Vegetable Varieties for Gardeners

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An interactive website with nearly 8,000 variety descriptions - vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu
Lettuce

**Buttercrunch**
Butterhead Bibb or Boston type. Compact, 10-inch heads with light green, thick outer leaves and loosely folded, thick, creamy inner leaves that are not bitter. Slow to bolt. Pick baby leaves at 28 days.

**Black Seeded Simpson**
Looseleaf type. Heirloom. Light-green, crumpled leaves can be picked very young and are never bitter. Withstands hot weather and drought. Resistant to downy mildew and white mold. Bolt and tip burn tolerant.

**Red Sails**
Looseleaf type. Very open plants with deep-burgundy-red over light-green leaves that are slow to become bitter. Fast-growing, heat-tolerant, and relatively slow to bolt. Pick for baby leaves at 29 days.

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**The ecological garden: Top Dressing**

Top dressing reinvigorates the soil by providing organic matter and some nutrients to the soil without needing to till material to incorporate. It is a recommended practice especially for heavy feeding and fast growing plants in the field. Home-produced or store-bought compost or vermicompost (compost from worms) can be added to improve plant vigor and health.

Before applying any kind of top dressing compost, it is important to thoroughly weed the garden and water the soil well. Aim to soak the soil to a depth of about 8 inches.

Only use compost that is completely finished, meaning you are unable to indentify any of the original ingredients and is light, fluffy, and earthy smelling. Store bought compost from animal manure or worm castings is recommended if no home source is available.

To top dress, spread a 1- to 2-inch layer of finished compost between your plants. Prevent smothering your plants by leaving a little donut-shaped well around the base of each plant, then water the compost in well.

*Visit [www.gardening.cornell.edu/compost](http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/compost) for more resources on making your own compost and vermicompost at home.*

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Most people think of plants as very passive organisms. They grow almost imperceptibly, and only once a year do they flower or produce edible products. However, plants are very active in ways that are not so obvious to the casual observer. For example, plants change the chemistry of the soil and influence the types of microorganisms that grow there. Some will poison their neighbor's offspring to maintain a competitive advantage, while others change the environment in ways that benefit other species. Plants wage a constant battle with insects, relying heavily on chemical warfare.

Home gardeners unencumbered by the need for specialized equipment or row crop production, have rediscovered some of the beneficial interrelationships among plants. This knowledge, coupled with a long tradition of folklore, is being used to improve home garden production.

**Borage:** Deters tomato hornworms and cabbage worms. One of the best bee and wasp attracting plants. The leaves contain vitamin C and are rich in calcium, potassium and mineral salts. Plant near tomatoes to improve growth and disease resistance. After you have planted this annual once it will self seed. Borage flowers are edible.

**Basil:** Planted with tomatoes is said to improve growth and flavor. Basil can be helpful in repelling thrips. It is said to repel flies and mosquitoes. Leaves are edible and a popular culinary herb.

*Visit [www.gardening.cornell.edu/companionplant](http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/companionplant) for this entire factsheet.*

**Yellow Pear**
Open Pollinated. Heirloom. Main season pear variety. Indeterminate plants bear yellow, 3/4- to 1-ounce, 1 1/2-inch fruit. Tolerant to Late Blight. 70 to 80 days.

**Celebrity**
Hybrid. Main-season standard tomato with red, 7- to 10-ounce, fruit. Compact, determinate plants. Resistant to alternaria, fusarium race 1 and 2, verticillium, nematodes and tobacco mosaic. All American Selection. 70 - 75 days.

**Opalka**
Main-season, heirloom, paste tomato with bright-red, 3- to 5-inch, solid, bull's horn shaped, dry-textured, nearly seedless fruit in clusters of 3 to 5. Indeterminate plants. 83-90 days.

The ecological garden: Companion Planting
Peppers

The ecological garden: Shredded Leaf Mulch

For as long as trees have grown in forests, leaves and needles have fallen to the ground, matted together, and formed a natural protective layer over the soil.

All mulches perform at least three basic functions:

1. Reduce soil water losses.
2. Suppress weeds.
3. Protect against temperature extremes.

In one study comparing various mulch materials with bare soil, soil moisture percentages in mulched plots were approximately twice as high, summer soil temperatures were reduced by 8 to 13 degrees, and the average amount of time required to remove weeds was reduced by two-thirds.

Leaves that have been shredded with a mower or chipper/shredder are sometimes used as a summer mulch. If not shredded finely enough, however, the leaves tend to mat together and form a barrier that blocks free water and oxygen movement into the soil. For best results, allow leaves to partially rot before using them as a mulch. They will finish decomposing in place, contributing humus, nitrogen, and other nutrients to the soil.

Visit www.gardening.cornell.edu/mulch for the entire mulch fact sheet.

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Sweet Chocolate
Sweet bell type. Plants bear smooth, medium-sized, 2 1/2- by 4-inch, mild, snub-nosed, green fruit at 58 days maturing to brown with thick red flesh. Heavy fruit set and tolerant of cool nights.

Numex Joe E Parker
Multipurpose Anaheim type chile. Medium-tall productive plants bear 6- to 8-inch by 2-inch, thick-fleshed, bright green fruit that mature to mahogany then red, but are mostly eaten green. Harvest at 70 days green, 95 days red.

Carmen
Early, sweet, Italian-type hybrid pepper. Upright, 28-inch by 16-inch plants bear wide-shouldered, horn-shaped fruit that mature from green to red. 2006 All America Selection.
Carrots

The ecological garden: Straw Mulch

For as long as trees have grown in forests, leaves and needles have fallen to the ground, matted together, and formed a natural protective layer over the soil. Mulching can be done after the soil has warmed in spring.

The use of mulches in landscape plantings provides many benefits. When water droplets land on bare soil, the impact causes soil particles to fly in all directions, resulting in soil crusting and slow water infiltration. Most mulches break the impact of the droplets, reducing soil erosion and crusting and increasing the penetration of water into the soil.

In addition, mulches improve soil structure in several ways. As organic mulches decompose, they provide organic matter that prompts soil particles to aggregate. Large aggregates increase aeration and improve moisture conditions in the soil. These conditions, in turn, encourage additional root development and biological activity, further enhancing soil structure.

Straw from wheat, timothy, oats, rye, or barley is widely available and comparatively inexpensive. Care should be taken to purchase straw and not hay, the difference being that hay has seed in it. Straw is cheap and effectively suppresses weeds and reduces soil water losses. As a winter mulch, it protects tender roots from cold temperature injury.

Visit www.gardening.cornell.edu/mulch for the entire mulch fact sheet.

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The ecological garden: Attracting Beneficials

Two large groups, or families of plants, are excellent “lures” for beneficials – the parsley family (Umbelliferae) and the sunflower or daisy family (Compositae).

You can spot members of the Umbelliferae family by their umbrella-shaped clusters of small 5-petaled flowers. The flower head provides a place to land for many insects, especially beneficial wasps. Using a variety of these plants that bloom at different times can make your garden look attractive too. A number of culinary herbs in this plant family including parsley, dill, caraway, cilantro or fennel. Some of these herbs are very attractive to syrphid and tachinid flies, assassin bugs, lacewings and parasitic wasps.

The Compositae (Asteraceae) family is characterized by flower heads that are actually made up of many small flowers growing together. Many flowers are composed of rays around a disk-like center. Many well-known ornamental flowers including marigolds, dahlias, daisies, asters, cosmos, calendula, coreopsis, tansy, yarrow, zinnia, and sunflowers are in this family. Flowering often lasts over a long period of time and there is usually more than one flower per plant. This provides a slow flow of nectar over a long period for the insects. Ladybugs, lacewings, parasitic wasps and some predaceous wasps are attracted to plants in this family. Soldier beetles, flower beetles, and some lady beetles will feed on pollen in addition to feeding on insects. These are all friends to your garden.

Visit www.gardening.cornell.edu/beneficials for the entire fact sheet.

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The idea of stacking crops in both physical space and in time allows for many benefits in the garden, including increased yields from the same space, improved fertility through nutrient cycling, and support of soil biology. Different plants have various root systems which support different types of bacteria, protozoa, and other microbes essential to soil health.

A common phrase that refers to this idea is “succession planting,” where:

a. Two or more crops are planted in succession: After one crop is harvested, another is planted. The length of the season, climate factors, and crop selection are important factors. For example, a cool season crop could be followed by a heat-loving summer crop.

b. Two or more crops are planted simultaneously: Non-competing crops, often with different rates or matery or growth patterns are planted. For example, beets, which do most of their growing underground can be planted along with climber beans or peas, that occupy the vertical layer.

c. The same crop is planted with varieties that have different maturity dates: Often early, main season, and late varities. Planted at the same time, the varieties mature one after the other over the season.

Visit [www.gardening.cornell.edu/successionplanting](http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/successionplanting) for this entire factsheet.

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[http://vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu](http://vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu)
Cover crops help to retain the soil, lessen erosion, and decrease the impact of precipitation on the garden by slowing the runoff of water. They also reduce mineral leaching and compaction, and suppress perennial and winter annual weed growth. The cover crop’s root system also provides organic matter and opens passageways that help improve air and water movement in the soil.

Success in the growth of cover crops requires proper selection of the kind of cover crop, correct timing of seeding, and good management techniques.

Dutch white clover is a slow-growing, nitrogen-fixing perennial. Once established, it provides long-term cover, either alone or with a turfgrass. It is often used in high traffic areas to minimize soil compaction and improve soil health. White clover tolerates wet conditions.

To plant a cover crop, rake the garden area smooth and remove debris or large stones. Broadcast the seed according to the rates on the seed package. Lightly rake again and water the cover crop with your hose set at a fine mist.

Visit [www.gardening.cornell.edu/covercrop](http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/covercrop) for this entire factsheet.

Sugar Ann
Snap. Very early. 2 1/2-inch pods borne on 2-foot vines that don't need support. 1984 All-America Selection. 52 to 58 days.

Dwarf Gray
Heirloom snowpea. 28-inch vines bear 2 1/2-inch pods. Harvest for greens in 32 days and blossoms in 39 days, used for garnishes and in salad mixes.

Green Arrow
Shelling. 9 to 11 peas per pod on 2- to 3-foot vines that don't need support. Tolerant to downy mildew and fusarium wilt. 65 - 79 days.

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The ecological garden: Sheet Mulching

Sheet mulching is a way to remedy lifeless soil, build new nutrient-rich humus, inhibit weed growth, and mulch all at the same time. Whether you want to start a new garden, fill a raised bed with soil or expand an existing garden, sheet mulching is one of the easiest techniques.

1. Mow or cut your lawn, weeds, or other vegetation right down to the ground. Leave this material right there where you cut it (it will breakdown into new soil).
2. Add soil amendments if needed (as determined by a soil test).
3. If you have compost materials that may contain weed seeds (like fresh manure, leaves, or hay), spread them in layers on the ground.
4. Lay down a weed barrier. Use large sheets of cardboard from appliance stores if possible, because these last longer and are quicker to lay down. You can use layers of non-glossy newspaper too. Make sure to have a 4- to 6-inch overlap where sheets meet so buried weeds can’t find a route to the surface.
5. Add your final top mulch layer, at least 3 inches thick. Water the whole bed thoroughly once again.
6. You can plant right into the bed you made if you like. To plant a large transplant, just pull back the top layers until you get to the weed barrier (cardboard or newspaper). Cut an X into it, peel back the corners of the X and dig a hole. Throw a double handful of compost in the planting hole and then put in the plant. Pull the layers and top mulch back around the plant, water well, and you’re all set.

Visit www.gardening.cornell.edu/sheetmulch for this entire factsheet.

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Cornell Garden-Based Learning

http://vegvariety.cce.cornell.edu
Pole Beans

The ecological garden: Cover Crop Mix

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Success in the growth of cover crops requires proper selection of the kind of cover crop, correct timing of seeding, and good management techniques.

For New York conditions, annual ryegrass should be considered first for a garden cover crop. It is a vigorous grower with an extensive root system that occupies the same root zone as the garden plants without suppressing growth.

Buckwheat is a short season annual with a delicate, fibrous root system. Since it establishes quickly, it is useful for weed suppression. It also mellows the soil while improving aggregate stability.

To plant a cover crop, rake the garden area smooth and remove debris or large stones. Broadcast the seed according to the rates on the seed package. Lightly rake again and water the cover crop with your hose set at a fine mist.

Visit www.gardening.cornell.edu/covercrop for this entire factsheet.

Kentucky Wonder
Heirloom pole green bean. Vines bear 9-inch oval, thick, curved, green pods that are stringless when young. Widely adapted. Can be harvested for dry/shell beans. Also known as 'Old Homestead'.

Fortex
Pole green/French filet bean with round, stringless, 7- to 11-inch dark-green pods stay tender after walnut-brown beans enlarge. Resistant to anthracnose and common bean mosaic.

Northeaster
Dutch pole green bean with flat, stringless, 8- by 3/4-inch pods with white beans. 55 days.

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