HOMEGROWN MISSISSAUGA

OUTDOOR GARDENING GUIDE

ecosource
Growing a Green Community

MISSISSAUGA

Learn how to grow fresh food in your outdoor garden with this step-by-step guide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We acknowledge the lands which constitute the present-day City of Mississauga, and on which we cultivate relationships, grow, and share the harvest, and plant and steward seeds, as part of the Treaty Lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Traditional Territory and Treaty lands of the Haudenosaunee, and the Traditional Territory of the Anishinaabe, Huron-Wendat First Nation and Wyandot First Nation. We recognize these peoples and their ancestors as peoples who inhabited and stewarded these lands since time immemorial. The City of Mississauga is home to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

Indigenous food traditions, past and present, are integral to, and intimately connected with, the land. The City of Mississauga and Ecosource recognize and respect the traditions and stewardship of Indigenous Peoples. We are committed to continuing to learn, engage, and participate in the process of truth and reconciliation.

This guide was developed in partnership between the City of Mississauga and Ecosource. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the community partners and gardeners whose knowledge informed the development of this resource.

MISSISSAUGA

ecosource
Growing a Green Community

WHY GROW A FOOD GARDEN?

Growing your own food can be a very rewarding experience. It not only helps you access fresh, healthy foods that meet your dietary and cultural needs, it also keeps you active, reduces stress, and connects you to nature. When you grow food in a sustainable way, you also help the environment by supporting pollinators, improving soil quality, and conserving water. Whatever your motivation for starting a food garden outdoors, this guide will walk you through the basics from spring to fall, including selecting your site, choosing your plants, harvesting your vegetables, and preparing your garden for winter.

GARDENING & CLIMATE ACTION

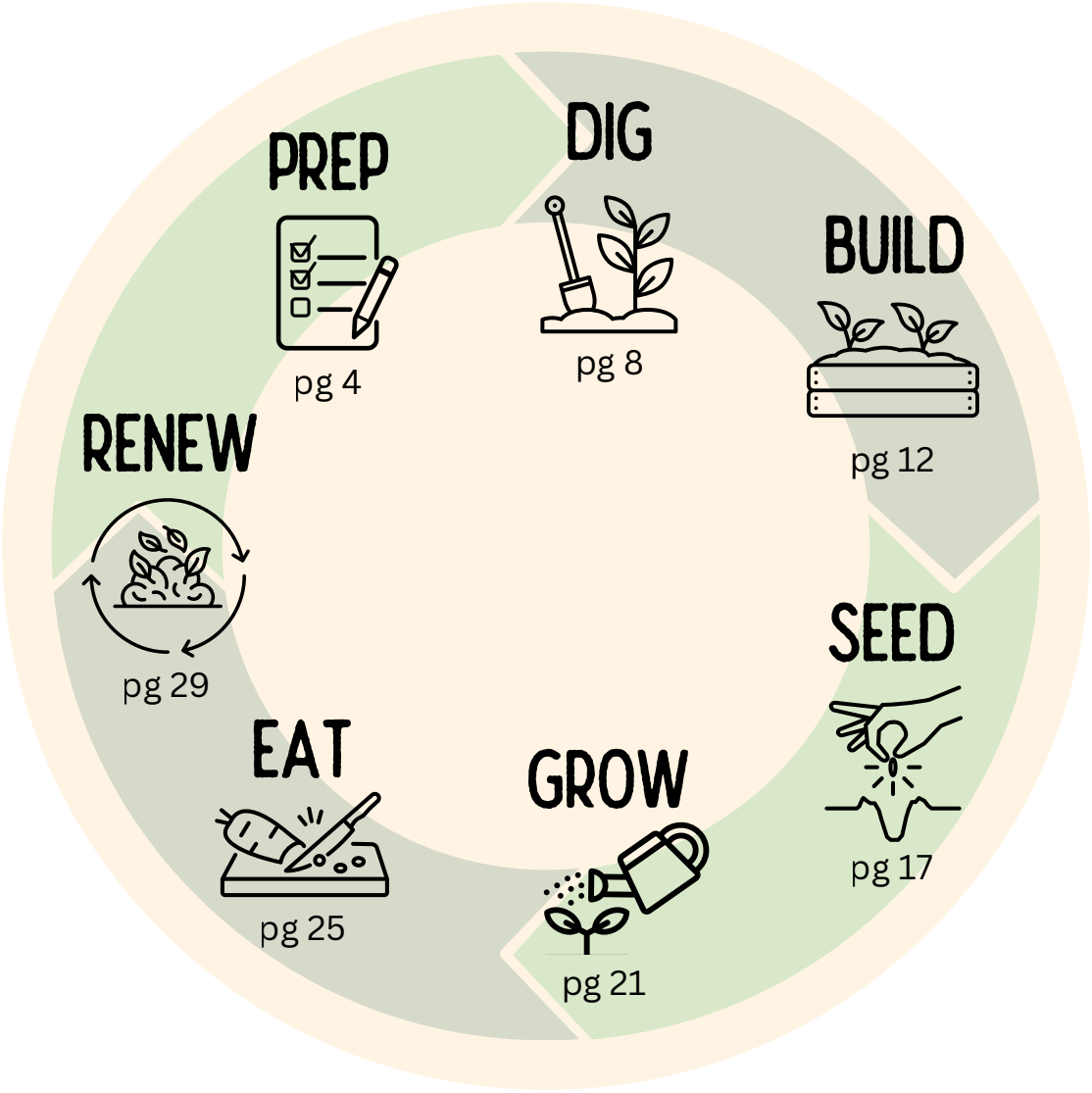
The City of Mississauga's Urban Agriculture Strategy recognizes that food gardening can enhance community and ecological health. Urban agriculture supports climate action by reducing food miles and related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It can also support climate change adaptation by cooling our neighbourhoods, improving air quality, absorbing rain where it falls, increasing biodiversity, and promoting community resilience.

Given these benefits, the City of Mississauga is committed to supporting residents in developing skills to grow and harvest food.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide provides basic information on how to start a food garden outdoors at home. The content is divided into seven chapters that guide you through a full gardening season from garden preparation to garden closing. The chapters include practical advice about what to consider at each garden stage along with words of wisdom from Mississauga gardeners. A glossary at the end provides a quick reference for the key gardening terms underlined throughout.

Accessibility features have been integrated into the guide, including accessible fonts, contrast, and alt text. To further support access, the guide is available for download in an alternative text-only format.



PREP

PLAN FOR YOUR GARDEN

INTRO

Before you start gardening, it's important to be prepared. Understanding what materials you'll need, how to stay safe, how to manage your budget, and some gardening basics will give you a strong start. In this chapter, we'll cover each of these essentials to help you make the most of your gardening experience.

WHAT MATERIALS DO I NEED TO START GARDENING?

BASICS

- garden gloves
- hand tools (trowel, cultivator)
- watering can
- shears or scissors
- seeds and/or seedlings*
- soil & compost*
- pots or planters*

FOR BIGGER SPACES (> 40 SQ FT)

- large tools (shovel, fork, rake)
- hose
- wheelbarrow

HOW DO I BUDGET FOR MY GARDEN?

Gardening does not have to be expensive! To get started, we recommend getting the basic tools above (which can be purchased or borrowed). Note that items marked with a star (*) can be easily sourced for little to no cost. Consider borrowing seeds from a Mississauga Seed Library and repurposing recycled containers as pots. With these cost-effective tips, you can start a small garden (<40 sq ft) for under $100, and over time, you can expand and customize it to suit both your needs and budget.

GARDEN TIPS

For increased accessibility while gardening, there are ergonomic versions of many garden tools available. You may also want to purchase garden kneelers or knee pads to make bending easier. Multi-purpose pickers/grabbers or extendable watering wands can also help increase mobility.

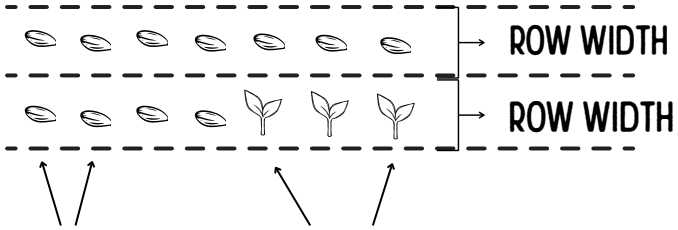
HEALTH & SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

- Wear protective gear: hat, sunscreen, lightweight clothing, insect repellent, gloves, and closed-toe shoes
- Learn about tick safety and do a tick check after gardening
- Avoid peak heat hours, drink lots of water and take frequent breaks
- Store tools safely to prevent trips and falls
- Avoid long repetitive tasks, stretch often and lift with your legs, not your back
- If planting in-ground, test your soil to make sure it's safe from contaminants. If you're unsure about the quality of your soil, plant in a container with a barrier at the bottom.

You can send a sample to a local lab. To find one, use these key words in an internet search: "environmental analytical laboratory Mississauga". Ensure the lab is accredited by the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) or the Canadian Association for Laboratory Accreditation (CALA)

HOW DO I READ A SEED PACKET?

The back of your seed packet contains key growing information. Here's an explanation of the most common terms:



SEED SPACING

how far apart to plant your seeds

PLANTING DEPTH

how deep to place seeds into soil

DAYS TO HARVEST

of days after planting the seed that it will be ready to eat

THIN TO

once your seeds start to grow, remove ones that are closer together than this distance

SOW BY

try to use seeds by this date; afterwards fewer seeds may sprout

GARDEN TIPS

Seed packets are good guides, but you don't have to measure things out exactly! For small seeds, plant them close together and if they all start to grow, remove the extras. Think about how big your plant will be when it's fully grown, and make sure there's enough space around each one.

WORDS OF WISDOM

“March Break is when my gardening season kicks off! I bring out my grow lights and gather recycled salad boxes, mushroom containers, big juice jugs, and saved-up old pots to use as seed trays and mini greenhouses. I save heirloom seeds from last year’s herbs, flowers, and veggies so I can keep the cycle going year after year. A quick check of the seed packet and planting calendar helps me time it right. Chilli peppers, sweet peppers, herbs, and leafy greens like kale, collards, and Swiss chard always go in first for me. I also love using the Mississauga Seed Library—it’s a great way to share and discover seeds tied to cultural traditions and help others start their own gardening journey.”

- Anjali Deshpande

DIG

PREPARE YOUR GROWING SITE

INTRO

While plants can grow almost anywhere, vegetables do need the right conditions to thrive. In this chapter, we'll guide you through selecting the best spot and building healthy, nutrient-rich soil to set your garden up for success!

HOW DO I SELECT A GROWING SITE?

Choose a spot that meets these criteria:

SUNLIGHT

Receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight a day. South-facing is always ideal!

WATER

Has close access to water (e.g. sink, outdoor hose).

WIND

Has moderate air flow to help strengthen and pollinate plants, and minimize disease.

SOIL

You can build healthy soil. If you can't plant in-ground, you can use a pot, planter, or raised garden bed.

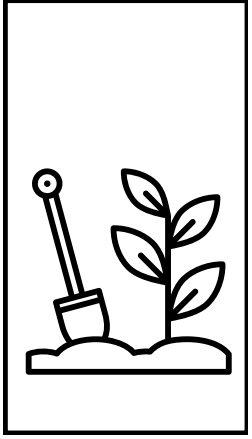
SPACE

Gardens come in all shapes and sizes, but it's helpful to define your growing area for easy maintenance.

GARDEN TIPS

Observe your space for a few days to help you select your garden site. Record which areas get direct sun and which are shaded by buildings or other plantings (above).

There are many ways to maximize the space you have, whether growing in-ground or in containers. If you are looking for a helpful guideline on sizing your garden, consider 40 square feet as a starting point. This is the size of community garden plots in Mississauga which is big enough to allow cultivation of a variety of crops but small enough to be manageable for beginner gardeners.



HOW CAN I BUILD HEALTHY SOIL?

Taking care of your soil can add nutrients, support helpful organisms, prevent compaction, and keep your garden healthy. The four actions in the diagram below are simple steps you can take to improve your soil.

PRODUCT	WHAT IS IT?	GARDEN USES
Top Soil or Black Earth	Many products sold with these labels are often low-nutrient dirt	To add soil volume, in combination with other nutrients
Triple Mix	Blend of 1/3 soil, 1/3 peat moss and 1/3 compost.	Good for starting a new garden bed.
Potting Mix	Blend of peat moss, compost, and perlite.	Sterile and has good drainage. Ideal for container growing
Compost or Manure	Decomposed plant/animal waste	Great source of organic matter, microbes and nutrients

COMMON SOIL PRODUCTS EXPLAINED

You can also build healthy soil by adding products designed to increase volume, improve drainage, or enhance the nutrient content of your soil. To the left is a summary of common products and their uses.

WORDS OF WISDOM

"In our community garden, we think of soil as the foundation of everything we grow and treat it like it's alive, because it is! We plant different things in the same place each year so they take and give different nutrients to the soil. We also feed it with compost, giving back what the earth gives us. Healthy soil means strong plants, fewer pests, and a garden that keeps giving season after season."

- Community Garden Member

BUILD

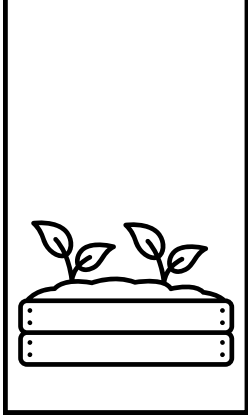
CREATE YOUR GARDEN

INTRO

You can choose to create your garden in ground, raised beds, containers, or a combination of all three. There are benefits to each type of garden and the best choice is what is appropriate for your space and needs. When selecting your garden type, you should consider your soil quality, accessibility needs, and the food you want to grow.

WHICH GARDEN TYPE IS RIGHT FOR ME?

FACTOR	IN GROUND	RAISED BEDS	CONTAINER
			
Cost	Lowest cost	Higher cost, dependent on type	Variable
Size and shape	Customizable size and shape	Size and shape is limited by supplier/bed type	Variable, but size typically does not exceed 24"
Soil considerations	Not suitable for sites with poor soil quality	Soil can be separated from ground if needed	Potting soil is required
Accessibility	Limited accessibility, requires kneeling and bending	Accessible options available	Size determines accessibility and movability
Growing limitations	Dependent on garden size, but generally can accommodate all plants	Some growing limitations for large plants (e.g., pumpkins)	Better suited for smaller plants and small root systems
Maintenance challenges	Higher maintenance needs to keep weed growth in check	Natural wood beds may need maintenance and repair within 10 years, while other materials (e.g., steel) are more durable	Watering needs increase with smaller containers that dry out faster



CONSIDERATIONS FOR RAISED BEDS & CONTAINERS

Gardening in raised beds and containers can have many benefits, such as fewer pests and diseases, fewer weeds, and more flexibility to suit your needs. When planning your raised or container garden there are some unique considerations, which we'll cover below.

MATERIALS

There are many materials that can be used for raised and container gardens. The most important consideration is ensuring your materials are food safe. Other factors include cost and maintenance. Natural materials will require more maintenance (e.g. wooden garden beds may need to be replaced in less than ten years). Steel beds are a great and affordable option and require little upkeep in comparison. For smaller containers, stone and food safe plastics are easy to find and a variety of price points are available depending on your budget.

USE	AVOID
✓ brick	✗ tires
✓ stone	✗ treated wood (ie. most pallets)
✓ most plastics	✗ plastic buckets used for storing chemicals
✓ untreated wood such as cedar	

SOIL

Soil for large raised beds can be similar to what you would use in ground, with organic matter such as compost added annually to replenish nutrients. Soil for containers should be light, airy, and hold moisture well. It is often called "potting mix or potting soil," and you can buy it or make it yourself.

GARDEN TIPS

Make your own potting mix by following this formula.

1 part peat moss or coconut coir

1 part perlite or pumice

2 parts compost

ACCESSIBILITY

You can build your raised beds and container garden to meet your needs. Think about what feels good for your body and create your garden accordingly. Consider these factors when selecting your raised beds or containers.

SPACE Can you easily access all sides of the garden?

HEIGHT Can you comfortably access the plants at different stages of their life cycle (e.g., seeding vs harvesting)?

REACH Is the container or raised bed narrow enough to reach plants growing in the centre?

GARDEN TIPS

DRAINAGE

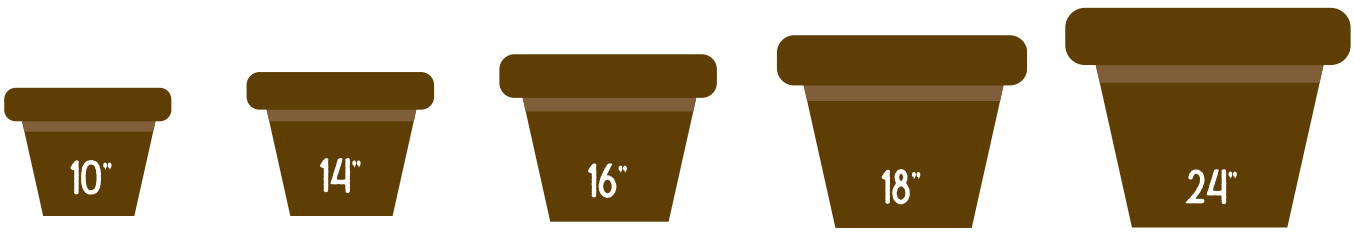
Does your container have a closed base? If so, ensure there are holes in the bottom for water to drain.

MOISTURE

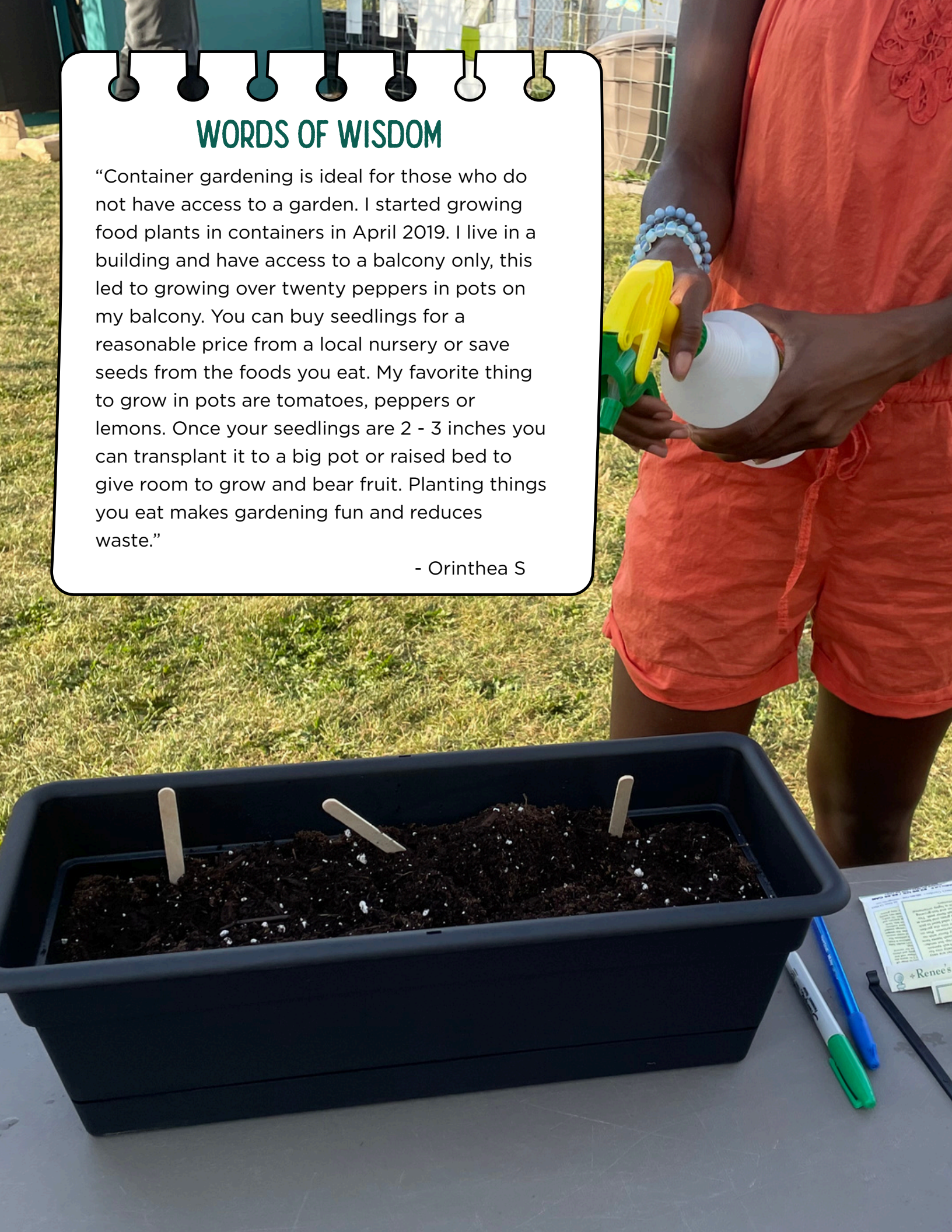
Container gardens may need more water than in-ground ones. Check moisture by sticking your finger 2" in — water if dry.

CONTAINER SIZE

In addition to material, you should also consider which vegetables or fruits you want to grow when selecting a container. Not all containers suit every plant - deep-rooted plants like tomatoes need larger containers, and sprawling vegetables like squash require extra space. Root vegetables like carrots are typically not grown in containers but could be planted in-ground or in raised beds as a certain soil depth is required. Remember spacing requirements for different foods apply to containers too! See page 7 for more details.



10"	14"	16"	18"	24"
salad greens, green onions, chives, other small herbs	cabbage, peas, rosemary, other large herbs	pole beans, compact varieties of raspberry and tomatoes	cauliflower, eggplant, hot and sweet pepper, tomato, okra	tomato, cucumber, zucchini, melon, mouse melon, squash



WORDS OF WISDOM

“Container gardening is ideal for those who do not have access to a garden. I started growing food plants in containers in April 2019. I live in a building and have access to a balcony only, this led to growing over twenty peppers in pots on my balcony. You can buy seedlings for a reasonable price from a local nursery or save seeds from the foods you eat. My favorite thing to grow in pots are tomatoes, peppers or lemons. Once your seedlings are 2 - 3 inches you can transplant it to a big pot or raised bed to give room to grow and bear fruit. Planting things you eat makes gardening fun and reduces waste.”

- Orinthea S

SEED

DECIDE WHAT TO GROW

INTRO

Choosing your seeds can be one of the most exciting parts about gardening. Whether you're new to gardening or advanced, we recommend thinking through a few considerations when deciding what to grow, where to find it, and how to plant it. This chapter will guide you through this process.

WHAT SHOULD I GROW?

Use these questions to figure out which vegetables to grow in your garden. Vegetables that you list for all three questions are good options for you to try.

What plants work with my garden's conditions (e.g., sunlight, vertical or horizontal space)?

What do I like to eat or want to try?

What cultural foods are difficult or expensive for me to buy?

GARDEN TIPS

New to gardening? Pick 3-4 types of vegetables or fruits to grow in your first year. Add more varieties each year to grow your skillset over time.

HOW CAN I FIND SEEDS?

SHOP

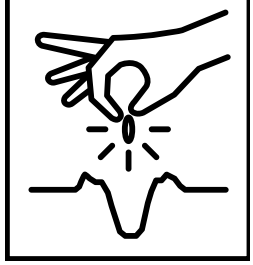
Seeds are available at garden centers, some grocery stores, and online directly from seed producers

BORROW

Seed libraries offer seeds to grow and return (optional) for future sharing. Offered at some Mississauga libraries!

SAVE

Save your seeds to use in future years (see pg 27). Trade seeds with friends to try different varieties!



WHEN SHOULD I PLANT?

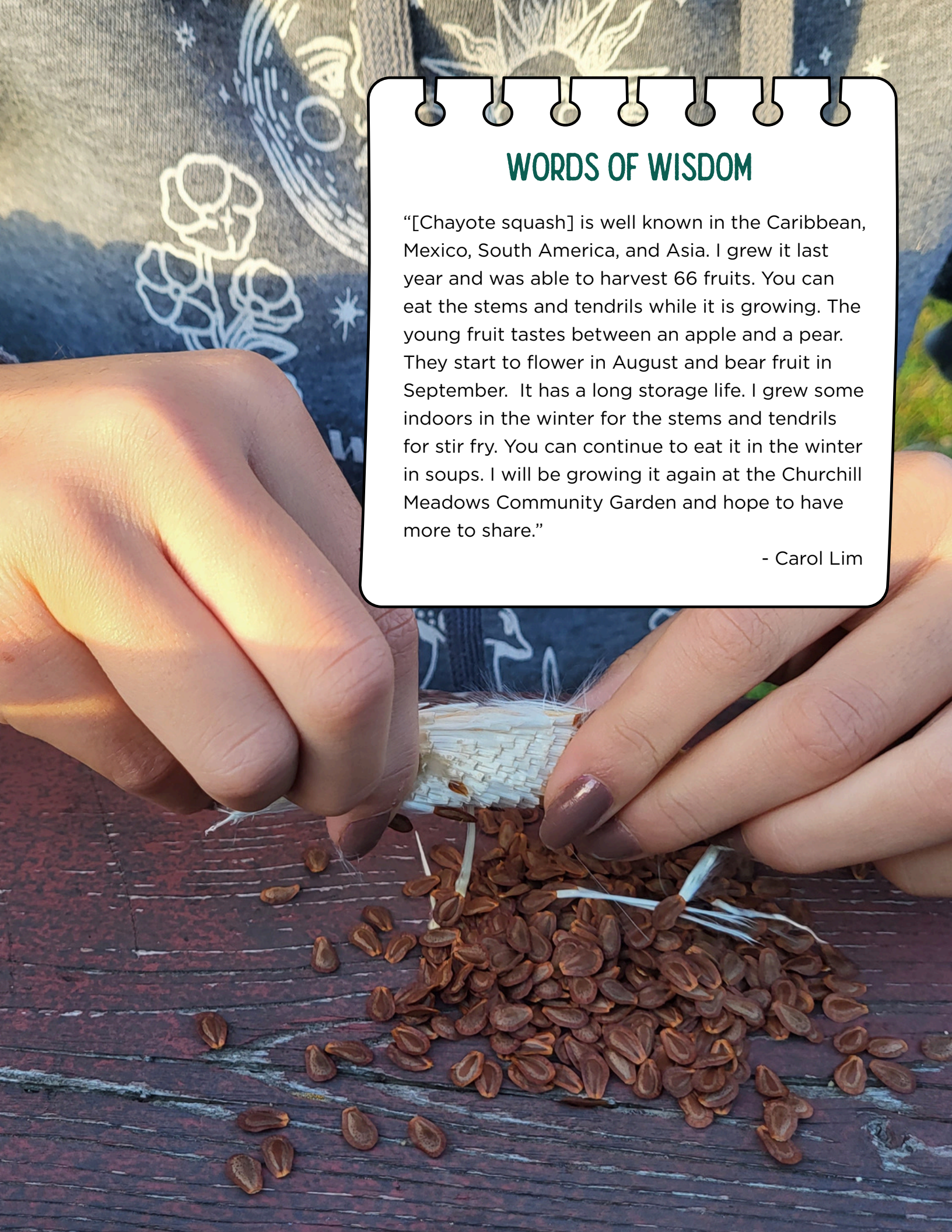
In Southern Ontario, we can plant some seeds directly outdoors, but plants with longer growing cycles need to be started indoors under specific conditions. Once they reach the 'seedling' stage, they can be transplanted outside. You can buy seedlings from a garden center or grow your own.

GARDEN TIPS

Mississauga is located in plant hardiness zone 6. Learn about which plants grow best in this zone to guide your plant selection process.

Use this chart to decide the best planting times and methods for growing food in Mississauga. You can grow multiple vegetables throughout the season in the same spot by planting them in succession. Start by planting vegetables that thrive earlier in the season and then re-plant after your first harvest with vegetables that thrive later.

	Direct Seed Outdoors	Transplant outdoors 3rd week of May	Plant April/May or August	Plant late June to August
Beans	x			x
Tomato		x		
Pepper		x		
Watermelon		x		
Cucumber		x		
Beets	x		x	
Okra		x		
Broccoli	x	x	x	
Zucchini		x		
Kale	x	x	x	
Radish	x		x	
Turnip	x		x	
Winter Squash		x		
Eggplant		x		
Cantaloupe		x		
Spinach	x		x	
Lettuce/Greens	x		x	
Bok Choy	x	x	x	
Cabbage	x	x	x	
Basil	x		x	x
Carrots	x		x	
Peas	x		x	
Leeks	x	x	x	
Cilantro	x		x	
Onions	x	x	x	



WORDS OF WISDOM

“[Chayote squash] is well known in the Caribbean, Mexico, South America, and Asia. I grew it last year and was able to harvest 66 fruits. You can eat the stems and tendrils while it is growing. The young fruit tastes between an apple and a pear. They start to flower in August and bear fruit in September. It has a long storage life. I grew some indoors in the winter for the stems and tendrils for stir fry. You can continue to eat it in the winter in soups. I will be growing it again at the Churchill Meadows Community Garden and hope to have more to share.”

- Carol Lim

GROW

MAINTAIN YOUR GARDEN

INTRO

After planting, you'll need to take care of your plants until it's time to harvest. In this chapter, we'll review common maintenance techniques. Understanding plant needs improves with experience, so don't be afraid to learn through trial and error.

WATERING

Water young plants twice daily and mature plants 1–3 times a week, adjusting for weather. Water at the roots, not leaves or stems. Water in the morning for best results.

WEEDING

Unintended plants, or weeds, compete for resources and should be removed. Identify them by knowing your plant's leaves. Pull weeds by the root to prevent regrowth.

TRELLISING

Vining plants like cucumbers, Malabar spinach, beans, peas, and squash, as well as tomatoes, need support from a trellis. Use metal, wood or plastic stakes tied with string.

PRUNING

Pruning removes excess or damaged growth to increase airflow, prevent disease, and help plants produce more fruit. Use clean scissors to trim above a leaf node—great for tomatoes, peppers, and squash but not needed for all plants!

BOLTING

When plants are stressed, they may 'bolt' or produce seeds too soon (before you've had a chance to harvest). To prevent this, remove seed pods as they appear and adjust conditions, like temperature, water, and soil health. Applicable for leafy greens and root vegetables only.

MANAGING COMMON CRITTERS

Many animals and insects will be attracted to your food, but if you don't want to share, here are some strategies we recommend.

GARDEN TIPS

Use a combination of these sustainable pest control methods to increase chances of success.

STRATEGY	USE
Physical Barriers	Keep out rabbits, squirrels, birds, and other animals with netting and fencing.
Pinwheel Windmills	Create ground vibrations that help deter rodents like voles.
Companion Planting	Plant flowers like marigolds or daffodils, which release natural chemicals that repel pests.
Crop Planning	Plant your least favourite foods around the garden's perimeter to attract pests away from your main harvest.
Organic Sprays	Use low-impact organic deterrent sprays like neem oil or a DIY spray (2 Tbsp natural dish soap + 2 cups water) to remove pests.

RABBITS IN THE GARDEN

If you find a small nest lined with fur and grass, it may belong to a mother rabbit. She hasn't abandoned it—rabbits stay away during the day to avoid attracting predators, returning at dawn and dusk to feed their young. Babies grow quickly and leave the nest in just 3 weeks. During this time, they rarely damage plants and mostly stay hidden. Give the nest space, and if it's in a garden bed, consider adding a gentle barrier for protection.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Coexisting with Our Animal Relatives

“In many Indigenous traditions, all beings—four-legged, winged, crawling —are all considered relatives, not intruders. When animals visit our gardens, they are not pests but messengers, reminding us of our shared relationship with the land. Each one, from the rabbit nibbling leaves to the raccoon exploring at night, has a spirit and a purpose. We are taught to live in balance, to share, and to listen. Our gardens can become places of relationship, not conflict, when we remember we are not the only ones who belong there. Instead of reacting with frustration, we can learn to observe their behaviors and understand their needs. By planting a little extra, offering space for wild plants nearby, or using gentle methods to guide them away, we practice mino-bimaadiziwin—the good life—rooted in respect and reciprocity. This shift—from control to coexistence—honors the balance our ancestors walked with the natural world. The garden is not just ours; it's part of a living network where every being has a role.”

- Niki Richer

EAT

ENJOY YOUR HARVEST

INTRO

Now that all your hard work has paid off, it's time to enjoy your fruits and veggies! Homegrown food has a special taste and experimenting with new recipes and sharing your harvest with friends makes the experience even more rewarding. In this chapter, we'll explore tips for harvesting, storing, and sharing your food.

WHEN DO I PICK MY VEGGIES?

LOOK
Is it the right size and colour?

TASTE
Take a bite! Does it taste good?

SMELL
Does it smell fresh or rotten?

FEEL
Is it the right consistency?

GARDEN TIPS

Check your seed pack or online for the estimated days until harvest. These are just guidelines so trust your senses to know when your plants are truly ready!

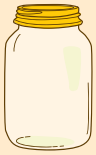
Harvest vegetables as soon as they're ready to keep plants producing and prevent rot, pests, and disease. In summer, this may mean picking daily.

GARDEN TIPS

Are you harvesting more food than you can eat? Share them with friends, preserve them or consider donating to local food banks such as Food Banks Mississauga, The Compass Food Bank, Eden Food for Change, and Seva Food Bank.

HOW CAN I PRESERVE MY FRUITS & VEGGIES?

CANNING

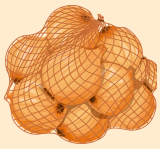


If sealed well, canned fruits and veggies can be stored at room temperature without spoiling for up to a year. The water-bath method (e.g., placing jars in boiling water) is great for beginners—just follow proper instructions to ensure safety and flavor.

DRYING

Slice juicy veggies like tomatoes, beets and zucchini first, then lay them out in a warm, airy spot to dry. Foods like peppers and mushrooms can be dried whole. For faster results, use an oven or dehydrator.

STORING



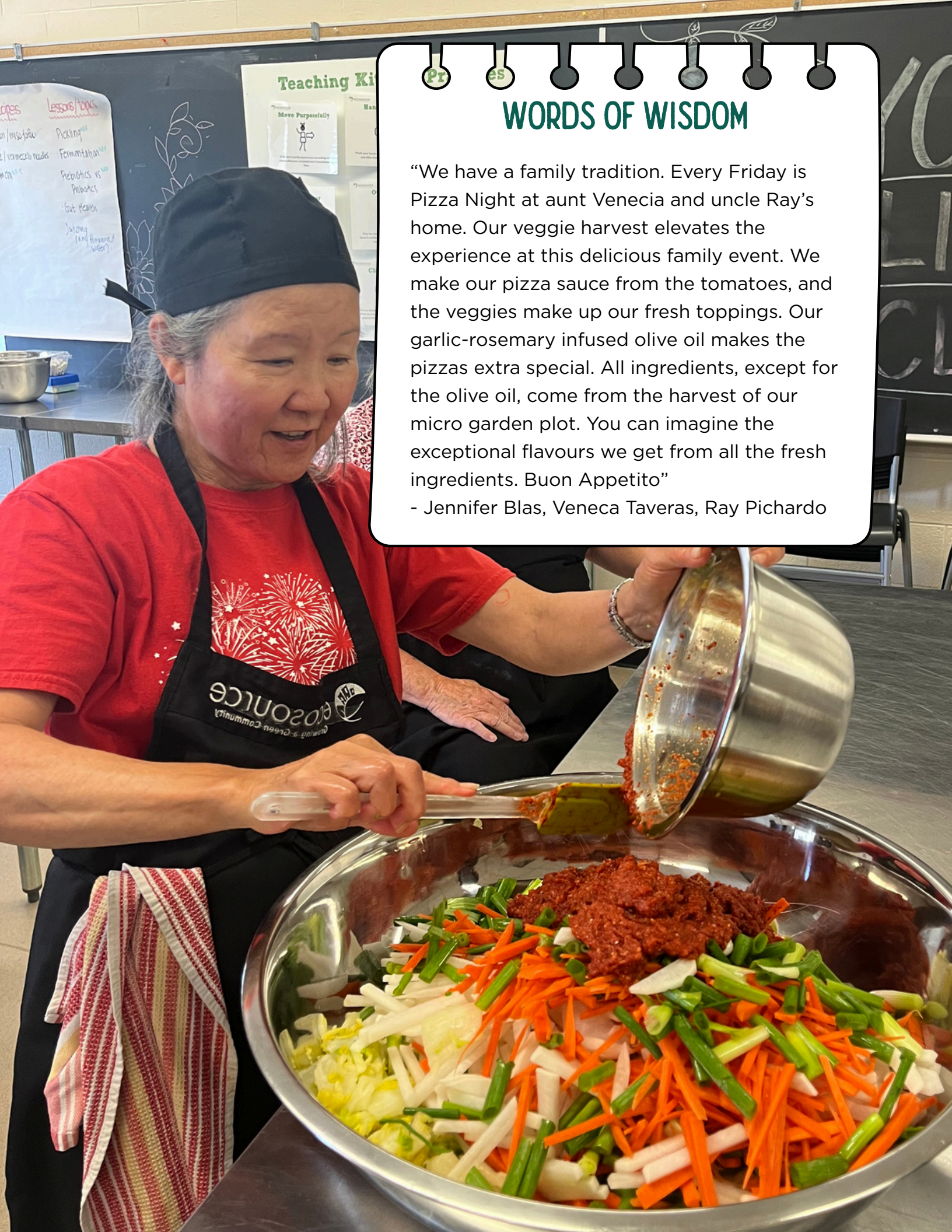
Root veggies and cabbages can stay fresh for months in cool, humid spots, while squash, garlic, and onions prefer dry areas. Ensure veggies are clean and the storage space has airflow.

FERMENTING

Turn veggies into tangy, probiotic-rich treats like kimchi, sauerkraut, or miso! Fermenting enhances flavor, boosts nutrition, and extends shelf life.

FREEZNG

Blanch most veggies before freezing (except peppers, onions, and leeks). If you're making sauce, freeze it instead of the raw tomatoes. Label the date and enjoy for up to one year.



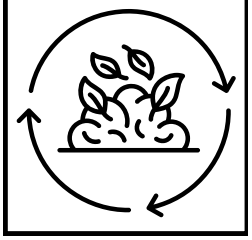
WORDS OF WISDOM

“We have a family tradition. Every Friday is Pizza Night at aunt Venecia and uncle Ray’s home. Our veggie harvest elevates the experience at this delicious family event. We make our pizza sauce from the tomatoes, and the veggies make up our fresh toppings. Our garlic-rosemary infused olive oil makes the pizzas extra special. All ingredients, except for the olive oil, come from the harvest of our micro garden plot. You can imagine the exceptional flavours we get from all the fresh ingredients. Buon Appetito”

- Jennifer Blas, Veneca Taveras, Ray Pichardo

RENEW

PREPARE FOR WINTER



INTRO

As the season comes to a close, it's time to prepare your garden for winter. This means clearing out dead plant material and protecting your soil from erosion — when wind, rain, and snow strip away vital nutrients. In this chapter, we'll go through effective ways to winterize your garden and set it up for success next year!

SAVE YOUR SEEDS

Save seeds from your plants to grow again next year. Whether they're hybrid, open-pollinated, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), or heirloom affects seed genetics so check your seed packet. GMO seeds are labelled F1 on the packet.

Beans & peas	Fleshy fruits (tomatoes, cucumbers, etc.)	Onions, garlic, chives, etc,	Greens, most herbs, brassicas (radish, kale etc.)
Leave some bean or pea pods on your plant and wait for them to dry. Remove from plants and break open pods to remove seeds.	Let fruit overripen, then harvest. Soak seeds and pulp in water for 2–3 days, then collect the seeds that sink. Rinse and dry completely.	Wait until the scape at the top of the plant bursts into a flower. When the flower has dried, collect seeds before they fall to the ground.	Wait until the plant starts to bolt, or grow a long stalk with flowers and then seeds. Wait for seeds to dry out and remove them from stalk.

CLEAR OUT YOUR GARDEN

Clear out annual plants that won't survive winter, such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, okra, chayote, bittermelon. Perennials like berries and some herbs can stay. To reduce soil erosion, cut plants at the base and leave the roots (unless they're in small containers—then pull them out).

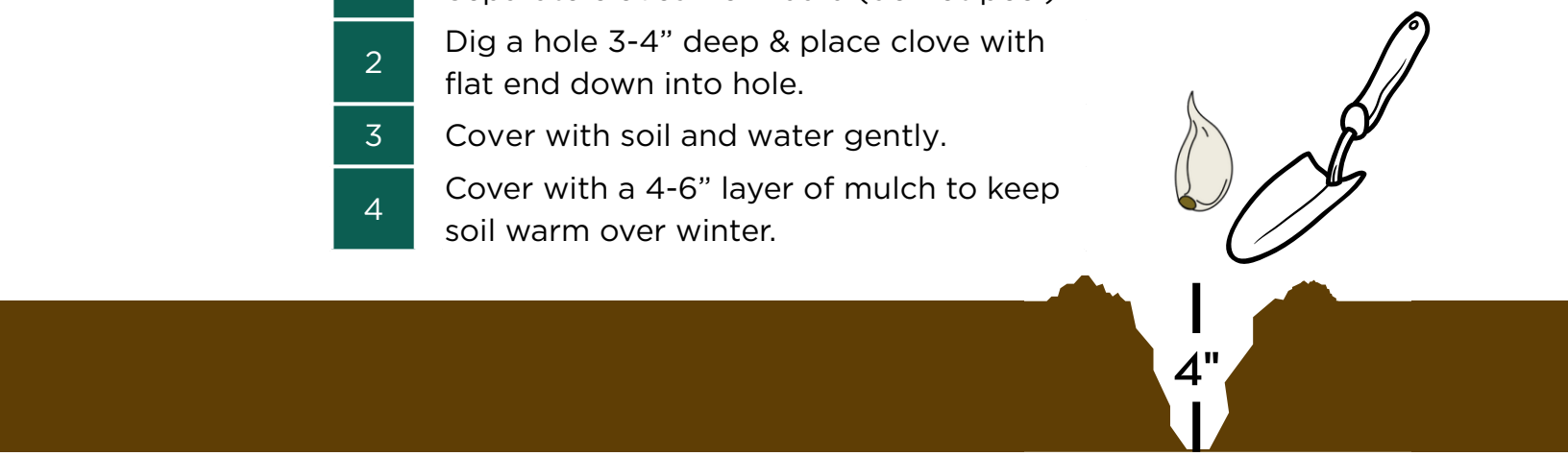
GARDEN TIPS

Try keeping some annual plants like kale, leeks, parsnips, and carrots to see if they survive the winter!

PLANT GARLIC

Most garlic varieties need 9 months and winter weather to grow in Mississauga! Plant garlic in mid-October and harvest it in mid-July. Cut the scapes off in June to increase bulb size.

STEP	INSTRUCTION
1	Separate cloves from bulb (do not peel).
2	Dig a hole 3-4” deep & place clove with flat end down into hole.
3	Cover with soil and water gently.
4	Cover with a 4-6” layer of mulch to keep soil warm over winter.



ADD COMPOST

Fall is a great time to add compost—if you cover your soil for winter. Otherwise, wait until spring. Add about 1-inch of compost per year. Lightly mix it in with a small shovel or fork for best results!

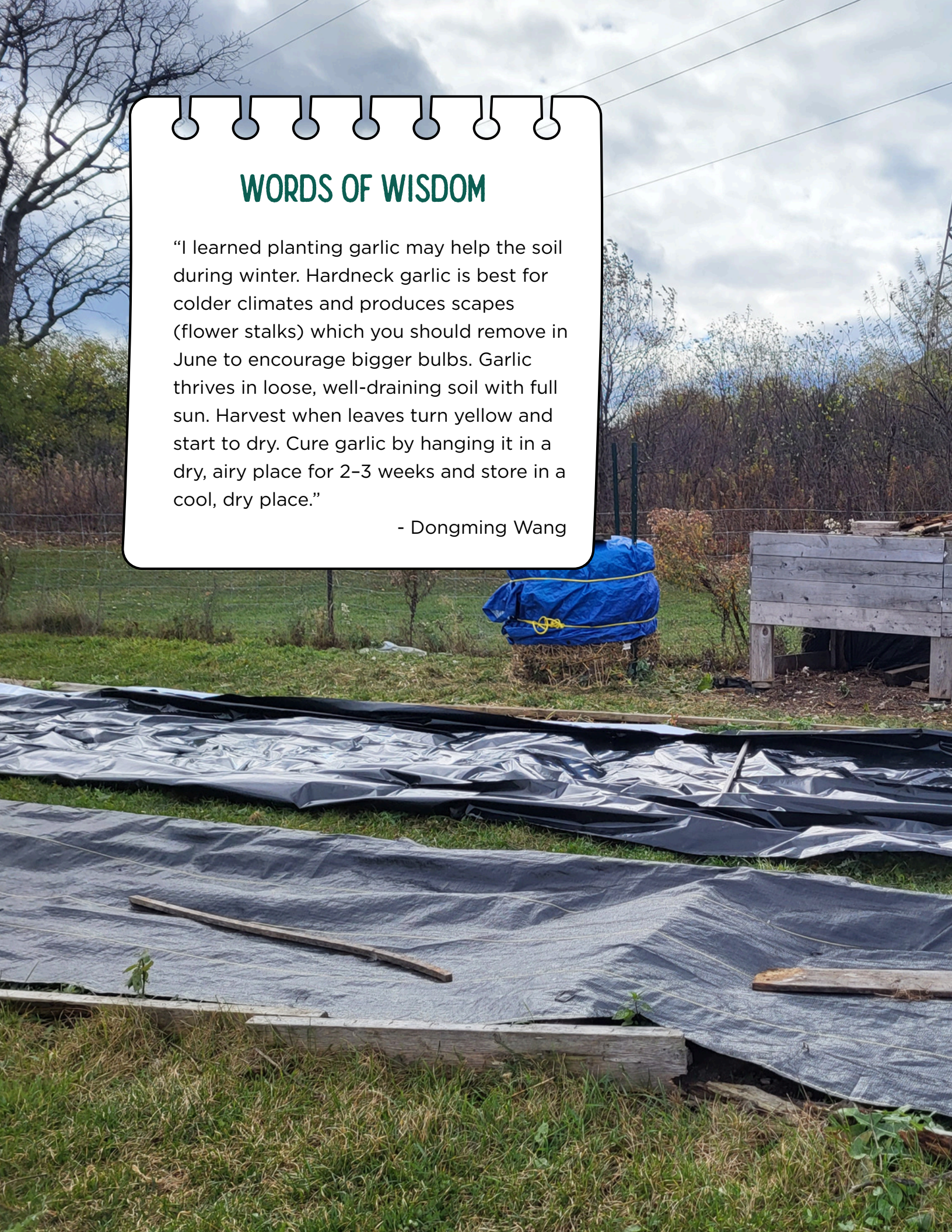
PROTECT YOUR SOIL

COVER CROP

Planting cover crops improves soil, prevents weeds, and reduces erosion when your garden isn’t in use. Examples include alfalfa, buckwheat, oats, oilseed radish, red clover and rye. Once you're ready to plant your veggies, simply mix these cover crops into the soil.

MULCH

Place mulch on top of soil to prevent erosion, reduce weeds and keep moisture in. Examples include grass cuttings, straw, dry leaves, wood chips, pine needles, landscape fabric, and gravel. Monitor often, as it can attract critters and affect soil balance.



WORDS OF WISDOM

“I learned planting garlic may help the soil during winter. Hardneck garlic is best for colder climates and produces scapes (flower stalks) which you should remove in June to encourage bigger bulbs. Garlic thrives in loose, well-draining soil with full sun. Harvest when leaves turn yellow and start to dry. Cure garlic by hanging it in a dry, airy place for 2–3 weeks and store in a cool, dry place.”

- Dongming Wang

GLOSSARY

Below is a list of common gardening terms that may be unfamiliar, along with clear explanations of what they mean.

ANNUAL	A plant that grows, flowers, and dies all in one growing season.
BLANCH	To briefly boil vegetables or fruits, then quickly cool them in ice water to stop cooking.
COCONUT COIR	A fiber made from coconut husks, used in place of peat moss to hold moisture in soil.
COMPACTION	When soil gets packed too tightly, making it hard for water, air, and roots to move through.
COMPOST	Food scraps, leaves, manure, and other natural materials that have broken down over time and no longer contain toxins. Added to soil to improve its health.
CROPS	Plants grown for food or harvest, like vegetables, grains, or herbs.
CULTIVATION	The process of growing plants.
CULTIVATOR	A small hand tool with prongs like a fork used to loosen soil, remove weeds, and prepare garden beds.
EROSION	When wind or water washes away soil, often damaging plants and gardens.
GMO	GMOs, or Genetically Modified Organisms, are plants that have been changed in a lab using genetic engineering to have specific traits, like resistance to pests.
HARVEST	Noun: foods that are gathered off plants when they are ready to eat (e.g. vegetables, fruits). Verb: to gather foods that are ready to eat.
HIERLOOM	A plant variety that's been grown for many years, known for their great taste, unique looks, and reliable seeds that grow into the same kind of plant each time.
HYBRID	A plant made by crossing two different varieties to create one with the best traits of both.
INFILTRATION	How water soaks into the soil, helping to reach plant roots.

LEAF NODE	The spot on a plant stem where leaves grow and new branches or roots can form.
(MICRO)ORGANISMS OR MICROBES	Tiny living things in soil, like bacteria and fungi, that help break down materials and support plant growth.
MOISTURE	The amount of water in the soil, which plants need to grow but can't have too much or too little of.
MULCH	A layer of material (like leaves, straw, or wood chips) placed on top of soil to keep moisture in, block weeds, and protect roots.
NUTRIENT-RICH	Soil that contains all of the natural substances that plants need to grow strong (for example, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium).
OPEN-POLLINATED	Plants that are pollinated naturally (by wind, insects, etc.) and produce seeds that grow true to the parent plant.
ORGANIC MATTER	Natural materials like compost, dead leaves, or manure that support soil health and feed plants.
PEAT MOSS	A spongy material made from mosses that helps soil hold moisture; harvesting peat moss releases carbon and is not considered a sustainable material.
PERENNIAL	A plant that comes back each growing season.
PERLITE	A lightweight, white volcanic rock added to soil to help it drain better and keep it from getting too compacted.
PICKERS/GRABBERS	Long-handled tools designed to help gardeners reach and retrieve itemswithout bending or climbing
PLANT HARDINESS ZONE	A guide that shows which plants grow best in your region based on the local climate and winter temperatures
PUMICE	A porous volcanic rock used in soil mixes to improve drainage and airflow around plant roots.

RAISED GARDEN BED	A box or frame filled with soil that sits above the ground. It can make gardening easier by improving soil drainage, reducing weeds, and raising the growing area so you don't have to bend down as much.
SCAPE	The flower stalk that grows from the center of plants like garlic or chives. Before seeds grow, it can be harvested and eaten. Once seeds grow, they can be collected and re-planted.
SEEDLINGS	Young plants that have just started growing from seeds (usually up to 2 months old).
SHEARS	Scissor-like tools used to trim or cut plants, branches, or leaves.
SOW	To plant seeds by placing them in or on soil.
STERILE	Free from living things, including microbes that help plants to grow.
TROWEL	A small hand tool with a pointed scoop used for digging, planting, or moving soi
THIN	To remove extra seedlings so the remaining ones have space to grow.
TILLING	Turning or digging up the soil deeply to prepare it for planting.
TRANSPLANT	To move a plant from one place (like a small pot or seed tray) into the ground or a bigger container.
VARIETIES	Different types of the same plant, each with its own traits like color, taste, or size.
VINING	A type of plant that grows long stems or "vines" and may need support to climb or spread out.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