



Successful Vegetable Gardening: Growing Year Round in Santa Clara County

Pre-class Activities and Preparation

Class 2: Soil

Prior to the class:

Take a good look at your vegetable garden soil, whether you are gardening in the ground, in raised beds that have been filled with a purchased soil, or in containers. Push back any mulch or debris on the surface, and dig down about 6-10 inches with a shovel or trowel. Is it dry or wet at that depth? What color is it? Put a handful of soil on a plate. Try to squeeze it into a lump. (If it is dry, add enough water to moisten it.) Does it stick together? Poke the lump of soil with a finger: does it readily fall apart or stay in a lump? Does it stick to your hands or brush off easily?

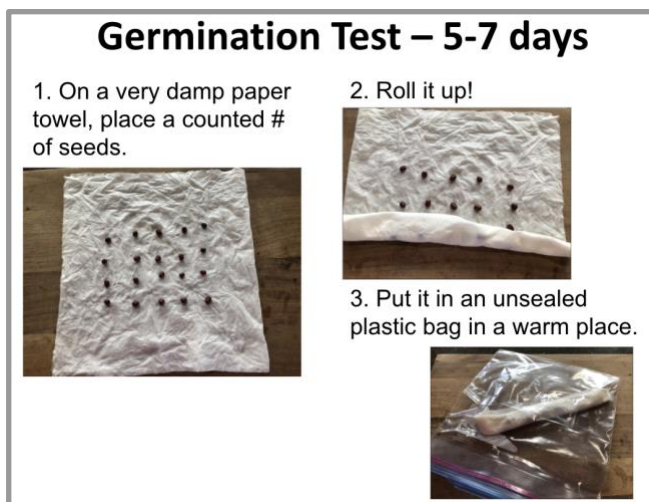
For the class:

If possible, bring to the class a package of fertilizer that you purchased for use in your garden. We will be looking at the information printed on the package. (No need to buy something for this purpose.)

Class 3: Seeds and Seedlings

Prior to the class:

If you have access to some seeds, do a germination test following the steps in this photo. Large, easy to handle seeds are recommended, such as bean, fava bean, pea, sunflower (not roasted, still in the shell), squash, or radish. You could even use seeds from your spice cabinet, such as fennel, coriander, or mustard seeds. 10 to 15 seeds is plenty for this test.



For the class:

Before class, check your germination test by unrolling the paper towel. Count how many seeds have germinated. The number of germinated seeds divided into the total number of seeds gives the germination percentage. So if 9 seeds out of 12 sprouted, that's 9 divided by 12 times 100 (to give the percentage) = 75%.

Class 4: Water and Mulch**Prior to the class:**

- Gather sample(s) of materials you'd consider covering your soil with: wood chips, dried leaves, stones/pebbles, straw, compost.
- Place in a 1" deep transparent container, or a sandwich-sized ziplock bag.

For the class:

Have your container or bag of sample material with you plus a light source such as a lamp, flashlight, or phone flashlight app.

Class 5: Managing Pests**Prior to the class:**

Watch this [video about beneficial insects](#)

If you have one or more containers of purchased pesticides in your garage or garden shed, look at the labels and compare them. Which insects or diseases are targeted? Are there cautions about non-targeted organisms, and if so what? What are the precautions recommended for safety?

For the class:

If you have a purchased pesticide in your garage or garden shed, please bring it to the next class (or take photos of the label).

Class 6: Cool Season Vegetables**Before the class:**

- Visit the [Santa Clara County Master Gardener website](#) and find the Vegetable Planting Chart
- Choose a vegetable you like that can be planted in March
- Look up that vegetable on the [UC ANR IPM website](#). What is one pest that affects it? How can that pest be managed?

Class 7: Warm Season Vegetables, Part 1**Before the class:**

- Go to the [UC ANR IPM website](#)
- Go to the page on tomatoes in the home garden:
 - Click on Home, Garden, Turf, and Landscape Pests.
 - Click on Pests in Gardens and Landscapes – Vegetables and Melons
 - Click on Tomato
- Look at the list of diseases, pests, and environmental disorders that affect tomatoes.
- Click on one item in the list, and read the information, clicking through any links on the page.

Class 8: Warm Season Vegetables, Part 2

Before the class:

- Search for and compare one or more of these pairs:
 - Black Beauty and Green Machine zucchini
 - Waltham and Honeybaby butternut squash
 - Straight 8 and Spacemaster cucumber
- What differences do you notice? Why might you choose one over the other? Here are some factors that might be important to you:
 - growth habit and size of plant
 - days to maturity
 - specific disease resistance
 - hybrid vs heirloom/open-pollinated

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