

## CARE OF THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

SUSTAINABLE GARDENING uses practices that allow plants to thrive with minimal inputs of labor, water, fertilizer and pesticides. It is a thoughtful balance between resources used and results gained while maximizing positive effects and minimizing negative effects.

### Key Concepts

- Healthy soil means healthy plants.
- Healthy plants have fewer problems and more productive harvests.
- Plant needs change with stages of their life cycle so adjust management.
- Problems arise from a single or multiple stress factors such as compacted soil, plant intolerance to site conditions, improper planting, weather, soil and water problems and insect/disease attacks. Monitor conditions regularly.

### Key Techniques

- Good **soil management** - 80% of all plant problems are related to soil conditions.
- Plant selection - right plant, right place (zone, cool/warm season, hardy/tender, sun/shade, dry/moist, soil conditions; info on seed packets, plant tags).
- Correct water and irrigation management (timing, amount, frequency).
- Use optimal cultural care related to specific crop needs throughout the growing season - factors such as planting dates and depths, variety requirements, spacing, diversity, air flow, fertilizers, mulching, watering, proper harvesting, etc.
- Consider weather influence on plant growth and pest potential (temperatures, wind, rain, timing of insect activity).
- Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) - a strategy to prevent and suppress pests (insects and diseases) with minimal impact on human health, the environment and non-target organisms (such as bees and other beneficial insects).