

DECEMBER

SOWING GUIDE ACCORDING TO CLIMATE

WARM/HOT

Sow Beans
Cabbage
Capsicum
Celery
Cucumber
Eggplant
Herbs
Lettuce
Marrow
Melon
Pumpkin
Radish
Silverbeet
Squash
Sweet corn
Sweet potato
Tomato

MILD/TEMPERATE

Sow Beans
Beetroot
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Capsicum
Carrot
Cauliflower
Celery
Chicory
Cucumber
Endive
Eggplant
Herbs
Leek
Lettuce
Marrow
Melon
Parsnip
Pumpkin
Radish
Squash
Sweet corn
Tomato

COOL

Sow Beans
Beetroot
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbage
Carrot
Cauliflower
Celery
Chicory
Cucumber
Endive
Herbs
Leek
Lettuce
Marrow
Melon
Okra
Parsnip
Potato
Pumpkin
Radish
Silverbeet
Sweet corn
Tomato



CORN SALAD is a small, cool season winter salad plant. The stem will produce new green leaves if left after harvest. It conveniently self-seeds.

DECEMBER NOTES

The moment that your plants are past the seedling stage, cover the soil around them and up to their stems with an organic mulch to avoid weed growth and water evaporation. Light coloured mulch (straw, newspaper etc.) reflects solar energy away, so in cool, temperate areas, use darker mulches such as partly decomposed hay, weathered sawdust, seagrass, shredded leaves etc. The cabbage tribe will need constant protection from grubs. If you prefer not to kill them, spray leaves weekly with diluted salt water, onion water, aromatic herb tea, or even seaweed extract. Celery and onions are bad companions from an irrigation point of view. Celery needs a lot of water for growth and succulence, but flat onions get a fungus disease if overhead watering is excessive too close to maturity.

Plant summer crops in slight depressions, channels, or V-trenches to attract and catch water.

WHERE LIKE-MINDS MEET

There are 40 organic gardening clubs that meet each month in Australia. For an up-to-date register of meeting places and contacts refer to 'Organic Growing' magazine, printed quarterly and available from newsagencies.

HERBS AS INSECTICIDES

Rue, marigold, pyrethrum, feverfew, valerian, geranium, garlic and chives are good companions to have growing in the orchard or food garden to help mask a crop from insect infestation. The genuine pyrethrum plant, (with serrated grey foliage) contains the best insecticidal properties in the flowers rather than leaves. Mix a tablespoon of dried flowers (freshly-ground in a pestle and mortar) with 2 litres of hot water. Add a little liquid soap and let stand. Use when cool against aphid, white fly etc.

SEED SAVING HINTS

Phoenix Seeds (Assoc. Ltd.), a non-profit company, was established in 1981 to help counteract the accelerating disappearance of traditional non-hybrid seeds. For a free mail order seed catalogue, write to P.O. Box 9, Stanley, Tasmania 7331. Phone (004) 58 1105. Open pollinated seeds of vegetables, herbs, flowers and trees (as opposed to hybrid varieties) are offered in Phoenix Seeds' current catalogue. Sources are from a burgeoning organic seed growers' network, supplemented by other traditional suppliers; seed packing is done by disabled people at Summit Industries, and the proceeds are used for seed-related projects. Growers committed to seed crop production should first study the subject in depth from a technical publication such as "GROWING & SAVING VEGETABLE SEEDS" by MARC ROGERS (Garden Way Publishing).