



# How to Start a Vegetable Garden

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## Amending the soil

Providing good soil structure is essential to growing a successful vegetable garden. At the University of Hawai'i Urban Garden Center in Pearl City, we've amended a newly planted vegetable garden with good compost (not mulch), cured chicken manure, and bonemeal. All of these products can be purchased from your local garden center. A general rule for compost is to incorporate 4 inches to a depth of 6–8 inches into the soil. A general rule for chicken manure is to incorporate one heaping garden shovel of manure per vegetable plant. Amendments should be incorporated at least one week prior to planting.

The pH of your garden soil will determine the plants' ability to take up nutrients (i.e., the fertilizer added to the garden). Soil pH for vegetables should be 6.0–7.0. If the pH is too high or too low, nutrients will not be available to the plants, no matter how much fertilizer you add. Test your soil pH before you plant!

## Choosing vegetables

Your local garden center carries vegetable plants and vegetable seeds to purchase. The University of Hawaii recommends choosing vegetables that are disease resistant. Visit this website to see a list of seeds available from the CTAHR Seed Lab: <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/seed>.

## Preventing insects and diseases

Healthy plants are able to sustain damage from pests and diseases better than a plant experiencing water or nutrient stress.

Applying a layer of mulch to the newly planted vegetable garden will help to retain moisture and regulate temperature extremes, and it will continue to condition the soil, resulting in a healthier garden. A 3-inch layer of mulch is used for most conditions in Hawai'i.

A consistent watering schedule is imperative for a healthy garden. A drip line that easily attaches to your water outlet and which can be placed at the base of the plants is the best choice when watering vegetable gardens. Water that stands on the surface of plant leaves as a result of using overhead sprinklers or hand watering makes plants more susceptible to disease and fungus growth. Water should be applied as early in the morning as possible.

Organic fertilizers are available in the form of chicken or steer manure and bonemeal. Synthetic fertilizers are also available. Follow the directions on the package for application instructions. For specific fertilizer requirements, see the UH publications on Home Garden Vegetables at <http://www.ctahr.hawaii.edu/freepubs>.

## For gardening in containers

Purchase "potting soil" from your local garden center to grow vegetables in containers. Potting soil is usually a mixture of peat moss and perlite. Slow-release fertilizers are best for containers and are available at garden centers. Or, cured chicken manure can be used, by adding 3 teaspoons per 8-inch container.