew where

Coming next

Chapter 10 is the capstone: a month-by-month plan for your first season on a small plot.

Home Vegetable Gardening

Course 1 · Chapter 10 · Capstone: A Month-by-Month Plan for a Small Plot

This last chapter pulls the course together. You will take one small plot, and work through a first season month by month, using what Chapters 1 to 9 covered: light and space, soil, feeding, sowing, planting out, watering, pest control, easy crops and planning.

The Plot

The plan below is for one modest plot: two beds, each about 1.2 m x 2.4 m, in a sunny spot (Chapter 1), with a path between them. It grows the five easy crops from Chapter 8: salad leaves, radishes, potatoes, beans and courgettes. Dates suit a cool, temperate climate in the northern hemisphere and are a rough guide; shift them by a few weeks to match your own last-frost date (check).

```
# First-season layout: two beds with a path between
plot/
├── bed-1/   early potatoes, then late salad
│   └── sow radishes between the potato rows early on
└── bed-2/   climbing beans along the back, courgettes (2 plants) at one end, salad
```

> **Start small**
>
> Two beds you keep up with beat six you abandon in July. Next year you can add a third bed and begin the rotation from Chapter 9.

The Season, Month by Month

Month	Jobs	Chapters
February	Order seed and seed potatoes; sketch the two beds in your notebook; set the seed potatoes out in a light, cool place to chit (check)	9, 8, 4

Month	Jobs	Chapters
March	Dig or loosen the beds and add compost; test the soil if you have not; sow early salad and courgettes indoors later in the month or in April (check)	2, 3, 4
April	Plant the early potatoes; sow radishes between the rows; sow beans indoors; sow salad outdoors, a short row every 2 to 3 weeks; set slug traps and guards from the start	4, 7, 9
May	Harden off beans and courgettes; plant them out after the last frost, with canes for the beans; water them in; mulch; first radishes ready to pull	5, 6, 8
June	Water deeply and less often; weed while weeds are small; earth up the potatoes; start picking salad; check leaves for aphids and blight	6, 7
July	Lift the early potatoes; sow a second batch of salad in the space; begin picking beans and courgettes, often and young; keep watering in dry spells	8, 9
August	Keep picking; watch for blight on any remaining potatoes and remove affected leaves promptly (check); sow late salad; feed courgettes if growth slows	3, 7, 8
September	Last courgettes and beans; clear spent plants; leave bean roots in the soil; add compost to bare beds	3, 8
October to January	Mulch bare soil; tidy tools; write up the notebook: what grew well, what failed, what you would change; plan next year's beds and rotation	9

A Weekly Routine

Most of the work is small and regular. A short check each week prevents most problems from becoming big ones. The list below is the habit in code form; the idea is simply that the same few steps repeat.

```
# Weekly garden check (about 20 to 30 minutes on a small plot)
for bed in ["bed-1", "bed-2"]:
    look(bed)              # leaves, holes, slugs, aphids, blight spots
```

```
    if soil_is_dry(bed):
        water_deeply(bed)  # roots, not leaves; mornings
    weed(bed)              # small weeds pull out easily
    harvest(bed)           # pick young and often
note("what I saw and did")  # one line in the notebook
```

Where first seasons go wrong

Sowing too much at once, planting out before the last frost, letting the soil dry out in the weeks after planting, leaving courgettes until they are marrows, and giving up on weeding in midsummer. Plan small, check weekly, and pick often.

Review and Next Year

At the end of the season, look back at your notebook. Which crops did you actually eat? Which gave far more than you needed, and which too little? Which pest was worst? Use the answers to adjust: sow less of the glut crop, more of the favourite, and add a third bed to begin the rotation (Chapter 9). Gardens improve by small adjustments each year, not by getting everything right the first time.

What you now have

You can read your soil, feed it, start seeds, plant out, water and weed sensibly, spot the common pests and diseases, choose forgiving crops, and plan a season on paper. That is a complete foundation. The rest is practice, and a notebook.

Not Yet Verified, and Sources

- **Source.** Written from general knowledge of gardening; no specific source was read. Nothing is quoted from a text.
- **Marked (check).** All dates, the timing of chitting and indoor sowing, and blight handling. Verify against local advice and your own frost dates.

Exercises

EXERCISE 1

Find your own area's average last-frost date (check a local source), then adjust the plan's dates for April and May to match. Say which jobs move earlier or later, and by roughly how many weeks.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 2

Pick one month from the plan and write a one-page checklist for it, with each job, the tools you need and how long you expect it to take.

→ Solution

EXERCISE 3

Design your own first-season plan for a plot of your own (a garden bed, a balcony of containers, or an allotment strip). Give the size, the light, the crops, and a month-by-month list of jobs from February to October.

→ Solution

Quick Reference

- **Start small:** two beds, five easy crops
- **Winter:** order seed, plan on paper
- **Spring:** prepare soil, sow, plant after the last frost, harden off first
- **Summer:** water deeply, weed small, pick often, watch for pests
- **Autumn:** clear, feed the soil, review the notebook

Course complete

That is the end of the course. Pick your first beds, write the plan in a notebook, and sow something.