Gardening Tips & Techniques: Online Garden Planning Tools

Planning and designing your garden can involve many steps. These can include everything from taking an inventory of your current seed stash, to evaluating crop varieties, talking with friends and family, scoping out new garden areas, drawing sketches on graph paper, poring over seed catalogs, and dreaming throughout the winter months.

Over the last few years, several online resources have been developed to help make the planning process easier and more organized. If you enjoy working on the computer and if you find visual illustration of your garden to be helpful, online planning might be a good fit for you.

Gardener's Supply has a nice, simple **bed-planning tool** on their website. We've mentioned this particular tool before; you can use it to plan your entire garden or just a bed. There are options for creating your own garden using a wide variety of food crops, or choosing a **pre-planned garden** like "Fun for Kids" or "Salad Bar."

Gardener's Supply's Kitchen Garden Planner program helps you make a detailed plan for what crops to plant in your garden space.
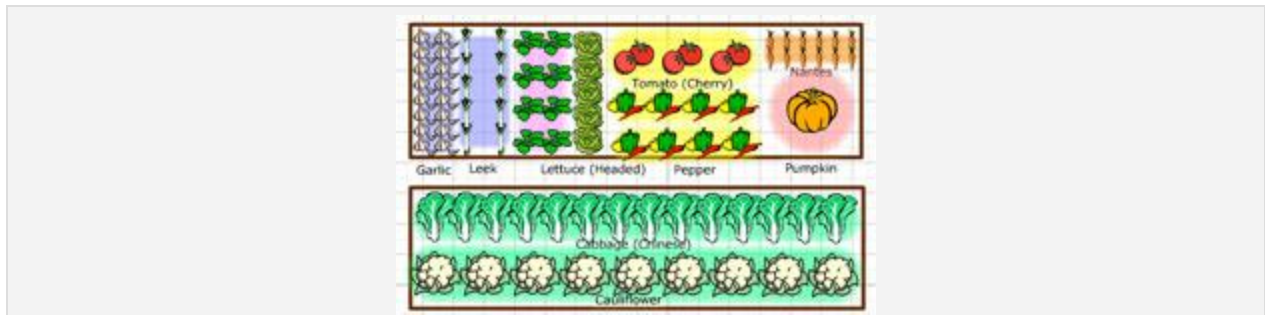
This program is based on square foot gardening, and each garden bed is automatically divided into a grid of 1'x1' spaces. When you place a vegetable, fruit, or herb in your garden space (by dragging the icon from a list), the image automatically indicates how many of those plants will fit in the 1'x1' space. If you are planning to plant rows that run the length of your garden bed, the numbers of plants and spacing will be less accurate, but you may still find the visual image of the garden bed to be helpful.

As you choose crops for your bed, information appears at the bottom of the page about each particular item. Planting and spacing tips, common pests, and seasonality are all addressed, along with a link to further information.

This tool is a nice place to start; it is free and works well for a small garden and gardens with square or rectangular beds.

For a more advanced online tool, check out **growveg.com**. This program includes the basic aspects of the Gardener's Supply tool, but has many more features. There is a 30 day free trial for this program and if you choose to purchase it, a $25 yearly fee.

We use the "growveg" tool at Grow Pittsburgh for some of our garden planning tasks and have found these features to be helpful:

Growveg.com is a more advanced program that allows you to plan an extensive garden space and save planting information from year to year.

- **Extensive crop list** including uncommon crops and growing info
- Ability to save and easily access multiple garden plans
- Potential to create curved and unconventional garden spaces
- Color-coded crops, based on crop families (good for creating a rotation)

This garden planning tool is more elaborate and more time-consuming to use as well. It's best suited for large or elaborate food gardens. For more info, here's a **"quickstart" video** that shows some of the features.

There are probably more good garden-planning tools online, but these two are a great place to start. Hopefully one of these can help you start thinking about next year and possibilities for the growing season!