



Garden Glossary from A to Z !



Annuals: Plants that grow from seed, blossom, produce fruits and seeds, and die within one year. Their seeds can be collected to grow the following season. Examples include impatiens, marigolds, pansies, and petunias.

Amend: To incorporate an organic or mineral material such as compost, rock powder, sphagnum peat, fertilizer, or lime into the soil to enhance its fertility or structure, or adjust its pH.

Bolting: The term used to describe a plant that has gone to seed; a condition that occurs most often in plants eaten for their leaves (i.e. lettuce, cilantro, parsley, spinach). The plant flowers and the flavor of the leaves change (often becoming bitter). Bolting can be initiated by hot temperatures, or can simply occur when the plant is reaching the end of its cycle.

Bulbs: A diverse group of perennial plants that store nutrients to support growth and bloom. Examples include tulips, daffodils, and crocuses.

Cell Pack: A lightweight tray of molded fiber or plastic that is divided into many small sections like a muffin tin. Commonly used to hold potting mix for starting seedlings in a greenhouse or under lights indoors.

Container gardening: The practice of growing plants exclusively in containers (such as pots and barrels) instead of planting them in the ground. In some cases, this method of growing is used for ornamental purposes. It is also useful in areas where the soil is unsuitable for the plant or crop in question. Limited growing space can further make this method appealing.



Compost: A mixture of decaying organic matter, as from leaves and vegetable and fruit scraps, used to improve soil structure and provide nutrients. Well-balanced compost requires air, moisture, carbon and nitrogen materials, micro- and macro-organisms.

Cover crops: A crop, such as winter wheat, winter rye, or clover, planted between periods of regular crop production to prevent soil erosion and provide humus or nitrogen.

Diatomaceous Earth: A nontoxic pesticide, this powdery substance actually has sharp edges that kill slugs and bugs without chemicals in your vegetable garden.

Fertilizer: Any of a large number of natural and synthetic materials, including manure, bone meal, seaweed, and nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium compounds. It is spread on or worked into soil to increase its capacity to support plant growth.

Germination: The process of a seed forming a sprout.

Hand Cultivator: A pronged tool used for loosening the soil; also helpful in weeding stubborn roots.



Hardening Off: To gradually introduce transplants (seedlings) to outdoors conditions before planting in the ground.

Hardiness: The ability of a plant to tolerate hot or cold climates.

Heirloom: Heirloom vegetables are open-pollinated plants that have been cultivated for at least 50 years. They are often more flavorful, colorful, and interesting than hybrids, but they may be challenging to grow if your soil is disease-prone.

Humus: A stable form of organic matter derived from the decay of plant and animal materials; a vital component of garden soils.

Hybrid: Hybrid plants are the result of crossbreeding to produce offspring with desirable traits, such as disease resistance or uniform color or size. As a result, hybrids will not usually reproduce true to seed, and new seeds must be planted each season.

Loam: A well-balanced soil comprising clay, silt, and sand. Ideal planting medium for gardeners.

Mulch: A protective covering, usually of organic matter such as leaves, straw, or peat, placed around plants to prevent the evaporation of moisture, the freezing of roots, and the growth of weeds. Also used in walkways.

NPK: Scientific shorthand for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, the three nutrients used in greatest quantity by plants. The three-number formula (5-10-5, 20-20-20) on fertilizer labels identifies a product's NPK content

Open-Pollinated (OP): Open-pollinated (OP) plants have parents of the same variety and reproduce true to seed, so their seeds can be saved and replanted and the resulting plants will resemble their parents.

Organic: Term used by gardeners to distinguish those sorts of soil amendments, fertilizers, and pesticides that derive from unprocessed natural products, as opposed to products chemically synthesized in a factory. Examples of organic products include manures, rock phosphate, and rotenone, an insecticide extracted from the roots of a South American plant; synthetics include ammonium nitrate, superphosphate, and malathion.



Peat Moss: Partially decomposed sphagnum moss (bog moss) that is used as a soil amendment; increases moisture retention.

Perennials: Plants that live and flower for more than one season and die to the ground each winter. Examples include bleeding hearts, chrysanthemums, iris, peonies, trees, and shrubs.

Perlite: Granular volcanic rock used to lighten potting soil and improve its aeration.

pH Content: A measure of acidity or alkalinity; in gardening, usually applied to soils. A soil's pH may range from 0 to 14, with a pH below 7 indicating acidity, and a pH above 7 indicating alkalinity.

Rain barrel: A barrel used as a container to hold rainwater; a water conservation method in gardens.

Raised bed gardening: The gardening method that utilizes constructed frames placed above ground. The frames are on average 3'-5' wide, and can be of any length. As with container gardening, soil is added to fill the frame, and seeds and transplants are planted in the imported soil rather than directly into the ground.



Root Ball: The mass of roots and soil exposed when a plant is slipped from its container or burlap covering or dug out of the ground for transplanting. Root bound is a term that is used when roots are densely tangled or coiled around the root ball; a condition often seen in plants grown too long in a small container.

Rotate: To change the location each year (usually in a 3- to 4-year cycle) in which a particular vegetable crop is grown, to reduce the threat from soil-borne diseases.

Row Cover: A light, permeable material, usually polypropylene or polyester, that is spread over rows of plants to protect them from insects and/or a light frost. Invaluable in the vegetable garden.

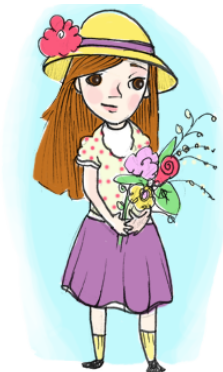
Second Sowing: A second planting of vegetables in mid- to late-season after the first planting has been harvested

Seedling: A young plant.

Self-Sow: To bear seeds that germinate without assistance in the garden. A tendency to self-sow may be desirable, as with many kinds of wildflowers, but it can also turn a prolific flower or vegetable into a weed. Self-sowing occurs as a result of dropping seeds or by a natural action such as wind or water

Staking: The act of adding a support mechanism to a plant that has vines and climbers. Stakes direct and contain the growth of a vegetable plant (such as a tomato), keeping their stems from degenerating into messy sprawls. These supports also allow you to stretch space in an overcrowded garden. Stakes are typically made from bamboo.

Thin: To pull out or cut off crowded seedlings so those remaining have adequate room for vigorous growth. In pruning, thinning involves the removal of stems and branches from a congested plant to enable more light and air to penetrate into the interior



Till: To dig or cultivate soil to prepare it for planting.

Top Dress: To spread fertilizer, compost, or manure over the surface of the soil around a growing plant in order to nourish it without disturbing the roots.

Trowel: A small hand tool used in gardening, resembles a much smaller version of a shovel.

Vermiculite: Lightweight mineral granules that improve the aeration and water retention of potting soil.