



Planting Your Garden

Half the fun of gardening is rooting around in your garden, getting your hands dirty and generally using your garden as an excuse to act like a child again. Here's how to have fun, and be successful too!

1. Choose Your Day Wisely

Transplanting from a pot into your garden is stressful on plants. Avoid hot, sunny days. Much better to transplant on a cool, overcast day. If you can't choose your day, do your transplanting in the cool of morning or evening. At all costs, don't let the exposed root ball of your plant dry out before you put it in the ground.

2. Choose Your Plants and Spots Wisely

Most garden plants need a half day or more of good sun to be happy, though a few need shade or dappled sun or cannot take direct sun in the heat of the day. Most warm season vegetables really prefer a full day of sun. Read the signs on our plants and the tags in the pots for the needs of specific plants.

3. Prepare Your Soil

Use a shovel (or a tiller) to loosen up your soil and mix in some organic matter. A good soil amendment (like Harvest Supreme) will have a coarse enough texture to keep your soil loose after you mix it in, and enough organic matter to help build humus in your soil. It is much better to improve your entire garden bed than just the spots where you will drop individual plants, because root systems want to grow and spread out. You want your soil loose enough that water will drain from it, because roots need air as much as they need water.

4. Dig the Holes

Dig a hole for each plant, a little bigger than the pot it comes in. Then mix in a little organic fertilizer at the bottom of each hole. Check the directions on the bag for the correct amount of fertilizer. If you have not prepared and amended your entire garden bed as described above, then make your holes at least twice the size of the pot to give the roots enough loose soil to grow into.

5. Remove Plants From Pots

Carefully remove plants from the pots they came in. Don't just pull on the main stem – you are likely to damage it. The best way is to hold the pot upside down with your hand over the soil surface, and the main stem sticking out between your fingers. Then squeeze the bottom and sides of the pot to loosen the root ball, and let it fall out into your hand. **IMPORTANT:** Do this at the last second before planting, as you plant each pot, otherwise the exposed roots will dry out.

6. Loosen Up the Roots

If the plant has grown large enough in the pot then the roots will have started to curl around the perimeter inside, and you'll see them on the outside of the root ball when you take it out of the pot. If you see this then pull on the roots a bit to loosen them up. You can also grab the root ball with your hands and pull it apart a little bit, just enough to loosen it up. This will encourage the roots to grow out into the soil you have so carefully prepared.

7. Plant the Root Ball

Fill the bottom of the hole you dug with enough tamped down soil that when you drop in the root ball, the top of the root ball is level with the surrounding soil surface. Then fill in around the root ball with more soil, pressing the loose soil firmly but gently into place with your fingers and hands. If you leave the soil too loose you will end up with a ditch around your plant as the soil settles, so use enough soil and be firm when pressing it into place.

8. Water Everything In

Now take a hose or watering can and "mud it in". You want to literally turn the soil around the plant into mud. Not only does this give the plant some moisture, it also settles the soil and shows if you've filled in enough around the root ball.

9. Monitor Carefully For Thirst

The root system on your fresh transplant needs time to recover from the physical abuse of being transplanted. This generally takes a week or two depending on size, during which time you must be more careful than usual to make sure the soil is not allowed to dry out too much. Stick a finger in the soil every day, and make sure it has not dried out below the surface. If the weather is warm (not hot), you will generally have to water fresh transplants every day. Once the plant starts growing you will know the root system has healed.

10. Fertilize Every Six Weeks

Apply an organic fertilizer as a top dressing every six weeks, out to the above ground perimeter of the foliage, and scratch it into the soil surface. You'll know you've neglected fertilizer if the plant starts to turn pale in color.