

Organic Gardening & Soil Preparation

for 50 square feet of garden

- 1) **4 bags** (2 cubic feet) planting mix (i.e.: **G&B Harvest Supreme**), or compost, (not steer manure). [6 bags is recommended, do not exceed 8 bags. Dean's 30/60 rule.]
- 2) 2-1/2 lbs. bone meal (about 5 cups)
- 3) 4 lbs. Gardner & Bloome Vegetable Food (about 8 cups)

[Square-foot gardening enthusiasts--the above will prepare 3-4x4 boxes--you may want to add 2 cu. ft. of vermiculite, perlite, or a combination (per each 4x4 box)--this will mean, per box: 2 bags of planting mix, 1/2 a large bag of vermiculite or perlite (optional), 2 cups of bone meal, and 2 cups of G & B Vegetable Food.]

Spread everything evenly over the specified area, then dig and mix in 6 or 8 inches deep. Now you're ready to plant.

Plant seeds or transplants, or a combination. Pay attention to **spacing requirements** of each vegetable, and try to **intercrop** (put faster maturing vegetables between slower ones, to make the most of space).

Water carefully, making sure that the soil remains moist, but not sopping wet. Most vegetables prefer dry foliage, so **water early in the day** and **water the soil**, not the leaves. Gardeners with limited time may want to set up timers, drip systems, soaker hoses, or other water/labor-saving devices.

Begin a weekly regime of garden chores:

- Thin seedlings** (as needed).
- Gently cultivate** to remove weeds.
- Inspect your garden** carefully at this time for **insect and other pest damage**.
- Harvest early & often**, as soon as vegetables are ready.

After 2 months (mark it on your calendar), **reapply**

the Gardner & Bloome Vegetable Food (4 lbs., or 8 cups for every 50 square feet.), evenly, and **mulch** over the top, with 2 bags (2 cu. ft.) of planting mix or compost. When mulching, *make sure that you leave the immediate area around each plant bare of mulch.*

After 2 more months (4 months after you've planted), **reapply the Gardner & Bloome Vegetable Food** (4 lbs., or 8 cups for every 50 square feet.), evenly, and **mulch** over the top, with about 2 bags (2 cu. ft.) of planting mix or compost. [If your season is unusually long, you may want to repeat this feeding/mulch regime one more time.]

To garden year-round, when you remove crops from an area, cultivate the area with a heavy rake, remove garden debris, and replant. **Pay attention to the warm/cool vegetable season cycles** (baseball season/off season). Continue to mulch and fertilize on a regular basis, adding bone meal only at the beginning of each planting season (twice a year). If mulching is done year-round, soil preparation shouldn't need to be repeated if earthworms are present, although an annual forking with a pitchfork or spading fork will be beneficial, as will some additional soil preparation.

A blast of cold water, hand-picking, or even a squirt of Safer Insect Killer (with Insecticidal Soap **and Pyrethrins**) or GardenSafe Fungicide 3 (Neem Oil) are all **good organic controls**. Copper barriers (and Sluggo) will help control snails and slugs. Corn gluten based Concern Weed Preventer controls weed seedlings. A suet bird feeder or hummingbird feeder (or a "toad abode" or lizard house) can attract important allies in your war on bugs.

A healthy garden is your best defense, but timeliness and good sanitation are also important. Rid your garden of a few aphids early; avoid a war with their descendants a week later. **Keep the garden free of weeds and debris**, and bugs will have fewer hiding places.

Growing organically gets easier all the time.