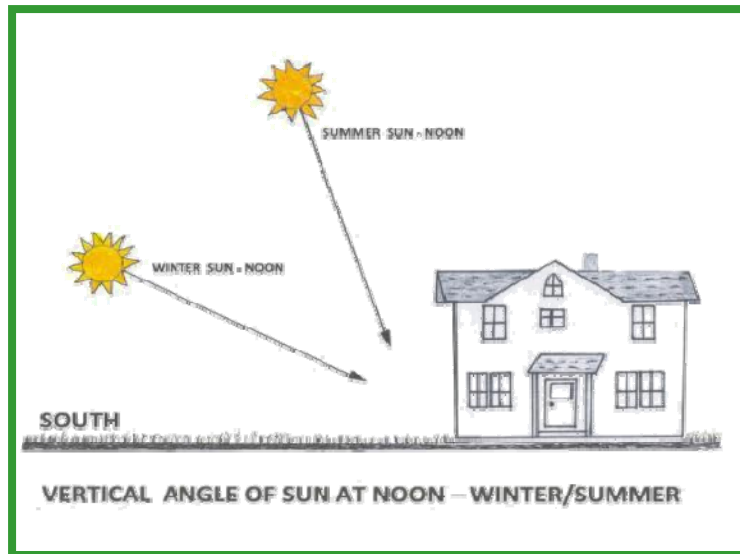
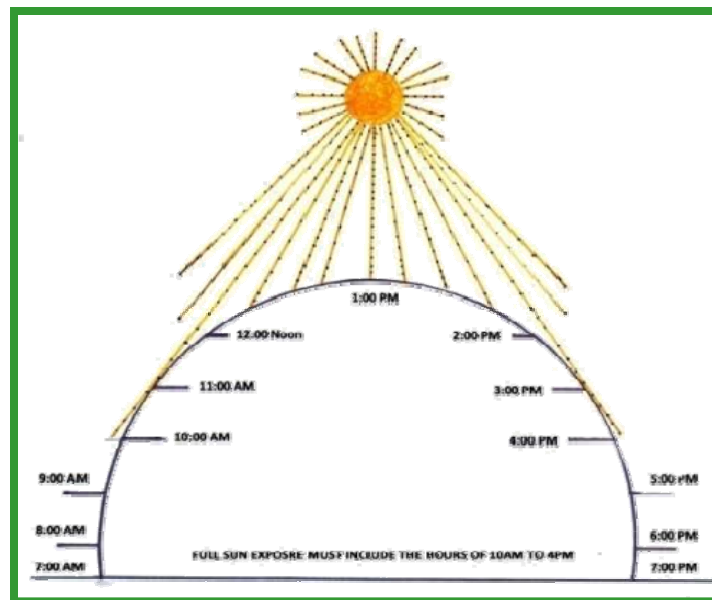


Sunlight is the single most important element in fruit and vegetable gardening, and it is closely followed by Soil.

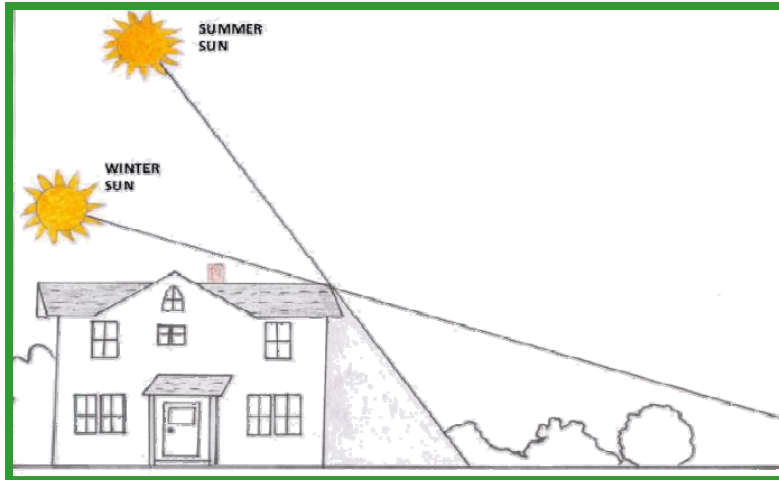


Choose a location with a southern exposure, away from buildings, trees and other objects that might shade your garden.



Most vegetables and fruit trees need maximum sunlight, and if light intensity declines, their production is affected.

Full sun exposure must include the hours of 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.



This is the northern exposure of a garden and it's not as effective because of the shade factor – to be successful in organic gardening or any other type of gardening, you must choose the right location.

In this segment of my upcoming book, *Organic Gardening Simplified*, an array of photos will show you how to choose a location, do a perk test, take a soil sample, do a temporary soil test yourself and send the rest of the soil to the nearest County Extension Center for a more detailed analysis, build raised beds, and other necessary information needed to start in the right direction.

Soil -----

We all know that organic gardening is the science of growing fruits and vegetables by utilizing decomposable materials derived from living entities without using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. And we also know that there are a number of techniques, from *Biodinamic* Farming, *No-till* systems, including the French Intensive or *Biointensive* methods to *SPIN* Farming (Small Plot Intensive).

But all those methods will fail unless the gardener provides the right growing conditions for the crop.

These are some suggestions that might be worth considering

- Selecting a site and location with proper sunlight exposure
- Good soil management
- Proper soil drainage
- Water availability

- Selecting the right crop
- Using organic fertilization
- Practicing nature-friendly insect and disease control methods

Know your soil

Want to be a successful gardener?

Let your soil be the star!

The quality of soil will definitely determine whether you have a poor or bountiful harvest.



- Soil is the second most important element after sunlight, and in order to grow fruits and vegetables in our gardens, we need good soil structure, which should be light and fluffy and loaded with nutrients in order to achieve maximum impact.
- The soil has many functions, it mechanically supports the root system to keep a plant upright, procures nutrients to plant growth, it is a natural recycling system, plus serves as an habitat to soil organisms.
- A good pore structure allows the roots to roam at will, distributes water uniformly, provides nutrients, plus lets oxygen, essential for root respiration and microbial activity filter in.

The 4 major components of soil:

- Mineral Matter ----- 45%
- Air ----- 25%
- Water ----- 25%
- Organic Matter ----- 5%

In order for most vegetable and fruit trees to absorb available nutrients from the soil, they need a slight acidic to neutral pH count, from 6.0-7.0. In such range, the essential mineral elements are available, and the roots can extract them from the soil and nourish the plant, but there are exceptions. Some species of plants prefer a more acidic environment, whereas others like a more alkaline soil. Make a point to know what pH your particular plant needs; a level too high or too low will hinder roots from extracting sufficient nutrients from the soil.

For example, at pH 7.0 and higher, boron, copper, iron, manganese, phosphorus and zinc will be less available than if levels were at 6-7. When low pH is present, the soil bacterial activity is slowed and calcium, magnesium and phosphorus become unavailable.

This is important! Familiarize yourself with every aspect of plant requirement, and once accomplished, you're on the way to success.

Soil Textures

Soil is composed of sand silt and clay, and if you want to feel the difference, rub some of it between your thumb and index finger and see how it feels.

In the chapter titled "**Soil Amendment**", I'll show you how soils differ from one another and how to amend them.

When not to work soil



The soil should be cultivated at intermediate moisture content, and a rough estimation is by squeezing a handful of it (like when making a snowball).

If the ball remains whole but crumbles when lightly tapped, it's a good indication the soil is workable.

Another example of the soil being too wet is if the soil sticks to the tines of the tiller, or on the shovel which you're using.



Amend your soil in the Fall

Resourceful gardeners have learned how to amend, fertilize and maintain soils properly, so it's as good or in better condition at the end of the growing season than at the beginning. A sensible time to start is during the fall.

Before tiling or spading, incorporate compost, aged animal manure, discarded fruit and vegetables, crab shells, seaweed and oyster shells if you're fortunate to be near a beach.



While everything is integrating and the worms are happy, plant a cover crop of winter rye, which adds valuable nutrients, increases organic matter and soil structure, plus it controls erosion.

Now it's ready to rest until spring.