Cultivating Vegetables:
Plan and Prepare Your Vegetable Garden

Where to make your vegetable garden

Choose the best spot for your vegetable garden otherwise your vegetables may not grow well. It must:

☑️ be near your house so that you can take good care of it
☑️ be near water
☑️ have good soil
☑️ be level so that the water will drain well. If you plant on sloping terrain, build a number of terraces. Before building the terraces, put the topsoil aside. Build the terraces with the subsoil and then spread the topsoil evenly on top.
☑️ be sunny. If there is some shade for a few hours, rather plant leafy crops.
be sheltered from the wind, frost and animals, if necessary. A wall hedge or fence can provide protection.

Use the bushes and trees you dig out when you clear the spot to make a fence.

**Size of the garden**

When deciding how big to make the garden, take into account:

- how big your family is.
- how much water you have available in the dry season.
- what vegetables you wish to grow. Pumpkins, for example, can only be grown in a large garden.
- how much time you have to look after the garden.

**Equipment**

Only a few tools are necessary:

- A **panga** to clear away grass and bushes.
- A **spade** to dig with.
- A **fork** to turn over the soil with, to lift out potatoes, etc. and to make working in clayey and stony soil easier.
- A **hoe** to work soil up to the plants and to remove weeds.
A rake to break up clods, create an even surface in the bed and to rake soil over the seeds after they have been sown.

A watering-can to water the vegetables. Make your own watering-can by making holes in the bottom of a tin.

A wheelbarrow for carrying soil, compost, stones, etc.

String or line to make straight beds.

The nursery

You need a shelter or nursery in your garden to protect seedlings against harsh sunlight and rainstorms.

Some plants, such as tomatoes, lettuce and carrots, are sown in the nursery, and when the plants are big and strong enough, they are transplanted into larger beds outside.

You can buy poles and shade netting or simply do the following:

For the shelter, get 4 or more strong poles with forked ends. The poles must be waist length when you have planted them.
Plant the poles at the corners and, if necessary, along the edges of the bed. Put reeds or sticks across the poles and cover with grass or reeds.

Allow some sun (about 50%) to filter through the grass cover. Remove some of the grass or reeds when the plants are bigger so that the plants can become used to more sun and harsher conditions. It is best to make removable covers which you can use wherever and whenever needed.

Preparing the seedbeds and beds

Make the bed as long as necessary (usually about 10 paces but a seedbed needs to be only 1 pace by 1 pace).
A bed should not be wider than 1 pace so that you will be able to stand next to it when working.

Stretch string or line round the beds to make them straight.

Leave pathways (about 4 handwidths) between the beds so that you can walk on dry soil between the beds.

In dry seasons the beds can be on the same level as the paths, but in wet months they should be higher.
If you have problems with nematodes or cutworms, prepare the bed a month before planting time and clear away all plant material.

Spread compost (1 wheelbarrow load for a square of 1 pace by 2 paces) over the bed.

If you use manure, use less as it may burn the plants. Work the compost into the soil and rake the bed so that it is even. You can now sow the seed or transplant the seedlings.

In the end your vegetable garden could look like this:

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For further information contact your nearest provincial department of agriculture