

# Garden Maintenance



 Alternatives

[www.rooftopgardens.ca](http://www.rooftopgardens.ca)

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Illustrations: Robin Clugston



The smart gardener is, first and foremost, a good observer. Before starting to work in the garden, spend a few minutes just looking at your vegetable garden.

## 1 Observation

- ✓ Take the time to evaluate the state of your garden: plant growth and health, ripe fruits and vegetables, need for clean-up.
- ✓ Write down what needs to be done in a notebook.

## 2 Detection

To keep your vegetable garden healthy, look for the first signs of damage caused by pests, diseases or poor growing conditions.

- ✓ Examine the plant leaves. Are they abnormal? (Do you see any bites, bumps, spots, rust, unusual change of colour, fungi, etc)?
- ✓ Look at the plants. Do you see any harmful pests (aphids, slugs, snails)?
- ✓ Determine and apply the proper treatment according to your observations, using the *Detection and Organic Control* pamphlet as a guide.

Use a magnifying glass to make this task easier.



## 3 Watering

This step has to be repeated frequently, and special attention must be paid during heat waves and dry spells.

- ✓ Water your garden well, preferably in the morning, and avoid watering the leaves.

*Ideally, you should use warm water. You can collect rain water in a container in your garden. To help keep the moisture in, spread mulch around your plants at the beginning of the season. See the Get Your Garden Going pamphlet for more information.*



## 4 Hoeing and weeding

This step should be done once a week to help your vegetable patch grow and to prevent weeds from appearing. Hoeing the soil will aerate it, which will help the roots absorb water better.

- ✓ Remove weeds with your hands, a small spade or a dandelion weeder.
- ✓ Till the first 5 cm (2 in) of the soil with a hand cultivator. If you have planters, you can use a fork.
- ✓ Water again after you have hoed.

*If the ground is covered in mulch, use the same method. Do not put flowering weeds in your compost. Be careful that you don't mistake plant shoots for weeds!*



## 5 Cleaning, pruning and organizing

To encourage your garden to grow, you have to remove the tired parts of plants.

- ✓ Remove or prune dead leaves, broken branches, faded flowers.
- ✓ Prune tomato suckers (refer to the *Specific Care* pamphlet).
- ✓ Make sure that plants needing support are staked or have a trellis or stake to climb on (tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, etc).

*Never remove more than 30% of plant foliage. Climbing plants will naturally grow toward a trellis. However, tomato plants need to be attached to stakes. You can use strips of old pantyhose, which won't cut into the stems.*



## Harvest

Fruits and vegetables can be picked as soon as they are ready to be eaten.

- ✓ Harvest fruits and vegetables using pruning shears or scissors.
- ✓ Cut herbs regularly to prevent them from flowering, which can alter the taste. Do this by pruning the tips of the stems.
- ✓ Harvest leafy vegetables by removing the outer leaves first.

*Never leave fruits and vegetables on the plants longer than necessary. This prevents waste and rot, which can attract insects and diseases.*

*If flowers are growing on your leafy vegetables, harvest the whole plant to avoid bitterness. For more information about harvesting herbs and leafy vegetables, refer to the Specific Care pamphlet.*



## Fertilization

There are three ways to apply fertilizer: foliar feeding (spraying right onto the leaves), top dressing and side dressing.

- ✓ Follow the directions on the product to apply the fertilizer solution.

*Refer to the Fertilizers pamphlet for more information.*

