



TIPS OF THE TRADE

MAINTENANCE

It takes a few weeks for your garden to get going in the spring. But after that, a weekly visit to your garden is recommended during the growing season. I have checked in on gardens both weekly and every two weeks and the weekly visit helps your garden thrive and helps maximize your harvests.

These visits in your garden should take between half an hour and an hour depending on the size of your garden and time of year. During these visits:

- Prune all dead leaves/branches/flowers from your veggies, herbs, and flowers.
- Further prune herbs and flowers to ensure they stay in their space and don't take over.
- Harvest all produce that is available. With the exception of your "one and done" veggies, it is recommended that even if you aren't able to eat all of the produce available you should harvest it anyway. This promotes new growth and helps maximize the length of time the plant will produce young and fresh produce.

IRRIGATION

The irrigation needs of your garden will vary throughout the season. I will be adding a section to my website (petite-farms.com) that includes my current irrigation recommendations based on weather forecasts. Stay tuned. This should be available by the time you are planting your Spring garden (mid-March).

PLANT ID TAGS

One thing I have learned is how important it is that your veggies are clearly marked and even logged when you plant them. This is critical as general harvest information is available for all vegetables but there are some variations depending on the variety of your plant. I am making new identification tags available at no cost to my customers, if you are interested.

CROP ROTATION

As you plan your garden space don't forget about crop rotation. I leave my tomatoes in the same location two years in a row but then move them. But the brassica family is another story. If possible, they should be moved every year in order to reduce the likelihood of pests and disease. Adding organic matter/compost and nutrients will also help!

PESTS

This last year was a doozy as far as garden pests were concerned. The gardens I worked on throughout the Portland/Lake Oswego area suffered from everything from Cabbage Moth, to Fungus Gnats, to Aphids, to Slugs. There is no guaranteed way to prevent these problems. However; a healthy soil, diverse plantings (always including herbs and flowers), the correct amount of water, and a watchful eye will help reduce the problem.

I did a fair amount of research on the various pests and homemade/natural solutions for each. My goal during this process was to find the most natural and non-invasive approach and have come up with the following arsenal:

Cabbage Moth / caterpillar - Cayenne Pepper Solution
Fungus Gnats - Hydrogen Peroxide Solution
Aphids - Ladybugs/Castille Soap Solution
Slugs - Egg shells

Please keep in mind that the solutions above should be used sparingly in order to ensure the “valuable” insects can survive and do their job, and to ensure that your soil stays healthy and vibrant. I am happy to share recipes so just let me know.

When you have a plant that is infested or dying, remove it as soon as possible and let the soil relax/sit for a week or two and then replace the plant.

Note: The most susceptible plants are from the brassica family. This includes: Brussels sprouts, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Kale, Bok Choy, Collards, Kohlrabi, and Mustard. I have had such bad luck with Brussels Sprouts that I currently recommend that my customers avoid planting it in their garden. Because of the amount of space required and length of time it takes to get a harvestable Brussels sprout plant and the high likelihood of pest damage, I believe it makes more sense to dedicate that space to other plants that are more likely to thrive!

Happy gardening!