



DEPARTMENT: AGRICULTURE



Cultivating vegetables —CREATE A PEACE GARDEN

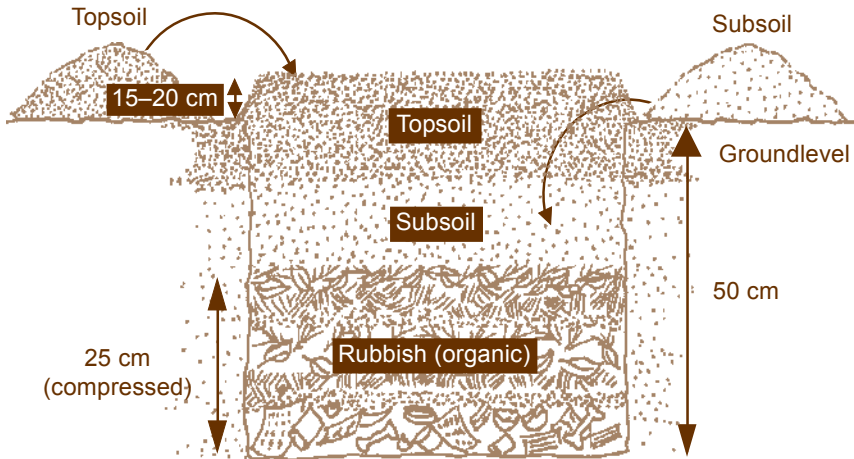
A peace garden is an area anywhere near your home, where you can grow fruit and vegetables. Vegetable beds the size of a door each are ideal. You should plant at least four beds of vegetables and as many more as you need and can handle, in rotation.

To start, decide on the types of vegetables you would like to grow, such as potatoes, cabbages, carrots, beans, peas and tomatoes, to give variety and balance to your diet. It is best to plant only a few seeds at a time, so that you do not have a surplus of one kind. If you do grow extras, how about selling them?

How to prepare your peace garden

- ◆ Mark out the area of each bed, for example the shape of a door frame, approximately 1 m x 2 m, and leave space between each bed so that you will be able to work with ease.
- ◆ Dig the soil over, removing stones and weeds. Especially where water is scarce, deep digging to make a trench at least 50 cm (knee deep) is important. The first soil that is dug out, the topsoil, must be kept apart as it is the best.





When filling the trench, place solid rubbish such as tins, eggshells, bones, wood and paper at the bottom to assist in drainage. Then proceed with alternating layers of soil and organic material such as grass, weeds, small branches and leaves. Lastly add the topsoil that you kept apart. The seed will be planted in this layer. The organic material layers act like a sponge holding moisture to a good depth.

- ◆ Stones can be used to make a border.
- ◆ If you have any manure or compost, dig it into the topsoil. Leave the beds like this for a week.
- ◆ Water well before planting and allow the soil to drain until it can be worked without becoming muddy.

Planting the seed

- ◆ Decide which seeds you wish to plant, for example:
 - *Three rows of carrots 30 cm apart*—plant the seeds 2 to 5 cm apart in the rows, 1 cm deep and cover with soil.

- *Three rows of beetroot 30 cm apart*—plant the seeds at the same spacing but 2 cm deep and cover with soil.
- *Potatoes in a separate bed 60 cm apart*—plant seed potatoes that are beginning to sprout 20 cm apart, 10 cm deep and cover with soil. When the potato plants are 30 cm tall, ridge the soil up around them. The potatoes will develop in the ridged-up soil.

It is best to have at least four separate beds. This will ensure that you have vegetables all year round if monthly sowings are done.

Refer to the table for planting details of all the popular vegetables and the sowing dates for the various regions

- ◆ Write labels for the rows of crops that you have planted. You can even put up a sign which says, “My peace garden”!
- ◆ Take note of the useful hints that are printed on your seed packets.
- ◆ Once you have planted all the seeds, press the soil down firmly over the planting rows and water lightly. You can make your own watering can by punching holes in the bottom of a tin or a 2-litre cooldrink bottle.

Put up a fence

Fence off your vegetable garden to prevent animals and children from walking across the beds. Orange or onion pockets cut open and sewn together make a good fence if supported on a stout framework of sticks.



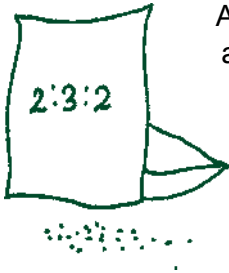
If you can put a fence around your peace garden, how about growing a granadilla creeper on it? It will provide protection, colour and fruit for the family.

Fertilise the soil

Your plants will need fertile soil to grow well. Soil that is fertile is rich in nutrients. As crops are harvested you will need to replace the nutrients that have been removed. These nutrients are replaced by applying fertiliser. There are different sources of fertiliser, namely:

- ◆ Organic fertilisers such as manure and compost, which may be used liberally and are generally inexpensive.

- ◆ Chemical fertilisers which must be purchased.



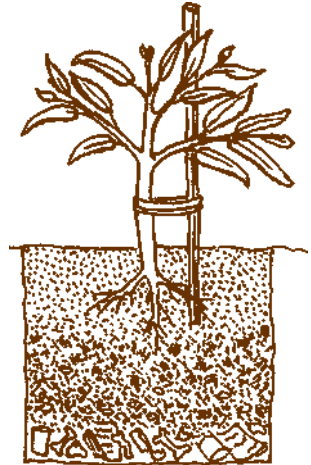
A good general-purpose fertiliser is 2-3-2 applied at one tablespoon per square metre before planting. You can use only organic fertiliser or a combination of organic and chemical fertilisers. If you use both, rather use organic fertiliser for leaf crops and chemical ones for the others.

Plant a fruit tree

If you want to plant a fruit tree, the best to try is a peach tree. There are many varieties but ask for one suited to your area.

Dig a hole 1 m x 1 m and 1 m deep. Put a few old chopped-up plastic containers, tins and other solid rubbish at the bottom of the hole. Add compost or manure liberally and return the soil that was taken out. Fill with water.

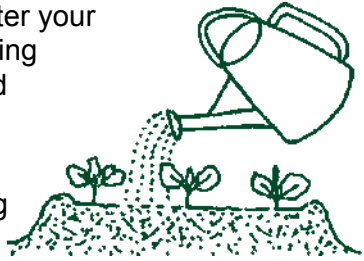
Cut the plastic bag off the tree and then plant it so that the top of the soil round the tree is level with the ground. Stamp round the base to make it firm. Water again. You may need to fasten the tree to a strong stick so that it does not get blown over by wind or pushed over by animals.



How to tend your peace garden

◆ If you live in a very dry area, try to water your vegetables in hot weather in the morning every day. Very small plants also need daily watering.

◆ When your vegetables start to grow, you should thin them out to the spacing shown in the table.



◆ If insect pests appear it is important to control them. Vigorous plants are less susceptible. Catch and destroy what you can, but if that is not effective you may have to resort to chemical control. Ask for advice from your store and follow the indications on the container. The same applies to plant diseases. Nonpoisonous, environmentally-friendly and biological control options must be considered.

◆ Weed regularly. Never allow weeds to seed and contaminate your beds.

◆ Once vegetables are growing strongly, they respond well to a liberal topdressing with well-rotted manure or nitrogenous fertiliser such as LAN applied at half a tablespoon per square metre. This applies especially to cabbages and leaf crops.

Harvesting

◆ Take care when picking your vegetables not to damage the plants, because this will reduce the yield and spread diseases.

◆ After the plants have yielded their crops, pull them out and put them on your compost heap. Old plants in your garden attract pests and diseases.

Rotate the crop

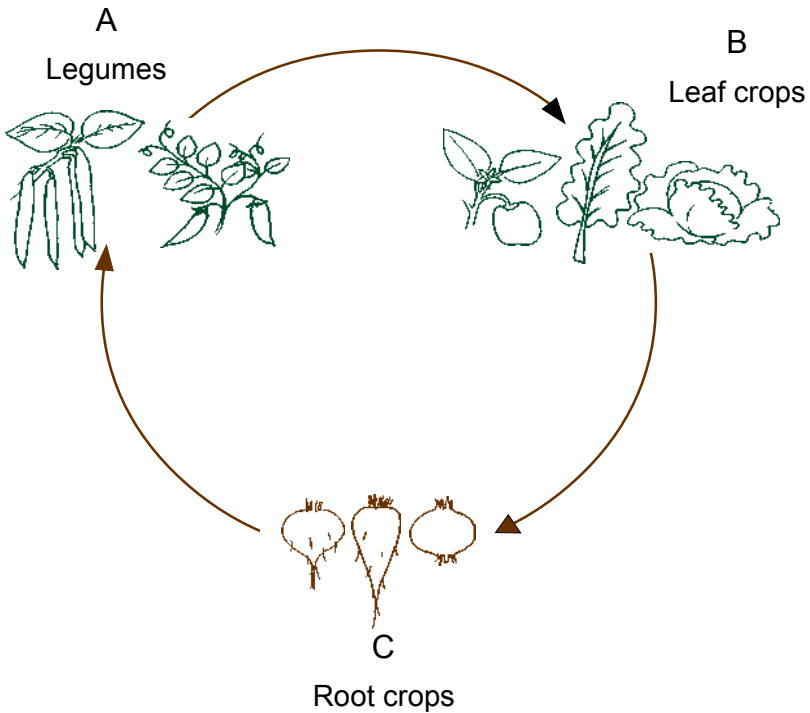
Do not plant the same vegetable in the same row as the previous crop.

If the same crop is grown in one place every year, pests and diseases may build up in the soil. It is also important to remember that different crops take different nutrients from the soil, while some add nutrients. Rotating crops will maintain the balance of nutrients in the soil.

Vegetables can be divided into the following groups:

- A Legumes: beans and peas
Grain: maize
- B Leaf crops: lettuce, spinach, cabbages
Fruit crops: tomatoes, peppers, eggplants
- C Root crops: beetroot, carrots, leeks, onions, potatoes

These groups should be rotated as follows:



For further information on growing vegetables, contact the following institutions:

Food Gardens Foundation
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Craighall
Johannesburg 2024
Tel (011) 880-5956
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ARC-Roodeplaat Vegetable and
Ornamental Plant Institute
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Tel (012) 841-9611
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