

VEGETABLES

Care Sheet · www.LibertyFamilyFarms.com · Ludlow, Massachusetts

Trellis Training

Cucumbers like to climb, so provide a trellis of some sort for them to grab onto in the garden. This will keep them from twisting around your other plants.

Zucchini and Yellow Squash behave in a similar fashion. If using a vertical trellis with squash, be careful to support the fruits when they get heavy. Make a sling out of some repurposed fabric to secure the fruit to the trellis until you are ready to harvest it.

Eat The Flowers

Did you know that Zucchini flowers are edible? Plants have both male and female flowers, but it's better to pick the male blossoms that grow on slender stems rather than the female blooms attached to the fruits. Rinse the flowers gently and dry on a paper towel. Dip in a simple batter of flour, salt, and sparkling water before frying in olive oil. Blooms can also be stuffed with a ricotta filling before frying—you'll find many recipes for fried Zucchini flowers online.

Grow Your Own

Go beyond Tomatoes and Peppers to round out your summer garden. Cucumbers are crowd-pleasers for slicing, snacking, and pickling. A bed of Lettuce in the garden translates to a bed of lettuce on your plate! Yellow Squash and Zucchini are great for grilling and other summer dishes. Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, and Cabbage are ready to plant now for harvest a bit later in the season. All require good garden soil, full sun, and regular water.



Cucumbers For Pickles Or Salad

There are two types of cucumbers for you to choose from, or plant some of each: *pickling* and *salad*. Pickling Cucumbers have thicker skin that stands up to the briny pickling process without getting mushy. Salad Cucumbers have thinner skin that's better for eating raw in a salad. They also have very few seeds and are good for slicing. If you're already growing Tomatoes, consider adding salad Cucumbers and some Lettuce plants to the garden. You'll harvest fresh salad all summer without a trip to the market!



Cool Weather Crops

Some vegetable crops thrive in the cooler weather. Frost and chilly temperatures actually improve their flavor.

Broccoli: Space plants 12 to 20 inches apart. Water well at planting and consistently after that, especially during dry spells. Harvest in the fall by cutting the heads from the plant, taking at least 6 inches of stem. It's best to harvest Broccoli in the morning when the buds of the head are firm and tight.

Brussels Sprouts: Plant 18 to 24 inches apart. Brussels Sprouts will withstand frost and can be picked until a hard frost strikes. Harvest when sprouts are firm, green, and 1 to 2 inches in diameter. Twist sprouts until they break away from the plant. Full grown sprouts keep well on the plant. It can be covered with hay or leaves in late fall and the little sprouts pulled off as needed through the winter.

Cabbage: Space plants 12 to 24 inches apart; the closer you plant them the smaller the heads will be. Water 2 inches per square foot per week, making sure plants do not dry out in summer heat. Use a sharp knife to cut the heads off at the base when they are the size you like and are firm.

Leave A Zucchini On Your Neighbor's Porch

We've all been there: a well-meaning neighbor offers an enormous squash from their garden! Share the fruits of your labor, of course, but try to pick Zucchini and Yellow Squash as soon as they reach a usable size, about 6 to 8 inches. Smaller fruits are far more tender and tasty. These plants are vigorous growers so you'll get plenty of fruit. Remember to cut them from the vine rather than pulling, and leave a basketful on the porch of a lucky neighbor!

Cruciferous, Nutritious, And Delicious

Cool weather vegetables should be planted in mid-to-late summer for harvesting in the fall. These include Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, and Cabbage, all cruciferous vegetables and members of the brassica family. They are crunchy and highly nutritious, containing a number of vitamins and minerals, and each one is a good source of fiber. All have become trendy, with new and delicious ways of preparing them popping up on TV and the Internet. One favorite way is roasting—it brings out their natural sweetness. Cut to size and toss with a little olive oil, salt, and pepper. Place on a sheet pan in the oven at 400°F for 20 to 25 minutes. Add garlic and/or red pepper flakes for some zing, or sprinkle some Parmesan cheese on top when serving.

