

# ✧ Renee's Garden ✧

Set The Table From Your Garden

## Demonstrating Succession Gardening

We've designed two [Kitchen Garden Design Plans](#) to maximize space for a succession of tasty vegetables and herbs throughout the spring, summer and fall. Each shows you what to plant, when to plant, and what crop follows another as the seasons change.

Our simple [Succession Garden for Long Summer, Mild Winter Gardens](#) was created to show what can be done in a small backyard garden in parts of the country where summers are long and winters are mild without deep frost: [USDA](#) zones 8-10 and warmer areas of zone 7. Last year we planted and took pictures of this garden to show how productive it can be. Here is our report:

*(Note: If you live in an area where winter starts early and the ground freezes hard - [USDA](#) zones 3-6, see our [Short Summer, Cold Winter Garden Design.](#))*

Our garden consisted of three raised garden beds, each 3 feet wide and 16 feet long, each planted with vegetables and herbs - first for early spring, followed by summer crops, followed by fall crops - so we had continuous harvests of fresh, nutritious and tasty food in a manageable garden space.

We planned the garden with good crop rotation in mind, so soil doesn't become depleted. This means having a heavy feeding vegetable replaced by a light feeder or a soil builder like legumes, and conversely, a light feeding variety replacing a heavy feeding variety.

For example, broccoli, which is a heavy feeder and requires fertilization with a higher nitrogen fertilizer, is followed by a crop of pole beans which actually fix nitrogen into the soil through their roots. Kale and peas grow in the spring and are relatively light feeders, so after harvest we replaced them with tomatoes and peppers, which are heavy feeders.



Even with good crop rotation and especially if you (like us) have porous, sandy soil, it's a sound practice to add a fertilizer (there are many fine organic fertilizers to choose from these days) and compost at each crop rotation to replace the nutrients that were taken up with the previous crops.

To get a head start on your garden, you can sow seeds for the brassicas like broccoli indoors to transplant when the temperatures (especially nighttime temps) are warm enough to plant. (Check your seed packet backs for specifics). For our spring garden, we started broccoli and kale indoors as well as some heading lettuces that take a while to mature.

*Direct sown spring crops starting to germinate and grow*

Other fast growing and big seeded varieties like peas, arugula, spinach, chard, scallions, mesclun (baby leaf) mixes, and root crops like carrots, beets and radishes are best direct sown in the garden around the same time as the others are transplanted.

Rows of quickly maturing radishes are sown in between the rows of carrots. This is an example of intercropping - a good way to get 2 crops out of one small space. The radish will be harvested early, long before the carrots mature, and as they are pulled the carrots will have the room they need.



*Radishes are inter-planted between carrots and will be harvested quickly to give room for slower growing carrots to mature.*



*Heading lettuce seedlings at the top end of the bed were transplanted, then mesclun mixes were direct sown at the other end.*

***Our Three Bed Garden in spring:***  
*Plenty of leafy greens, radishes, carrots, beets, chard and peas, with alyssum to attract pollinators.*

While leafy spring greens, brassicas and root vegetables are flourishing in the garden, it's time to sow the summer fruiting vegetables: tomatoes, peppers and eggplants, into seed starting containers under lights indoors to give them the head start they require because they need such a long growing season. By the time that the spring kale, peas and spinach are finishing up, nights will have reached 50°F (10°C) and the tomato, pepper and eggplant seedlings are ready to transplant in their place.

The rest of traditional full summer varieties may be direct sown in their place as space becomes available: Pole beans are direct sown in place of broccoli, bush beans are direct sown in place of arugula, cucumbers are direct sown in place of chard, squash is direct sown in place of scallions and beets and summer herbs replace the lettuce bed. As the spring carrots are all harvested, more carrots can be direct sown in their place to maintain a constant supply.



***Our Three Bed Garden in summer:***

*An abundance of squash, tomatoes, peppers and beans, along with parsley, basil, and dill ready for harvest.*



*Fragrant and tasty summer herbs add great flavors to your favorite dishes.*

In late summer to early fall, start cool season varieties like fennel, leeks, broccoli, lettuces and herbs in pots or seed starting containers outdoors in bright light or partial shade so the seedlings are ready to replace crops in your summer garden as the nights shorten and days cool down.

Other crops like peas, spinach, carrots, beets, arugula, pak choi, chard, escarole, heading lettuces, frisee and mesclun mixes are best direct sown directly into the garden in late summer/early fall to mature and harvest either in cool fall weather fall and/or overwinter (depending on how cold your climate is) for early spring harvesting. When early spring weather arrives again, it's time to start your succession for another season.

If your tomato plants and peppers have good fall crops, they can be left in the garden until they are finished off by cold fall weather. Then replace them with a winter cover crop in order to protect and enhance the soil after these heavy feeders.



*These late summer/early fall sown varieties are cold hardy and will overwinter well in mild climates providing abundant tasty produce to enjoyed through the cold months.*

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