



RDGC HORTICULTURE REPORT – JANUARY 2021 PLANNING YOUR SUMMER GARDEN

January ushers in a new year. It also brings seed catalogues that seem to reproduce in your mail box.

As soon as those eagerly awaited periodicals arrive most of us sit down, preferably with a steaming cup of hot coffee or tea, plan, and dream of succulent summer tomatoes, bushes of luscious lima beans, and tents of stringless green beans.

There are a lot of things to consider when planning your summer garden.

- Size of garden - expand, shrink, build new gardens or simply plant in pots on your deck. The size of your yard or having no yard at all will partially determine this. How much work you want to put in or have time to put in will be the other factor in determining the size of your garden.
- Crop rotation – planting tomatoes and other vegetables three years in a row in the same spot can leach out the soil thereby robbing your plants of the nutrients they need to grow. Keep this in mind.
- Number of vertical, horizontal plants, and their location. Making the best use of sunlight and space is important.
- Determine whether to use the square foot garden method, raised beds, or the more traditional rows. Again, space may be a factor here.
- Planting from seed will yield more variety and characteristics but is time consuming and constrictive. Buying plants in a local nursery or at the Rye Garden Plant Sale is a lot easier; however, the choice can be limited.
- Eliminate plants that have failed in the past. For some reason my Kale has little critters eating away at their curly leaves. Initially the plant has beautiful frilly leaves which then morph into hole filled not so frilly leaves. So, this year Kale will be replaced by another crop, perhaps broccoli.
- Experiment with new and untried vegetables. The different types of lettuce my garden produces lasts from April through October. There are so many new varieties of lettuce in garden catalogues. Once seeds are planted they grow quickly. I usually plant the next group of seeds three weeks after the first ensuring there will always be a salad on my table. Because lettuce does not like the hot summer sun make sure it is planted in partial shade.
- Plan to test the soil before planting to check for Ph (alkalinity vs acidity) and nutrients. Many local garden centers such as Agway will sell you a soil test kit or test your soil for free. Hoping of course, you will purchase any additives needed from them, which is only fair.
- Compatibility of plants - Peppers and eggplant do not like one another very much so should not be planted next to one another. What other plants are you are considering that are not compatible?
- Compost – using your own compost not only is a wonderful way to reuse potato skins, egg shells and other kitchen scraps but it also saves the garbage disposal or filling up your garbage can. However, garden centers sell bags of compost with traces of lobster shells and other specialty ingredients that can be good additives for your plants.

Although January can be a dull, cold, and dreary time for those of us who live in New England, having an opportunity to look through a seed catalogue and plan for your summer bounty can brighten it up.