

Five Keys to Finding the Right Garden Space



Your Checklist to Successful Vegetable & Herb Growing

Grow Your Own Vegetables



5 Keys to Finding the RIGHT Place to Grow Vegetables & Herbs

- ☒ 6-8 hours of sunlight or more
- ☒ 55-85° F (13-29°C) or special crops
- ☒ Dedicated space to cultivate soil
- ☒ Garden location suites daily habits
- ☒ 1-2" water / week (heat dependent)

Read more about these 5 keys in the next few pages.

When you find the RIGHT place to grow vegetables and herbs, they will seem to grow all on their own. Your friends and neighbors will admire your harvests and claim that you must have a green thumb.

If you want gardening to be easy, it's truly about working with mother nature and planting crops in an ecosystem that is made for them to thrive.

Follow these 5 keys to finding the RIGHT garden space and your abundant harvests are right around the corner.

1st Key: 6-8 Hours of Sun EACH DAY

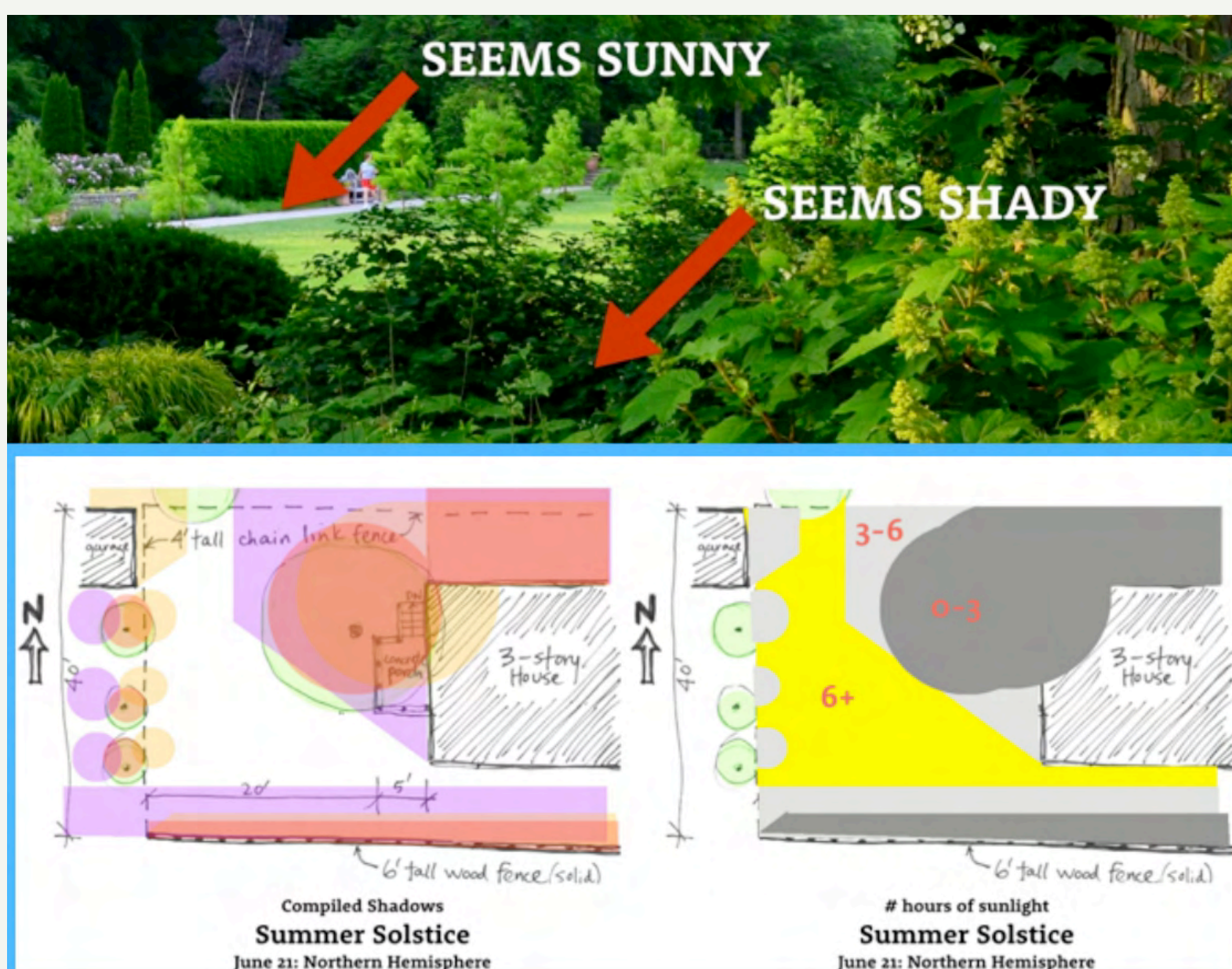
Healthy Plants Photosynthesis

SUNLIGHT + carbon
dioxide = vegetables...

When you're choosing a space to grow vegetables and herbs, it's not enough that a space "seems" sunny. To produce significant amounts of food, your plants need at least 6 hours of sunlight each day.

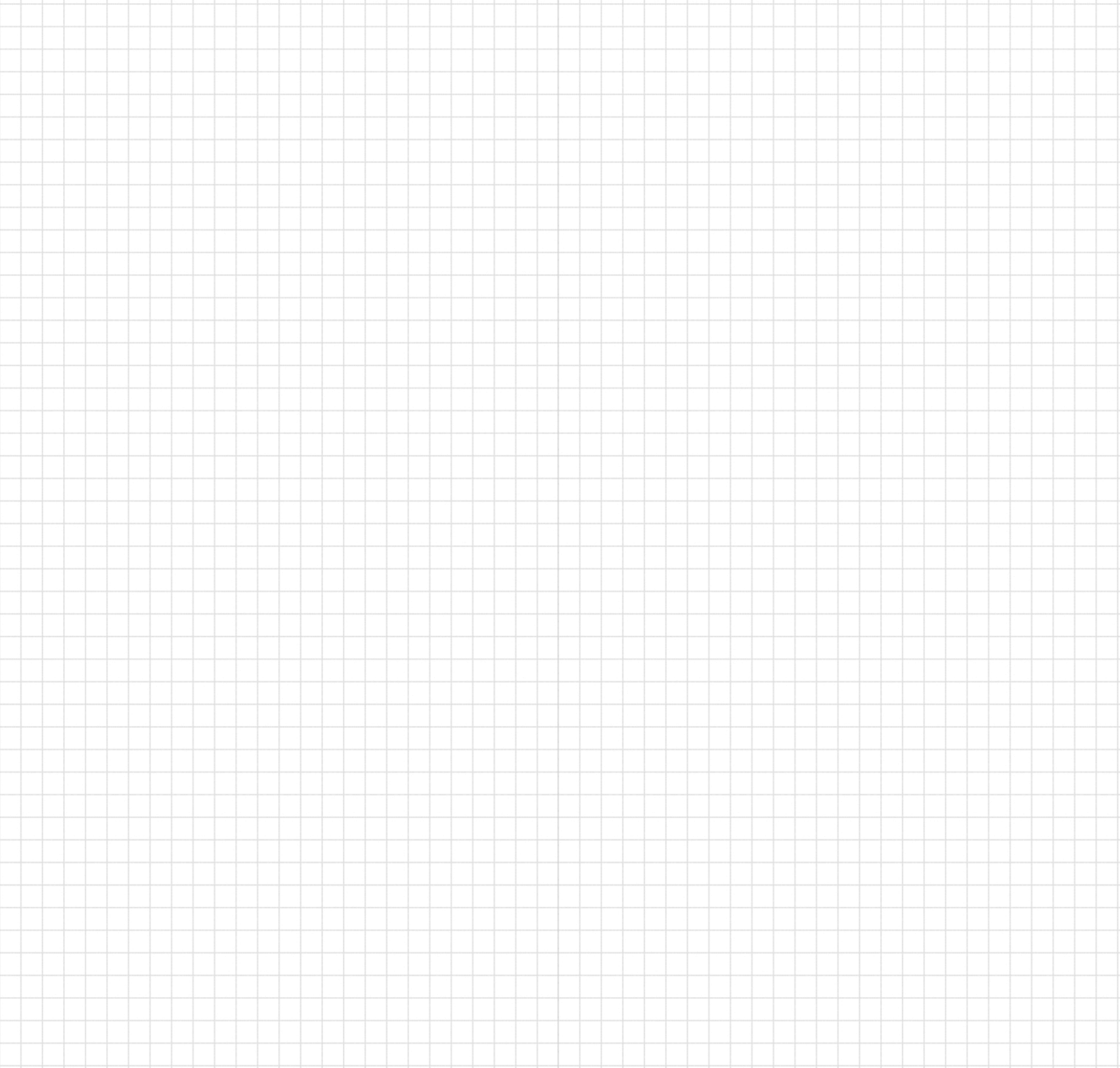
Sunlight is one of two main ingredients to photosynthesis which is the biological process vegetables plants use to grow. If you get less than 6 hours of sunlight each day, you are working AGAINST mother nature. Growing in the shade takes longer and yields smaller plants. Set yourself up for your best harvest and spend your time finding that sunlight!

Don't forget to view the mapping exercise in Video 1 of the Garden Freedom Series so you can find out exactly how much sun you are receiving.



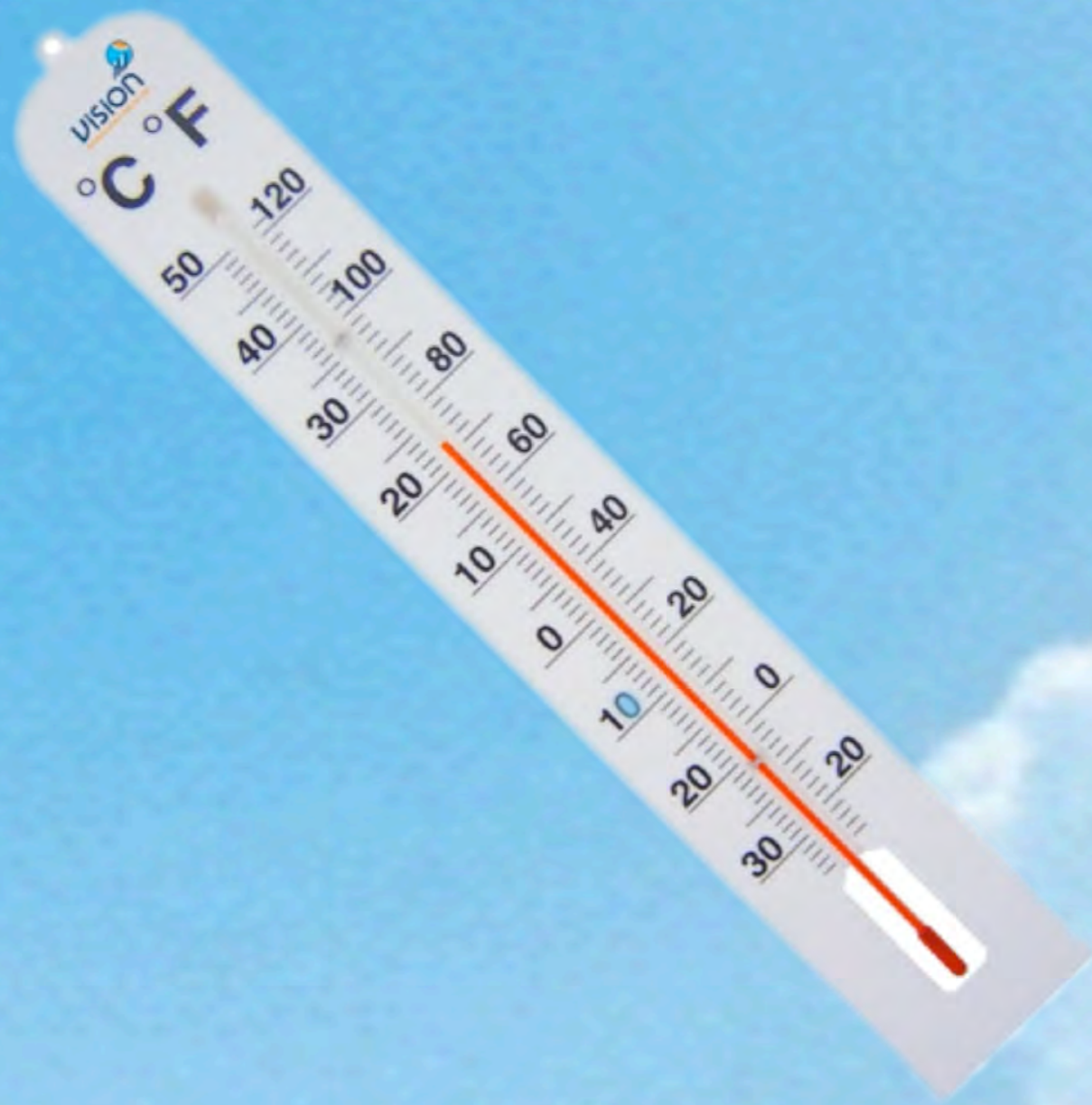
Find the Right Place to Plant Your Garden

Map the Shadows on Your Site



STEP 1: Draw your site to scale.

STEP 2: Color the shadows on your site throughout the day to calculate how many hours of sunlight you receive each day. Your vegetables need 6-8 hours of sunlight to thrive. Watch Video 2 in the Garden Freedom Series for an example of this process.



2nd Key: Your Temperatures DETERMINE Crops

Don't Fight Nature

Most vegetables & herbs
THRIVE at 55-85 °F
(13-29 °C)...



Every vegetable and herb has a temperature sweet spot, where the plant **LOVES** to grow. You'll find yourself saying, "I'm not doing anything, and I swear that plant doubled size overnight

Because most vegetables and herbs thrive at 70°F, can you create an environment that comes as close to possible to that temperature? If temperatures drop a couple times below 50 at night or you have a couple 95 days, all your vegetable crops will still do well. Track your temperatures. If crops are regularly experiencing temperatures outside the 55-85 range, you may want to add a warming blanket (like plastic) or a cooling blanket (like shade cloth). There are many methods that you can use to defy your local temps and extend your growing season. Or choose crops and varieties better suited to your area.



3rd Key: Mark Out Your Growing Space

Build Soil for Long Term Success

Healthy Plants Start with Healthy Soil...



If you're going to invest in one resource to locate your garden space, invest in cultivating great soil. A dedicated space helps you do just that.

If you want nourishing vegetables and herbs filled with nutrients, you want healthy soil full of biology. All the little soil critters feed nutrients to our plants so our plants can pass those nutrients on to us. Mark off your garden area and treat it like gold. Raised planting beds work well with or without lumber.

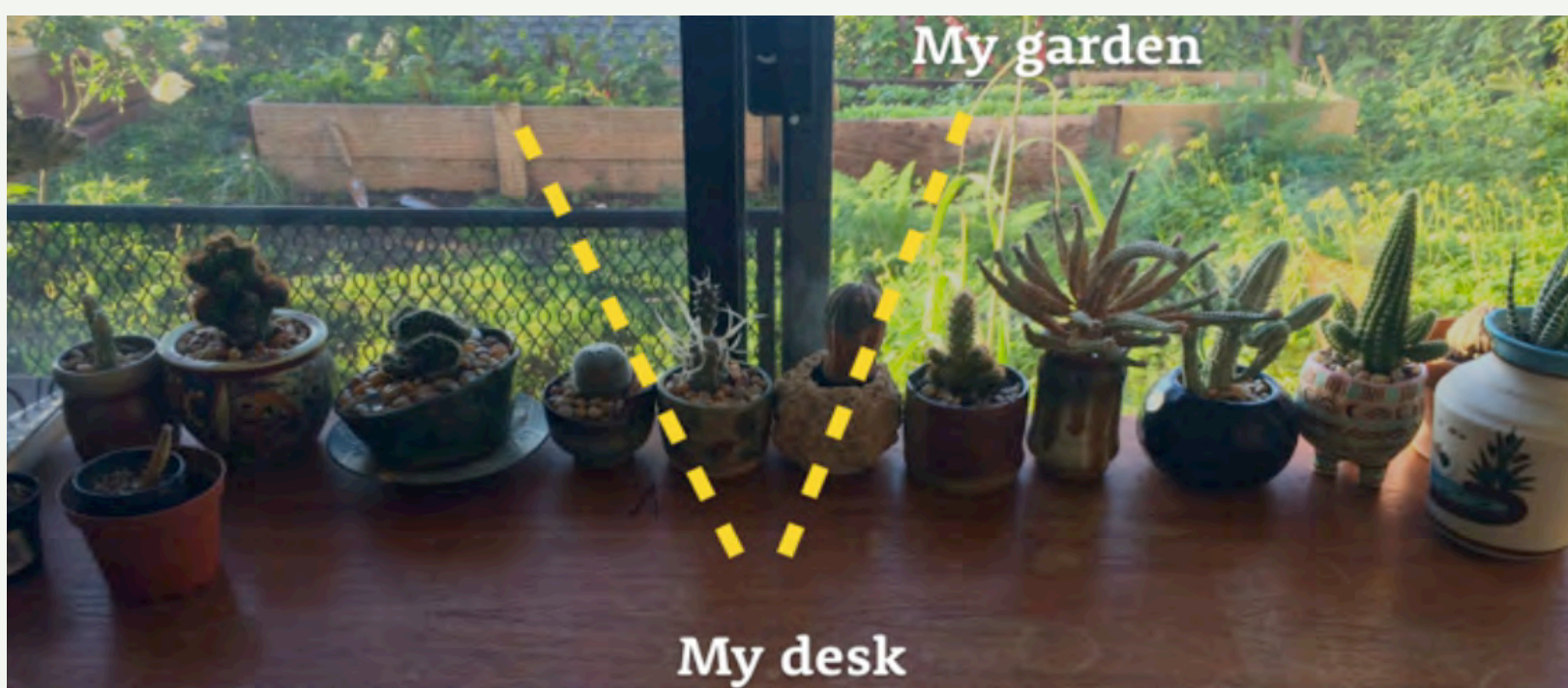
And if you're growing in flat ground, mark off the area with string so no one steps on your precious soil. If you grow in containers, make sure you refresh your potting mix each year to keep the nutrients flowing. Growing vegetables in a small dedicated area will conserve your time and resources, like water.



4th Key: Put Plants in Your Daily Path

Make it a LIFESTYLE

The BEST Fertilizer is a Gardener's Gaze...



Starting a garden is like adding a pet to your family. If you don't change your habits to include your garden on a daily basis, you will neglect your plants and they might die.

You don't need to DO much each day in a vegetable and herb garden... If you're gardening smart, you're only spending less than an hour each week doing any "work". But one of the keys to a successful garden is noticing what is happening in the garden on a daily basis.

Can you walk by the garden on your way to your car? Can you position the garden so you can see it out your window daily.

Plants like the company and respond well to a little daily praise. Plus you'll notice when your plants have received enough rain and when they need extra water.



5th Key: Vegetable & Herbs Need Water

Water Moves Nutrients Through Plants

Water is LIFE & Plants Need Hydration...

This key gives new growers the most stress. Too little water and plants die, too much water and nutrients wash away. 1-2" (2.5-5cm) per week is just right for most vegetables and herbs.

If you have to haul water to your garden every day, you won't have a garden for long. There are many options to keep your planting beds hydrated. You may choose to build your planting beds as hugelkultur, berms/swales on contour, or self-wicking beds that retain a lot of moisture.

You may collect rain in barrels and spray on your crops with a hose. You may invest in a drip irrigation system or ollas that automatically drip precious water right near the roots of the plants. Set your planting beds up near your water source to make it easy to hydrate those crops. The more you can automate your watering, the less daily gardening you will have to do.



Guidelines:

1" water / wk for 60 F (16 C)

1.5" water / wk for 75 F (24 C)

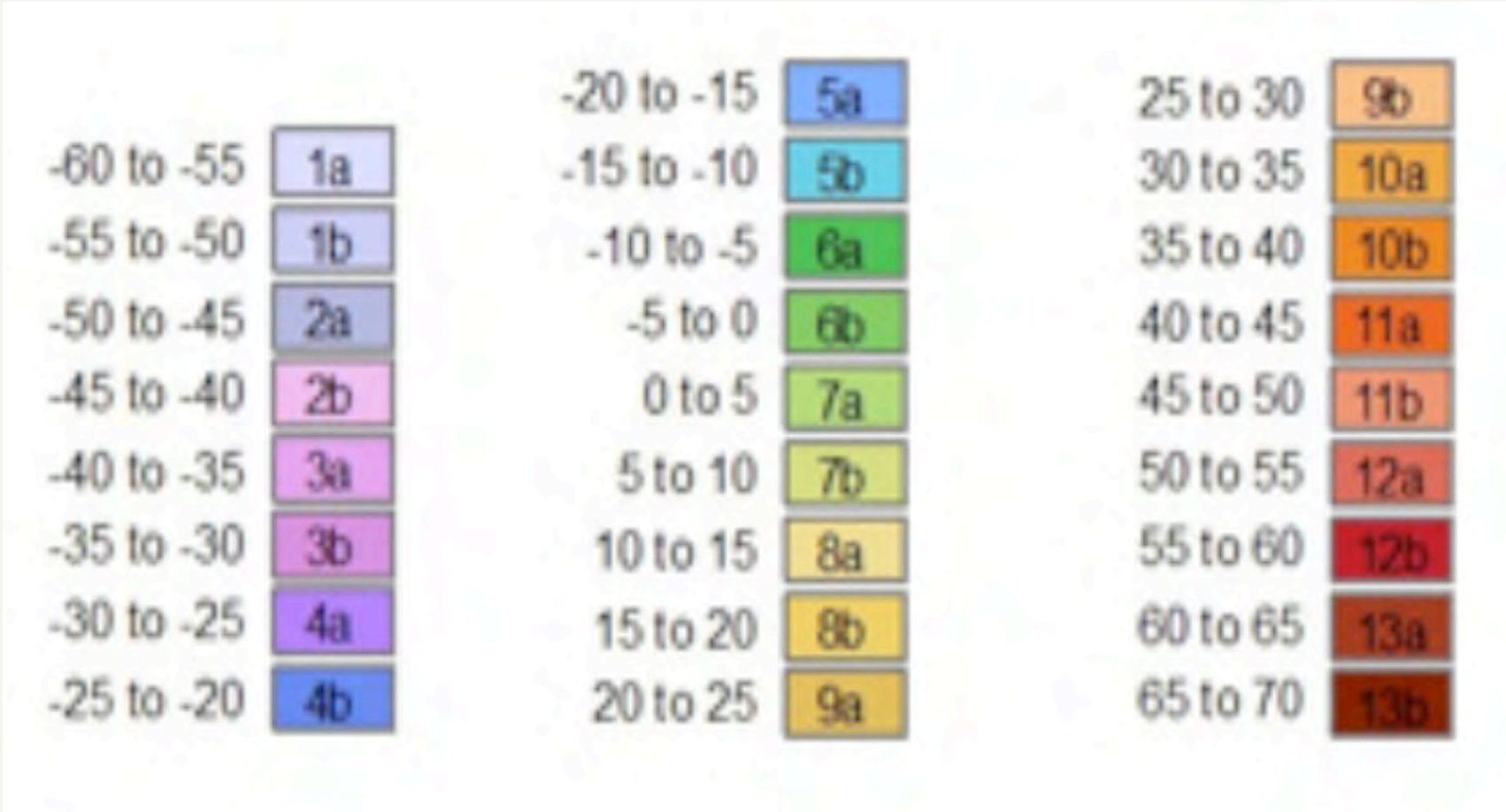
2" water / wk for 80 F + (27 C+)



What are
Growing
Zones and
Why Are They
Important?

Additional Notes: HEAT Data and Understanding Growing Zones

While we all have soil, air, water, & sun, the combination of those elements is unique to your location. In the United States, Growing Zones were developed as a way to help you understand what cultivated plants will most likely thrive in your region, and each vegetable has its own low temperature limit. (We'll look at other classification systems from around the world in the coming pages.)

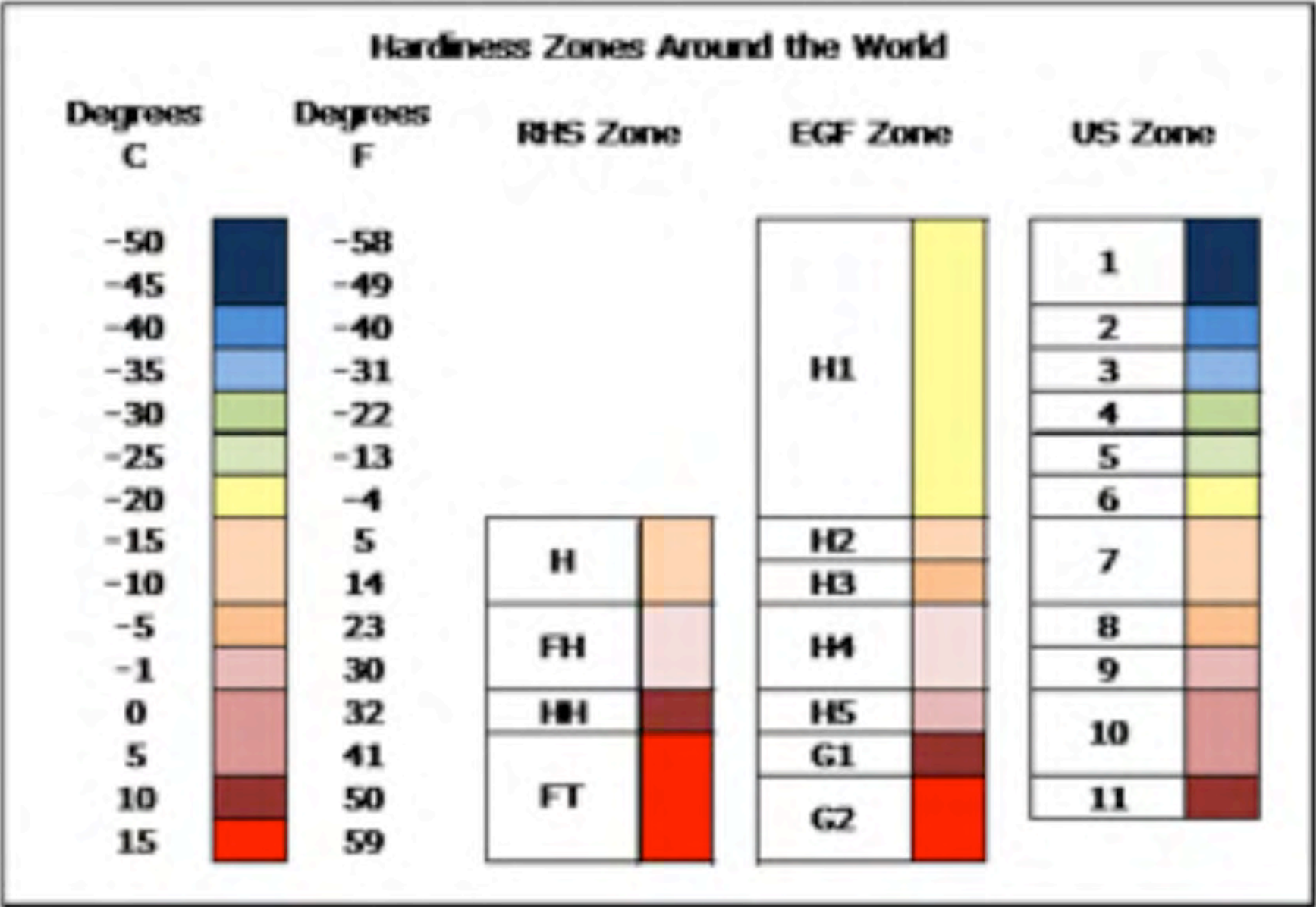


Average Minimum Temperatures (in Fahrenheit)

While coldest winter air temperature is an important factor to know whether a plant will survive or not, there are other factors that you'll want to consider as well. Heat, for example, can also kill your plants.

In the United States, you can refer to the USDA Hardiness Zone Map for your Growing Zone. That zone tells you what plants might survive the winter in your area. Each zone represents a different average minimum winter temperature. [Visit the interactive map here](#) where you can zoom in to your local area.

You can see the USDA Hardiness Zone Map is broken up into 26 growing zones, each in increments of 5°F. See left for a close up of those growing zones for reference.

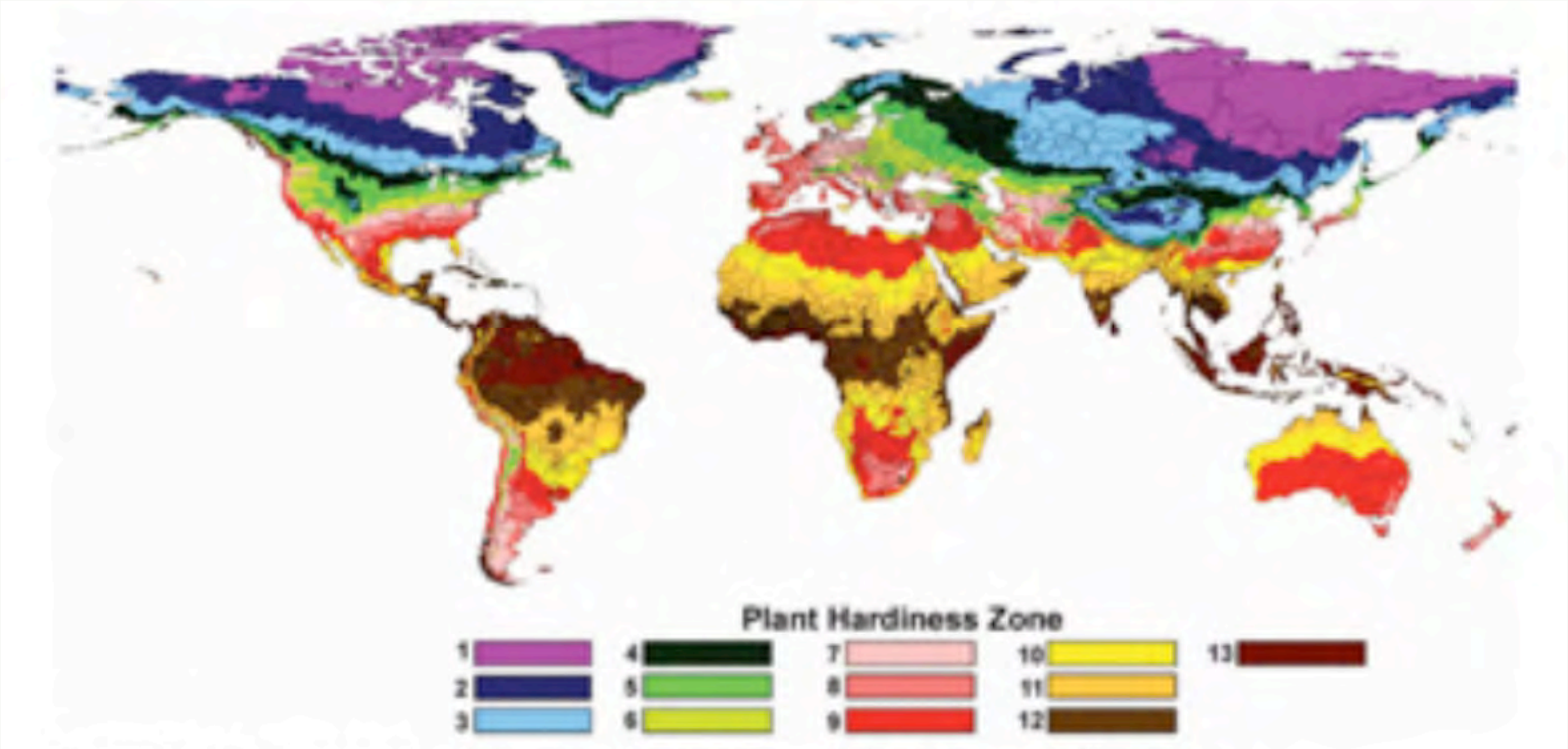


Growing Zones Around the Globe

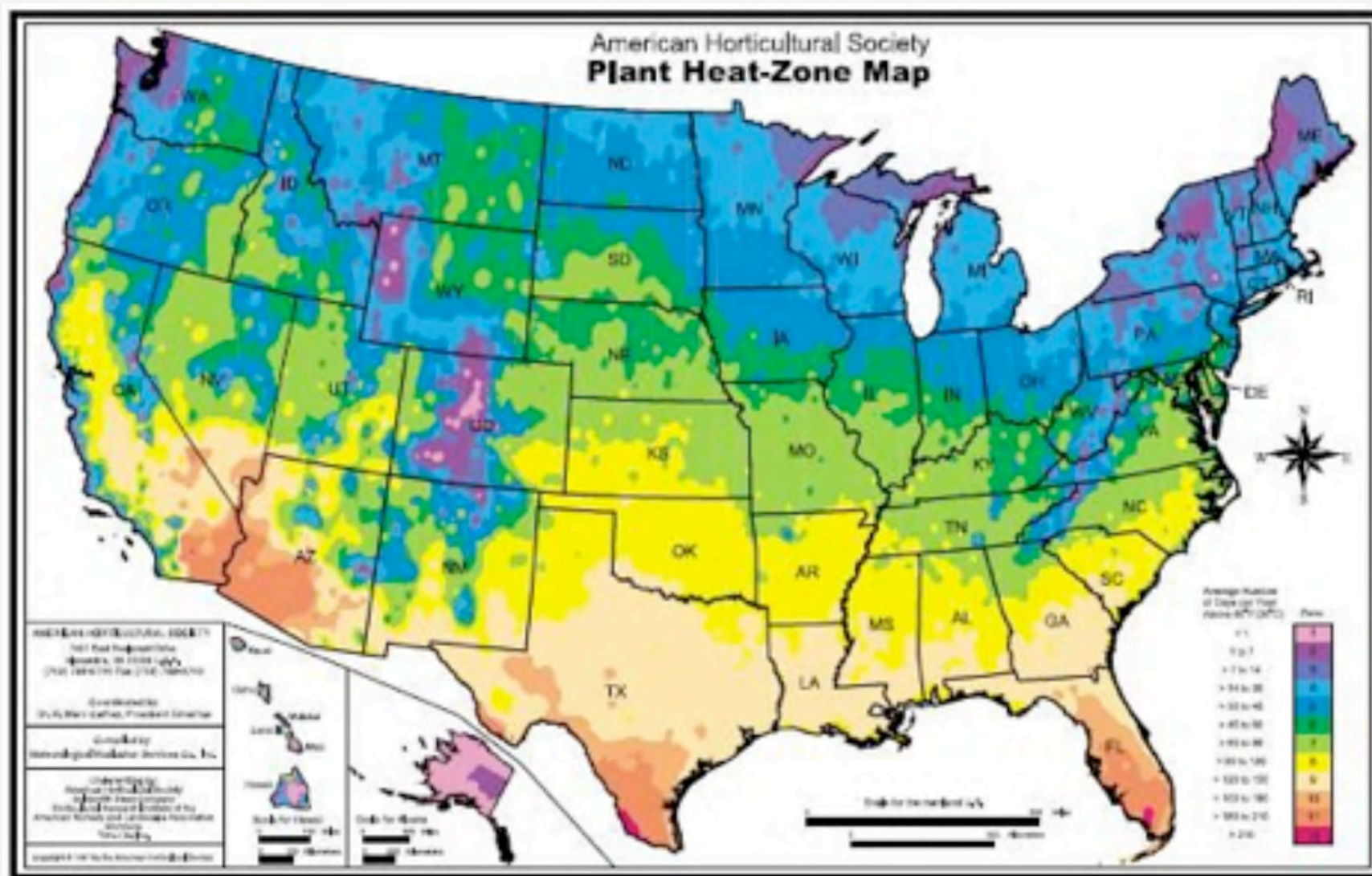
Not all countries and continents have their climate data organized the same way for growers, so it can be hard to find sometimes.

While Europe has the EGF Zones (you can compare them to USDA zones below), many places don't use Growing Zones as there are other factors involved when growing food.

Additional Notes: HEAT Data and Understanding Growing Zones



While there is this image online of the USDA zones applied to the rest of the globe, it is just a rough guide. Unfortunately, you can't zoom in for details. [Visit this map.](#)



NOTE: Two places may be in the same Hardiness Growing Zone with an average of 30°F low temperature, but one might have 250 days per year above 86°F and the other might have only 50 days above that temp. This makes them radically different growing spaces. Mother nature loves to create diversity!

Additional Notes: HEAT Data and Understanding Growing Zones



5 Other Factors to Consider Beyond Air Temps!

While air temps are helpful to know for growing vegetables, you CAN affect those temperatures to create more favorable growing conditions. You can create microclimates that are warmer or cooler than your average temps. The following pages provide 5 examples:

Why is Heat Data Important?

We've established that planting by growing zone is no guarantee, because the data is only based on average LOW temperatures. But what if you get a heat wave? Heat damage can be just as threatening to your plants as freezing temps. Some signs: flower buds wither, leaves droop, leaves brown, roots cease to grow, and more susceptibility to pests and disease.

Heat can affect the long term growth of plants even if you don't see these signs. Above 86°F (30°C), most vegetable plants stop functioning properly and you may see all or some of the signs listed above. Find your local climate data for average daily high temps. In the US, we are fortunate to have The American Horticultural Society Heat Zone Map. It shows the average number of days above 86°F. [Visit this map online.](#)

FIRST A QUICK LESSON IN HEAT: THE EARTH IS A BATTERY

To understand why air temperatures alone may not be the most reliable data, it's helpful to think of the earth like a giant battery.

During the daylight hours, the sun warms up the earth's surface, heating the soil: the sun is charging up the battery so to speak. When the sun goes down, the earth starts to cool again and loses its charge. So while the air temperature may be 40°F, it's possible the ground may be 50°F or warmer.

5 Aspects to Help you Create Microclimates



1 NUMBER OF HOURS OF SUNLIGHT EACH DAY AFFECTS YIELD

If the plant doesn't see the sun, it can't photosynthesize, and if it sees the sun 24 hours straight for weeks, you're in for some large vegetables! For example, Northern Alaska, won't see the sun for 67 days in the winter, but they enjoy over 80 days of uninterrupted daylight during the summer! (Yes, this is a real veggie!)

This particular factor is the most challenging to adjust. You are stuck with the number of hours of sunlight you receive unless you want to add grow lamps (or move to Alaska).



2 EXPOSING SOIL CREATES LARGER TEMP SWINGS

Besides the mineral composition, oxygen, water and organic matter in the soil which all contribute to whether or not vegetables thrive... bare soils reflect more light & heat than those covered by plants or mulch & heats up the air in the garden.

You can cover the soil with mulch to keep the temperatures cooler during the day and warmer during the night, reducing large temperature swings.

5 Aspects to Help you Create Microclimates



3 BODIES OF WATER CAN RAISE AIR & EARTH TEMPS

Water evaporates & this moisture captures heat from the sun, making the air around a pond warmer than areas that are further away.

Water as snow, can insulate the ground: temperature beneath the snow can be up to 20°F (11°C) warmer than the air temperature. That's 4 whole USDA Growing Zones warmer!



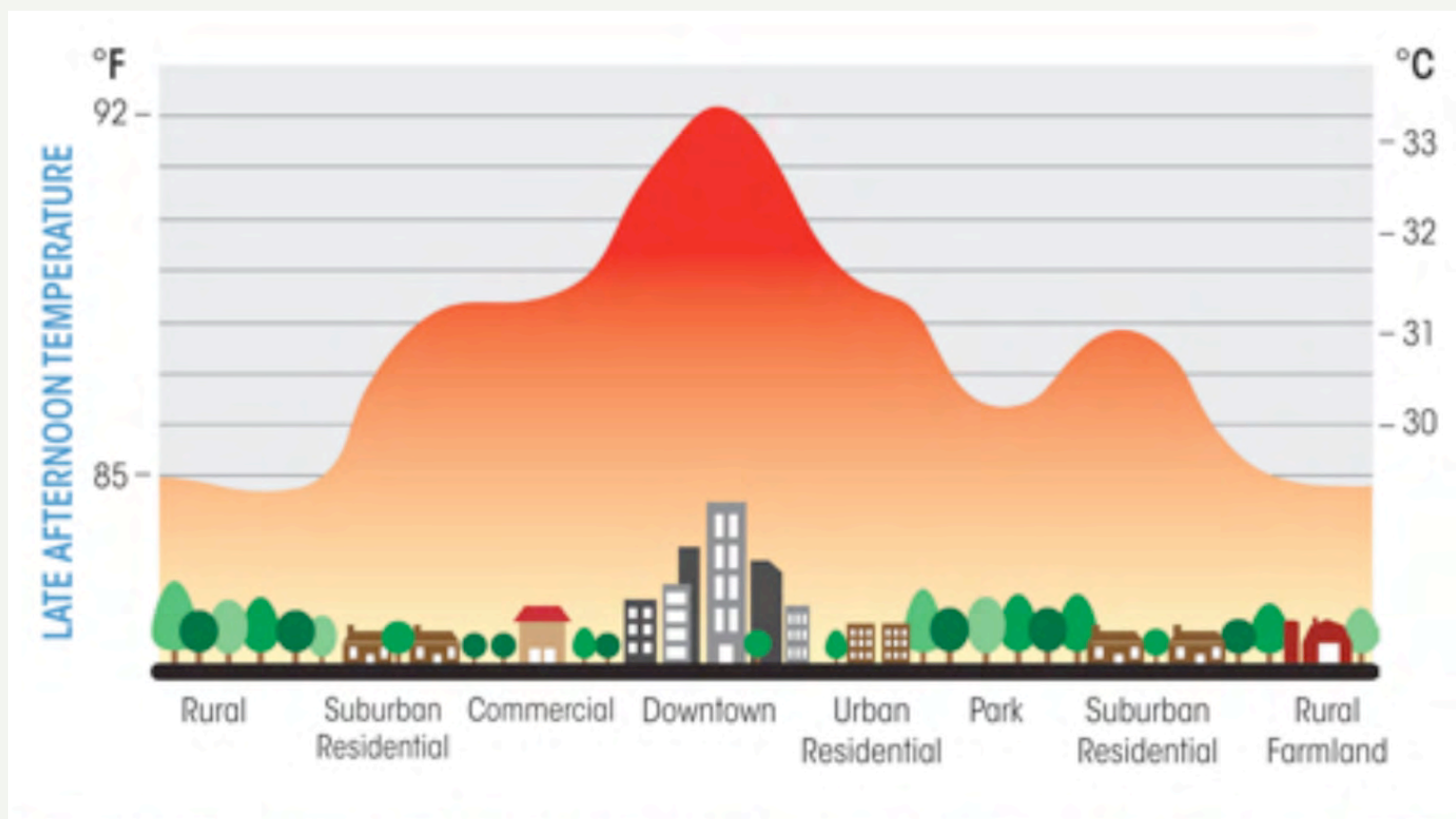
4 TOPOGRAPHY SEPARATES COLD & HOT AIR

Cool air falls while hot air rises. Even small dips and indentations in topography can form collection points for cold air and as a result sometimes form frost pockets.

Temps at the top of a slope can be warmer than at the bottom of the hill. Plant warmer temp crops at the top of hills and cooler weather crops at the bottom.



5 Aspects to Help you Create Microclimates



5 **HARD SURFACES ABSORB & REFLECT HEAT**

If you are in the city near a lot of paved surfaces, temperatures can be 5-10°F (3-5°C) warmer than in an area with a lot of vegetation.

You can use this to your advantage and protect crops that like warmer climates with a wall of rocks that can collect heat during the day and reflect it back to the plant at night.

Where Do You Go From Here?

Now that you have gained more insight on your climate, there's only one thing left to do... **APPLY IT.** The only thing to do now is to take action. What are your climatic circumstances? What unique climate challenges do you experience? If you're new to growing food, what climate conditions do you think you might encounter?

How might you use the abundance of resources nature has to offer and the information in this guide to create microclimates and increase the health of your garden?

Make your plans and list of action steps. If you start to feel overwhelmed, break your tasks up into smaller tasks. And if you need help or have questions, check out our garden membership program, Harvest Club where you can get ongoing personal garden support so you can keep moving forward on your fresh food goals!

If you're not yet in Harvest Club, you can [gain access to the resources, personal garden support & community of fresh foodies here.](#)



Take Your Garden to the Next Level

It's our mission to help support new growers all over the globe create successful vegetable and herb gardens for a happier, healthier you and a greener planet. It's our passion to remove any obstacles standing in your way so you have the opportunity to harvest organic, nutrient dense food for a lifetime of health and wellness.

Do you want to grow delicious, nutrient-rich, organic vegetables and herbs at a fraction of the price of store bought food, but lack the know-how, time, and budget to bring your garden vision to life?

Regardless of the size of your garden space... you've come to the right place. Our self-paced step-by-step online programs are here to guide you from garden site and design all the way to harvest.

Whether you're just getting started planting your first seeds, in the process of honing your garden skills, or ready to start doubling your vegetable and herb harvests, Grow Your Own Vegetables can help! With done for you templates and step-by-step guides with easy explanations, you'll get all the tips and tricks you need so you can get on the fast track to garden success!

Here are a few of our most popular programs:



Grow Your Own Vegetables The single most comprehensive online course that takes the mystery out of successful vegetable and herb gardens. Discover how to apply this garden system to your local conditions according to your Garden Personality. Do LESS garden work and get MORE fresh, delicious, organic vegetables and herbs on your table. [Learn more & get started now](https://growyourownvegetables.org/grov/) <https://growyourownvegetables.org/grov/>



Crop Planning: Maximize harvests & simplify your garden With some gardening experience under your belt, you'll start to wonder how to get the most out of your garden. A crop plan is the next level tool to plan your entire growing season and pack in those plants into every nook and cranny. Want a short cut? Grab these templates and adapt them to your local conditions. [Learn more & get started now](https://growyourownvegetables.org/cropplan/) <https://growyourownvegetables.org/cropplan/>



Preserve & Store the Vegetable & Herb Harvest Enjoy every last morsel of seasonal produce... whether it's from your own garden or from the farmers market. Preserved food tastes like a ray of summer sun even on the coldest winter nights. No vegetables left behind! Follow this 7-Step Food Preservation System to cook and preserve everything. [Learn more & get started now](https://growyourownvegetables.org/preserveharvest/) <https://growyourownvegetables.org/preserveharvest/>



Grow \$400 of Vegetables & Herbs in 40 Days Get some fresh, homegrown greens on your dinner table... and FAST! Grow indoors or outdoors. Follow the step-by-step videos and see how much food YOU can bring to your table while spending under an hour each week. [Learn more & get started now](https://growyourownvegetables.org/400in40/) <https://growyourownvegetables.org/400in40/>

Take Your Garden to the Next Level

From The Grow Your Own Vegetables Community:

*"I grew hundreds of pounds of produce. **Your class has been extremely helpful to me, an amazing value for the money.** I honestly have not had this much progress planning an annual garden before this class, and I can't thank you enough for your clarity, support, and optimism!!!" Lenna*

*"Your class was transformational! **I am growing so much more vegetables and have a plan of action.**" – Laura*

I have been so impressed with just how much you guys do for us. Thank you, thank you. I will reach out with any questions. - Barbara H.

*"The biggest impact for me is **having a better sense of confidence that I can grow organic produce successfully**, and also the knowledge that I have a safety net if I have questions or problems in the future as an alumni who still has access to question/answer sessions. At this point, **I feel it was definitely money well spent.**" – Michele*

*"One of my goals for taking the course was to demystify the start up process. **I genuinely feel I have everything I need to start my garden and harvest an endless supply of food.**" Kris*

*"Now I understand why yields were poor in the past: I now know how to find the best space to grow veggies, what to not bother with, and what's easiest for us. It's a far more rewarding experience now! **Saving agony is a highly valuable outcome for us. Money well worth spending!**" – Kei*

*"Your course format has been outstanding. **The visual aids really helped me understand and use the information.**" – Judy*

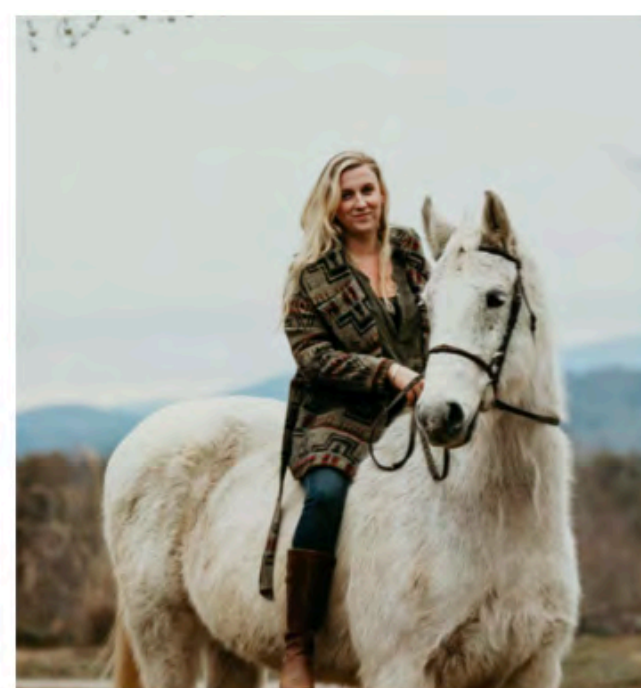
Meet our Dedicated Team



Stacey Murphy
Master Gardener Trainer



Denise Beins
Chief Operations



Lauren Groves
Tech Support



Crystal Meserole
Garden Support

Lauren , Thank you so much for your replies . Your replies are exactly what I need . Thank you 🙏 I will always support your group and you can count on my involvement with your incredible journey. You and Crystal are **AWSOME** customer supports and great human beings . I am grateful and appreciate all your help ! Have a great Labor Day weekend !! - LISA L.

Hi Crystal! Thank you so much for your lovely note. It really made me feel valued to have all my concerns addressed. - Jill