

GARDEN CARE GUIDE

CITY CHURCH



WELCOME!

Starting a community garden is a challenging and rewarding process. Congratulations on getting through it! This document is here to make the maintenance work that is ahead of you even more simple and accessible, regardless of your experience taking care of a garden.

In this document we will go over daily and weekly care needs at your garden.



THE BASICS

Take a look around at your garden... what are you noticing?

Examine the plants, the soil, and notice what you see to be happening in the present moment.

- Does the soil look dry? Go touch it beneath the top layer.
- Does one of your trees look limp or sick? Go check on it, looking at the trunk, the root stock, the leaves and fruit.

Gardening can be a very technical process which can feel overwhelming, but there are hundreds of resources, and dozens of right answers to many of your questions.

Understand the seasonality of your plants - some will die off each season, others will last for years. Annuals need to be replaced yearly, perennials last for multiple years.



WHAT IS “ENOUGH” TIME?

We recommend at least 2 hours spent in your garden weekly. This time is important so you can keep up with what's happening in your garden and notice any needs that may not be noticeable right off of the bat.

Think of your garden as being a community: if you don't go visit this community weekly and spend dedicated time there you will quickly fall out of the loop and not catch up on the latest happenings (fruiting's) or to the nuances present (wilting leaves) in the relationships amongst all of it's members.



DAILY NEEDS CHECKLIST

Is your irrigation working?

Are there any leaks or damage to the beds?

Have plants been watered?

Are all plants looking happy and healthy?

Are there any small holes on the leaves of any plants? (this can be indicative of pests)

Is anything ready to harvest?



WATERING AND IRRIGATION

Water needs change with weather, adjust based on your garden. Water in the early morning and early evening. Nights are generally also fine in Solano. Some rough estimates are provided, but adjust your timer based on how your garden responds.

For Veggies:

- Timer can be set to 10-15 min a day; 4 days a week in Spring & Fall.
- Timer can be set to 15 - 25 min a day; 4 days a week in Summer.
- Timer can be set to 10 min a day; 2 - 3 days a week in Winter
- Be sure to check if plants are looking droopy, wilted, or stunted in growth and increase or decrease watering time and frequency as needed.

Trees prefer long-weekly waterings to daily-short waterings. Adjust watering to never allow a tree trunk to sit in standing water. Avoid piling dirt around the trunk.



PEST CONTROL AND YOU

Generally speaking, with all gardens come some sort of pests, who much like the rest of us are just trying to eat some yummy food! When considering pests, always remember that **beneficial insects outweigh the bad ones** and without the pests, we wouldn't have our glorious lady bug and beetle friends, to name a few. That being said, we recommend checking for pest problems weekly while looking for weeds.

Signs of pests will include

- excessive amounts of chewed or eaten leaves,
- curled, and caved in leaves,
- large amounts of lumps or deformations on leaves,
- large amounts of bugs living on plants stems and leaves

Learn more about pest management here:



PEST CONTROL - IPM

Learn more about your pesticide choices and options, and choose one which will ensure the least potential damage to your local insect population (beneficial insects outnumber bad ones). Although a well-balanced garden has limited pest issues, some insects may find their way into the garden and cause problems. Always take the time to assess the situation and determine if a "pest" is actually causing damage to plants.

Some combinations of plantings can supposedly reduce pests:

- Nasturtium is a great flower to plant along the side of raised beds or planting areas to attract beneficial insects.
- Garlic can also be used to deter some pests.
- Buckwheat attracts hoverflies that eat aphids and blackflies keeping our garden health



PEST CONTROL: INSECTICIDES

Because many insecticides harmful multiple pollinator species, **Sustainable Solano never recommends using them in your garden.** If proper integrated pest management techniques are observed, many pest issues can be alleviated or even prevented them before they arise. There are many permaculture friendly ways to go about getting rid of pests - **before you start here: go the the IPM section.**

Many common vegetable pest issues can be cured or prevented with the use of Neem Oil. **However - be sure that the pests you are attempting to stop can be stopped by neem oil (or whichever pest control method you choose).** Read specific instructions (including safety instructions) on any pest control product you purchase for use in your garden. **Application methods and concentration will vary.**



PEST CONTROL RESOURCES

Learn more about your options:



Learn about the active ingredient in synthetic and organic pesticides, their relative toxicity to pollinators.

Directory of pesticides, their uses and hazards, from evidence based sources.



More about neem oil, its uses and pests which it is effective against.



WEED MANAGEMENT

If you're visiting weekly make sure you're starting with the basics and first working through the daily checklist.

Weekly removal makes pulling weeds easy before they have strong roots. Spend 5 - 10 min each week removing any small weeds or unwanted vegetation growing in planting areas. It is much easier to remove weeds when they are seedlings and have not established a root system. Weeds take away much needed energy from the soil that should go to your plants.

To properly weed:

- wear gloves,
- firmly grab the weed from the base (right above the soil) and pull. You are doing it right if you pull out the roots along with the base of the plant and it's leaves.



WEEKLY NEEDS CHECKLIST

Weed! Especially in the areas where your food is growing.

Check for signs of pests on the leaves of your vegetables, and check underneath the leaves and by the roots for pest eggs.

If pests were found take steps to alleviate the issue, follow the instructions, and observe the success of your chosen method.



BY THE MONTH

January

Check plants for frost damage.

March

Start cold weather crops.
Start seeds indoors.

May

Transplant second seedlings.
Start third round seeds indoors.
Prepare for heat.

February

Plan for spring season.
Plant seeds indoors.

April

Transplant first seedlings.
Start cold weather crops.
Start second round seeds indoors.

June

Harvest season.
Transplant third round seedlings.



BY THE MONTH

July

Harvest season. Plan winter veggies.

September

Harvest season.
Begin seeding indoors.
Transplant first round winter veggies.

November

Begin harvesting winter veggies.

August

Harvest season.
Plan winter veggies.
Begin seedings indoors.

October

Harvest season ending.
Transplant second round.
Start second round seedlings.

December

Begin harvesting winter veggies.



A FEW REMINDERS:

- **Protect yourself in your garden!**
 - When dedicating time to garden maintenance, always wear sunscreen, a hat, gloves, and read directions of any tools or products you may be using before using them.
- **Thoroughly wash all your gardens produce before you consume it**
- **Consider donating excess produce to the students, community members, or the Solano County Food Bank**
- **When in doubt, research!**
 - **Plants:** mg.ucanr.edu
 - **Pests:** ipm.ucanr.edu
 - **Plants:** sustainablesolano.org/what-to-plant-and-when/



Fairfield Planting Schedule

Vegetable	Cool/Warm	Planting times	Remarks
Asparagus	Both seasons	Jan to Mar	Will not tolerate heat
Beets, table	Cool	Jan to Feb or in Apr	Adapts well except in coolest areas
Broccoli	Cool	Early Aug	Tops are edible
Cabbage	Cool	Aug	Good winter crop in warm areas
Carrots	Both seasons	Jan to Aug	Winter crop in warm areas
Cauliflower	Cool	Jun or Jul or in Aug	Good winter crop in warm areas
Chard	Cool	Feb or Oct	Good winter crop in warm areas
Corn, sweet	Warm	Apr to Jun	Continuous harvest
Egg lant	Warm	Apr to May	see foot note
Endive	Both seasons	August	Control Spider mites
Garlic	Both seasons	Oct to Nov	Good winter crop
Kohlrabi	Cool	Jan or Feb or Aug	Harvest the following August
lettuce, leaf	Cool	May to Aug	Good winter crop in warm areas
Lettuce, Romaine	Cool	May to Aug	Good in warm areas
Mustard	Cool	July to Aug	Good in warm areas
Onions	Both seasons	Oct or Nov or Feb or Mar	Winter crop
Parsnips	Cool	May to Jun	Transplants easily
Peas, sweet	Cool	Jan to Mar or in Aug	Store for two months before eating
Potatoes, Irish	Both seasons	Mar to Jul	Well drained sand soils
Radish	Both seasons	All year	Harvest every 30 days
Rhubarb	Cool	Dec or Jan	Perennial
Rutabaga	Cool	Jul	One or two plants - usually enough
Tomatoes	Warm	Apr to Jun	Select proper variety for success
Turnips	Cool	Mar to Aug	Winter crop in warm areas

Legend
Best season for growing:
Both cold and warm season
Cool season
Warm season



Avoid
Brussels Sprouts
Cantaloupes
Celery
Cucumbers
Potatoes, Sweet
Pumpkins



Best Practices During Harvest

HARVESTING YOUR FOOD

The entire process of growing your food is rewarding and at times labor intensive. Harvesting your food is one of the easiest parts of the gardening process. That being said, we still want to honor best practices for harvesting our food, to protect the plant you're leaving behind so it can continue to produce food for your enjoyment.

The QR code below has tips for how to harvest different vegetables and how to know when a plant is ready to be harvested.



TOOLS FOR HARVESTING

There are a few basic tools you need for any harvest:

- Harvest containers for folks to collect produce
- A single main harvest container to weigh and collect washed produce

Acceptable harvest container:

food-grade containers, plastic tubs, ice cream buckets, and plastic shopping baskets.

Not acceptable harvest container:

wicker baskets, cloth or burlap bags, used plastic bags, garbage bags.

- A scale for weighing produce
 - a simple kitchen scale or produce scale is fine
 - Postal scales can work well in a pinch

Optional:

- Shears for cutting vines
- Gloves for prickly plants
- For prep-sink: sanitizer (if required)
- For prep-sink: soap and a clean brush

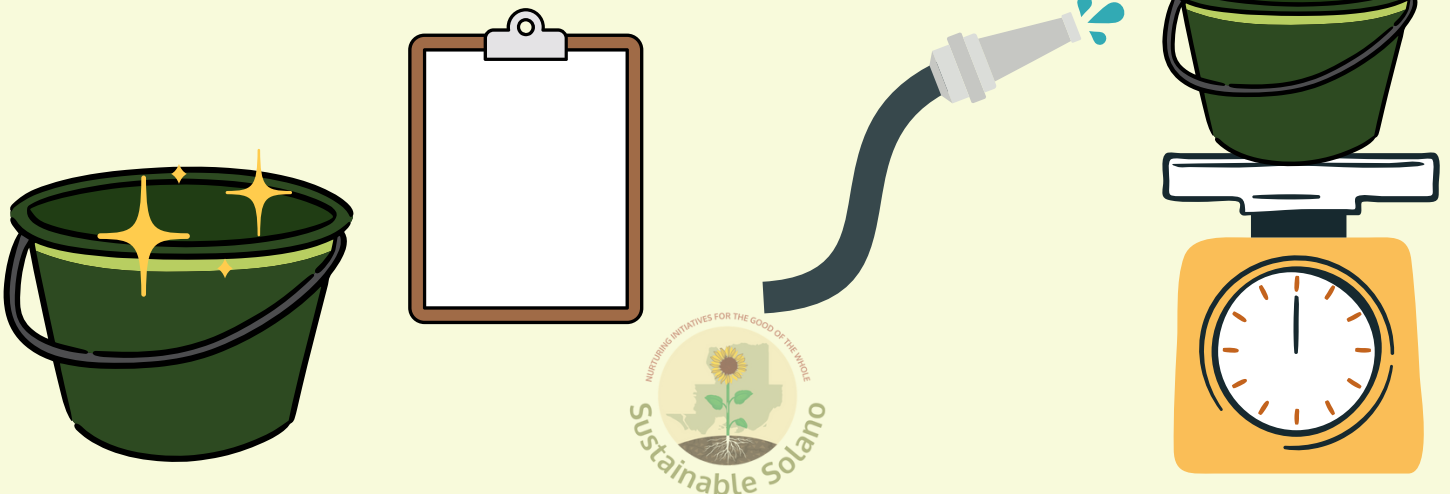


PREPARING FOR HARVESTING

A safe harvest requires a little bit of planning and attention to detail, but anyone can do it! Follow the steps below to ensure each harvest is a safe and productive one

BEFORE THE HARVEST:

1. Gather the harvest containers, scale, and paperwork.
 - a. In advance, run harvest containers through the dishwasher or wash the containers in a three-compartment sink.
 - b. Print and prepare the **Produce Tracker** and **Harvest Day Log**.
2. *(If applicable)* Turn on the potable water to the garden sink or to the hose.
 - a. If there is a garden sink, the sink should be cleaned and sanitized before use.
 - b. Before harvesting, clean the garden sink and table surfaces with soapy water, rinse and sanitize.
3. Survey the garden for vegetables to pick.
4. Weigh the empty harvest tub, record the tub weights for each student's container.



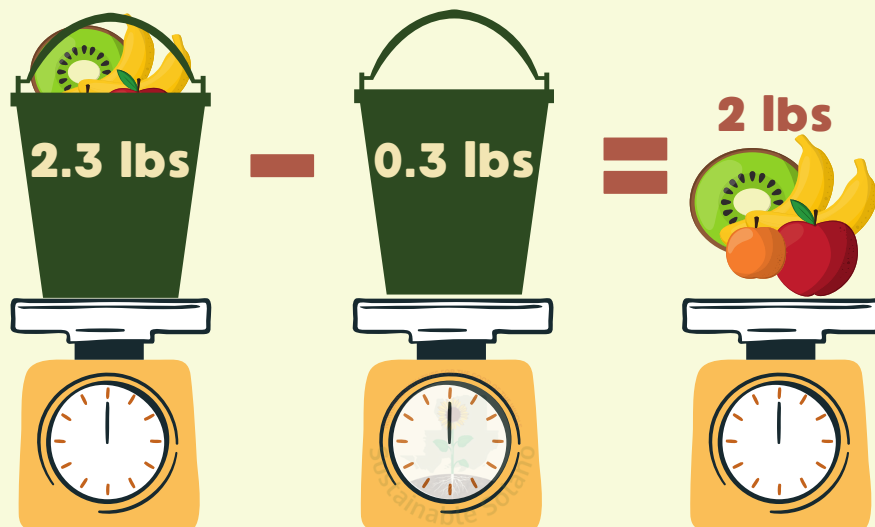
PREPARE FOR HARVESTING

1. Gather a small group of students.
2. Verify that none of the students are showing any signs of illness or have recently missed school because of an illness.
 - a. If a child was sick from an illness at any time in the last 48 hours, they shouldn't participate in the harvest. Find other garden activities for them.
3. Children and leaders wash their hands with soap and water in the classroom sink or bathroom.
4. Take kids out to the garden and show them what vegetables are ready to be picked (check out the resources section of this toolkit).
5. Distribute cleaned containers to the students.



HARVESTING AND STORING

1. Start to pick the produce according to ripeness.
2. Wash vegetables in the harvest containers, under potable running water in the sanitized garden sink or under a hose to remove large visible signs of dirt.
3. Allow vegetables to drain.
4. Weigh the washed vegetables.
 - a. $(\text{Weight of tub} + \text{veggies}) - \{\text{weight of tub}\} = [\text{weight of veggies}]$
5. Transfer to the clean harvest tub.
6. Record the following information in the harvest log:
 - a. Date and time of harvest
 - b. Weight of the vegetables
 - c. Names of leader and students involved in the harvest
7. Take vegetables to the kitchen. Staff should recheck weight and verify accurate quality and quantity.
8. Rinse produce under running water, scrub as necessary.
9. Allow produce to air dry on a sanitary surface.
10. Place produce in storage.
11. Place harvest log in binder.



DISTRIBUTION

Harvest as close as possible to pick-up time. Many leafy vegetables store poorly.

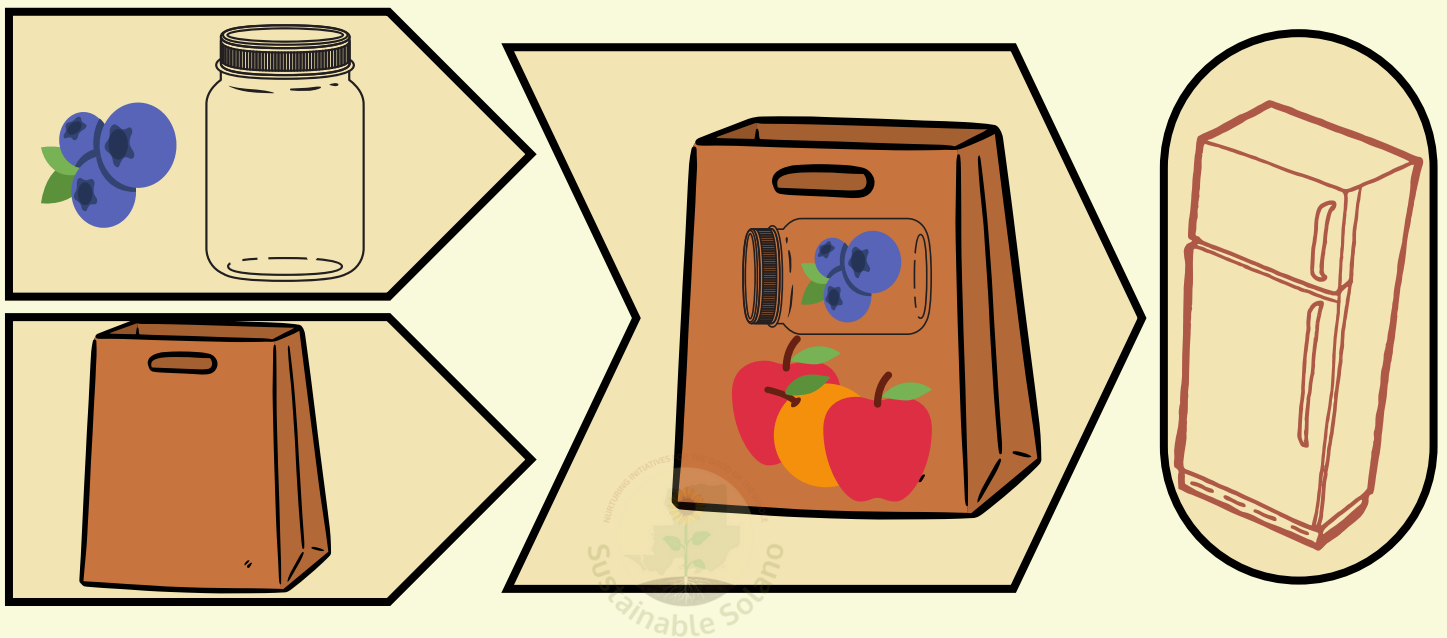
1. *(if applicable)* Clean any reusable distribution containers.
2. Harvest produce as above, do not place in storage.
3. Once produce is dry and the Produce Tracker and Checklist have been filed, prepare your work area.
 - a. Clean the sink area.
 - b. Clear, wash and sanitize the area where food will be bagged.
4. Ensure all hands have been washed again. Wash and sanitize the work surfaces.
5. Place more robust fruits and veggies into the distribution container.
6. Place delicate fruits and veggies in a protective container or at the top of the distribution container.
 - a. You can use clean jars, clean reusable plastic containers, single-use plastic or cardboard containers like take-out food boxes.
 - b. Reusable containers must be cleaned and sanitized before reuse.
7. "Seal" and place all the bags into cold storage until pick-up time.
8. Remove and distribute the bags in bunches, rather than removing them from cold storage all at once.

Check out "Make Food Safety a Priority for Your CSA" (FS 11) from Iowa State



CSA-STYLE DISTRIBUTION

1. Clean and sanitize the workspace.
2. Assemble workstations.
 - a. **Bag unfolding station:**
 - i. Needs: bags, distribution bags, gloves (optional)
 - b. **Delicate food prep station:**
 - i. Needs: robust containers, delicate fruits/veggies, gloves (opt.).
 - c. **Main bag assembly:**
 - i. Needs: unfolded bags, washed fruits and veggies, plus prepped delicate fruits and veggies, gloves (opt.).
 - d. **Cold storage crew**
 - i. Needs: method to transport bags safely, stapler/tape, full bags, pickup list (optional)
3. Have folks wash hands again.
4. Begin assembly.
5. Once bags are finished and stored in cold storage, clean the space and wash hands again.



Sample Harvest Day Checklist

Today's date: 5/12/22 Safety Supervisor: Tianna Kitchen Supervisor: Anita Name

Pre-Harvest	Yes	No	N/A
No pesticides were used on garden products.	✓		
Only properly composted soil amendments were used in the food production areas.	✓		
There is no evidence of animal damage, animal manure or vandalism in the area to be harvested.	✓		
Harvest Practices	Yes	No	N/A
All harvest containers have been cleaned, sanitized and air-dried prior to use.	✓		
Are any of the garden helpers are showing signs of illness or have recently be absent because of illness.		✓	
All garden helpers have thoroughly washed hands with soap and clean water.	✓		
Any garden helpers who have a cut or injury on their hands have disposable gloves to wear.	✓		
If a garden sink is available, it has been cleaned and properly sanitized before use.	✓		
All harvested produce has been washed under potable running water to wash away any visible signs of dirt.	✓		
Washed produce has been drained and weighed in a clean harvest tub.	✓		
All garden produce is recorded on harvest log along with names of volunteers, date, and time of harvest.	✓		
After washing, produce was taken to the kitchen for further cleaning and storage.	✓		
A food service staff member signed a Produce Tracker and Checklist as a receipt of garden produce.	✓		

HARVEST LOGS SHOULD BE FILED AND KEPT FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR.

Notes:

compost should be applied next week, will check tomorrow if all the materials are acceptably composted

Sample Produce Tracker

Today's date: 5/12/25

Food Safety Supervisor: Tianna

Harvester	Produce	Quantity	Guild or bed
patrick	lemons	12	2
tianna	peaches	9	3
holman	celery stalks	4	4
shene	chamomile	16oz	2
paul	mint	9oz	2
nick	apples	11	3
scott	oranges	12	1
liz	strawberries	30	3
amanda	artichoke	2	4

Kitchen Supervisor: anita name

Produce cleaned by: anita name

**SIGN ABOVE TO INDICATE PRODUCE HAS BEEN CLEANED AND STORED
HARVEST LOGS SHOULD BE FILED AND KEPT FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR.**