Vegetable Gardening Tips

A productive garden requires considerable attention and care. Insects, diseases and weeds must be controlled; water and nutrients must be supplied; plants must be supported; and harvests must be made at the proper time for best flavor, yield and nutritional quality. Numerous inquiries about garden issues have kept the phone ringing lately. There are some basic practices which will help to achieve the goal of a more productive garden.

Weed Control: Lack of proper weed control probably limits production in home gardens more than any other production practice. Weeds compete with vegetable plants for water, nutrients and sunlight and must be controlled if garden vegetables are to grow and produce well. Weeds also serve as a refuge for insects, as well as alternate hosts for diseases.

Disease Control: Most vegetables are susceptible to one or more diseases. You can, therefore, anticipate disease problems sooner or later in your vegetable garden. By following good cultural practices and taking preventive measures, your chances of garden failure due to disease problems can be reduced.

Avoid using tobacco while working in tobacco mosaic susceptible crops, such as tomato and pepper. Tobacco mosaic virus is carried in tobacco products and is easily transmitted to susceptible vegetables on workers’ hands. Workers should wash their hands thoroughly in soap and water after handling tobacco products and before they work with tobacco mosaic susceptible plants.

Watering: Watering can influence the development and severity of many foliage diseases. Wet foliage is favorable for the development of most diseases. To reduce infections, apply irrigation water to the soil rather than the foliage. If water must be applied to the foliage, then it should be done in late morning or mid-afternoon to allow the foliage to dry before evening. Excess soil moisture can damage vegetable roots, as well as promote root diseases caused by certain fungi. It is best to work in the garden when the foliage is dry to reduce disease spread. Bacterial diseases of tomatoes, beans and other crops are readily spread on hands and clothing of workers when the foliage is wet. Maintaining uniform soil moisture can reduce problems such as blossom end rot of peppers and tomatoes.

Fungicides: Fungicides can be a great help in preventing diseases when properly applied to the plant foliage. Since fungicides are preventive, they should be applied before the disease occurs, or as soon as the first symptoms of disease appear. A spray schedule should be followed that maintains a protective fungicide layer on the foliage and fruit during favorable infection periods.

Crop Rotation: Crop rotation will help prevent the build-up of disease-causing organisms in the soil. Some disease-causing organisms affect one vegetable or group of vegetables, but may not affect another. Several vegetables of the same family, such as squash, cucumbers and cantaloupes, may be affected by the same disease. Therefore, it is not a good practice to grow plants of the same family in rotation.

Sanitation: Sanitation is very important in controlling vegetable diseases. Many disease-causing organisms survive the winter in plant debris, cull fruit or plant stubble left in the garden. Any practice that will eliminate these overwintering sites for fungi, bacteria, viruses and nematodes will reduce the occurrence of disease problems the following year. Removal or plowing-under of crop stubble and trash helps destroy overwintering populations of disease organisms.
Spacing: Air movement through the garden is also important to help dry the foliage, thus reducing the chances of fungal and bacterial infections. Proper plant spacing is very important in vegetable crops. Humid or wet conditions occur if plants are crowded and unable to dry quickly. Blossom blight of okra and squash and fruit rot of strawberries are encouraged by dense foliage. Also, pesticides will not penetrate through this canopy of foliage.

Sunlight: Most garden vegetables require full sunlight for maximum production. Sunlight also hastens drying of foliage.

Insect Control: Insect control can reduce the spread of diseases in the garden. Cucumber beetles can transmit bacterial wilt, flea beetles are a source of Stewart’s wilt of corn and aphids transmit numerous virus diseases. Insects also cause injuries that serve as entry sites for disease organisms.

Vegetables should be checked regularly for insects, with insecticides applied very carefully if needed. Be aware there are some insects that are considered beneficial and should be identified and encouraged. Beware and take care not to harm beneficial honey bees. They are your friend.

Agricultural Market Summary

Cattle Market Trends

Feeder cattle prices were steady to firm which calf prices softened. Fed cattle prices sharp decline and will probably put pressure on feeder cattle prices. Corn prices rose more than 40 cents per bushel which may also put downward pressure on calf and feeder prices. Feeder steers under 600 lbs. $5 to $10 lower; Over 600 lbs. steady to $2 higher, $180.00-$355.00; Feeder heifers under 500 lbs. $3 to $8 lower; Over 500 lbs. steady to $1 lower, $178.00-$305.00; Slaughter cows breakers $2 to $3 lower; Boners $1 to $3 higher, $88.00-$115.00; Slaughter bulls $2 to $4 higher, $131.00-$150.50.

Grain Market Trends


For additional information on these and other topics, contact the UT Extension Office, 925 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087, 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in all programs. Visit the UT/TSU Extension webpage at http://utextension.tennessee.edu/wilson or look for UT & TSU Extension, Wilson County on Facebook.

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