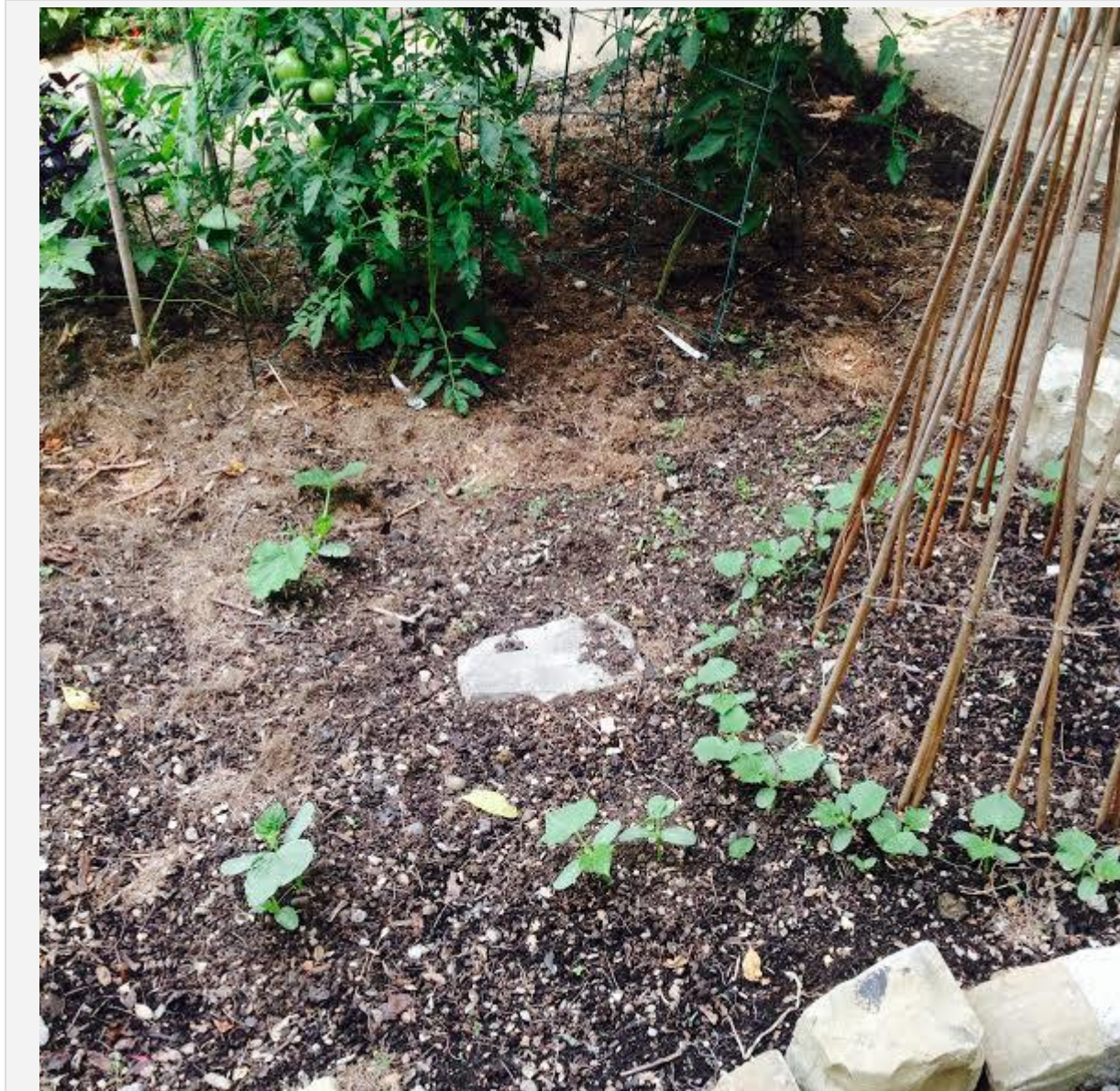




Planning and Planting: Last Chance to Plant Summer Crops!

If there's a spot in your garden where something failed to thrive, got eaten by a wild animal, or is simply done producing, you've got several options. You can mulch over the empty spot and plan to plant next year. You can plant a cover crop like buckwheat to add organic matter to the soil. You can wait a few weeks to plant fall crops. Or, you can squeeze in a few more summer crops.



These summer crops were planted after the garlic was pulled in mid-July.

If getting a few more summer crops in the ground sounds like a great way to make the most of your garden, here are a few tips:

Choose short-season crops. Certain crops take less time than others to mature. For instance, we don't recommend planting tomatoes, eggplant, or peppers this late in the season, as they wouldn't bear fruit before the frost. Here are some crops with short maturities:

- Cucumbers, especially pickling varieties
- Bush beans
- Zucchini
- Leafy herbs like dill and cilantro
- Quick-growing flowers, like dwarf sunflowers

Within the category of short-season crops, **pick varieties that have the fewest days to maturity.** The "days to maturity," should be listed on the seed packet, and refers to the time it takes for the crop to be ready to harvest, from the time it was planted.



These Maxibel bush beans will be ready to harvest about 50 days from seeding.

Direct seed these short-season crops. Most crops that we transplant are long-season crops. They take such a long time to grow and mature that it's beneficial to start them inside, before they would thrive in the outdoors. However, short-season crops tend to germinate and grow quickly. Therefore, seed them directly in the garden, where the heat of summer days will help them produce quickly.



These Firecracker dwarf sunflowers will bloom about 55 days from the day they were seeded.

Keep the seeds well-watered until they germinate. If the soil dries out while the seeds are germinating, they will either take longer to sprout, or –in a worst-case scenario– not come up at all.



These Little Leaf cucumbers are planted around a trellis. They are good for pickling and fresh eating, and should be ready about 57 days from seeding.

For the best results, **seed your last summer crops within the next week.** Most short-season summer crops still take about 50 days to mature. If all goes well, you'll be harvesting them at the end of September, before the weather turns consistently cold. The expected first frost in Pittsburgh tends to be in mid-October, so keep that date in mind when deciding what to plant. Some summer crops will succumb to light frost, and all summer crops will die when exposed to a heavy frost.