SITE ASSESSMENT

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR PLOT

THE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF A MICROCLIMATE OR AREA IN THE GARDEN ARE DETERMINED BY SEVERAL FACTORS:

Aspect

What is the climate in your location? Which direction does the slope face? What is the path of the sun throughout seasons? Where are the shady and sunny spots throughout the year?

Topography & Exposure

Where are the dry and wet areas? How steep/ flat is the site? Which parts are exposed or sheltered and from which direction? How does the wind move through the site/area?

Soil type

What type of soil do you have on your plot? Conduct a texture by feel analysis to work out the amount of sand, silt and clay. This will tell you how well it holds nutrients and water.

Temperature

Are there any frost pockets? Or are there any materials that are high in thermal mass (like brick walls) that will accumulate heat in the day and release it at night?

Soil depth

Dig a soil pit. How deep is your top soil? Are there roots, worms or other soil life in the top layer? What is the colour and smell of the soil? Do the soil aggregates hold together?

Pollution

How close is your plot to a road? Can you create or grow pollution barriers/grow food away from this perimeter? Are there materials that might leach pollutants into your soil?

SITE STRATEGY

DECIDING ON THE APPROACH TO YOUR PLOT

THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO CULTIVATE LAND THAT YOU MAY WANT TO CONSIDER AS A COMMUNITY:

Biodynamics

Considers the land as an organism, working with natural rhythms, cycles and biodynamic preparations to balance different forces in plant development - connecting plant and soil.

Permaculture

A sustainable design system that can be applied to food growing as well as other aspects of society. It prioritises balancing earth care, people care and fair shares.

Agroforestry

Creates edible forest gardens with seven layers in the growing system as alleys to one another: Canopy, Under story, Shrubs, Herbaceous, Root, Ground cover & Climbers.

No-dig

Using layering on the surface to improve soil structure, this low maintenace method retains moisture and prevents damage to soil organisms and ecosystem but is resource heavy.

CSA or Community Gardens

Grower/community led. These approaches enhance connections to food sources and nature while contributing to food security and the local economy.

Rewilding

Regenerating land through rewilding to encourage self-sustainaing ecosystems to flourish benefiting local and wider communities through the restoration of the land.

SITE PLANNING

DECIDING WHAT TO GROW ON YOUR PLOT

THERE ARE MANY CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLANNING YOUR CROP AND SITE LAYOUT:

Observation

Observing your plot over a year will teach you about what happens during each of the seasons. Observing your capabilites as a community is also essential. Start small.

Layout

Think about where your paths and beds would work best and mark them out. Lay beds out East to West, decide where to put plants and if using crop rotation, companions or guilds.

Crop rotation

Good practice for maintaining soil fertility, increasing yields and reducing the lifecycle of pests and diseases without the need for chemicals. Requires planning.

Companion planting

Using the beneficial relationships between plants to increase health of plants and their yields. Can combine ornamental with food crops and include perennial plants and be beautiful.

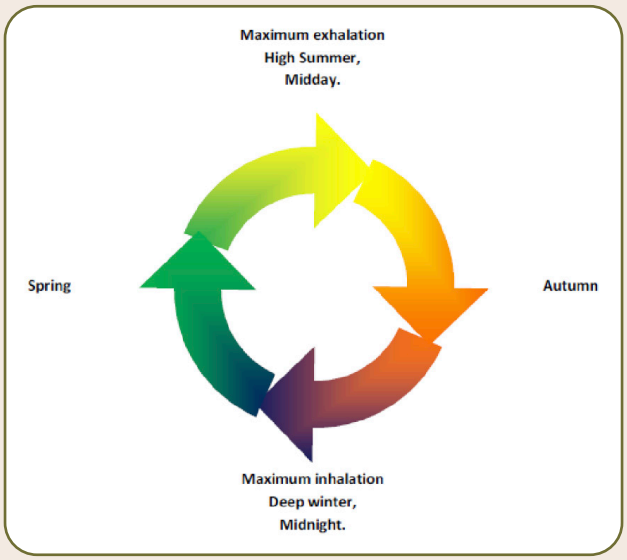
Growing plan

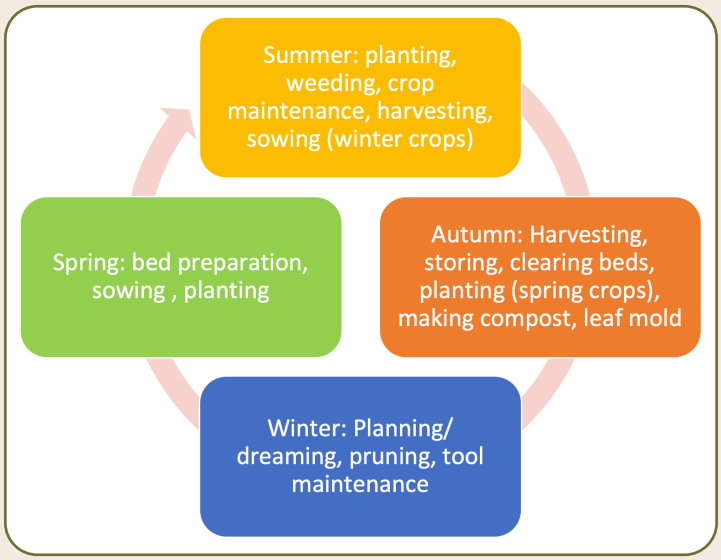
Deciding on which crops to grow and whether to include annuals and perennials means getting to know the different plant families and their characters and needs.

Sowing Plan

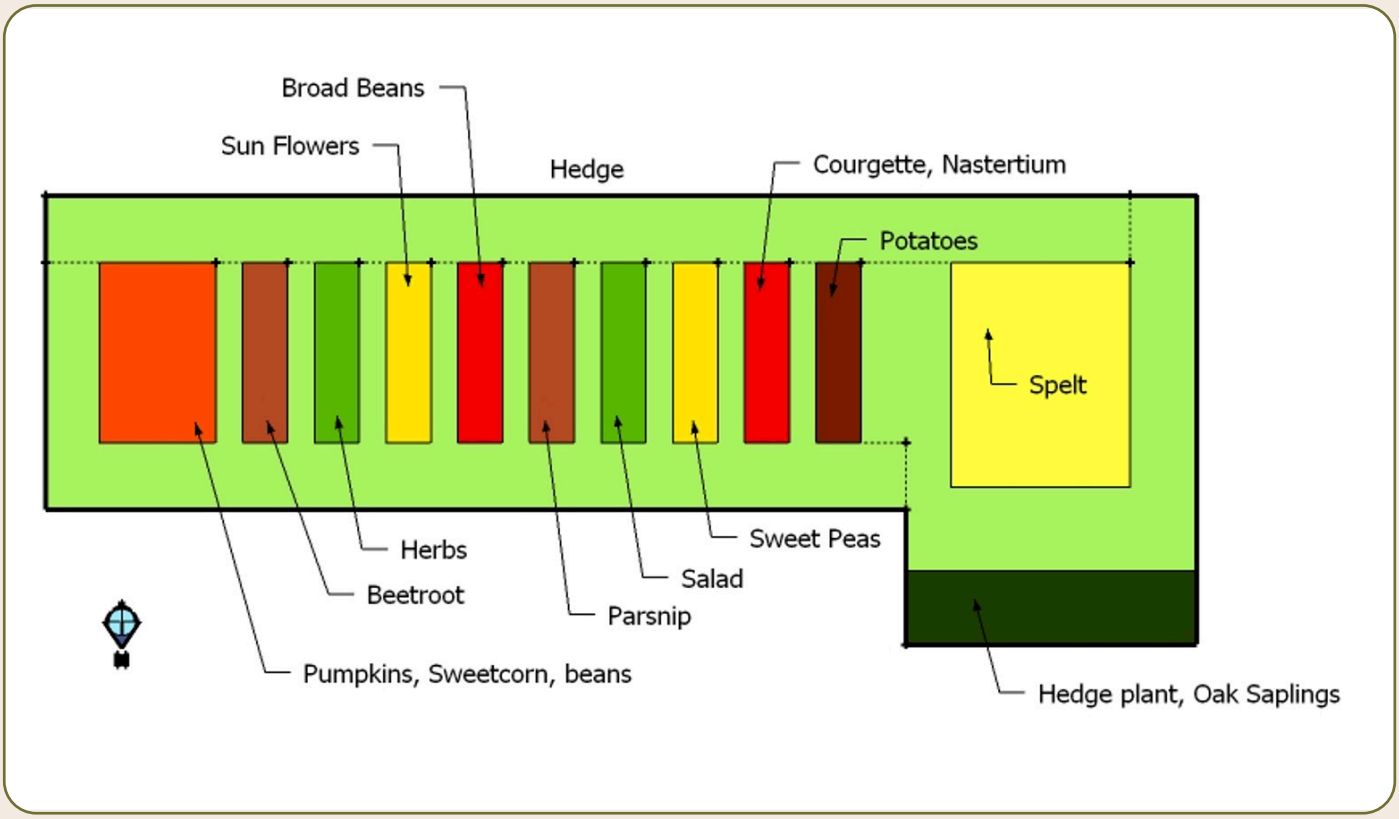
Create your own sowing plan (digital or analogue) considering successional sowing, companion planting, early, main and late crops, growth speed and winter food supply.

Observation





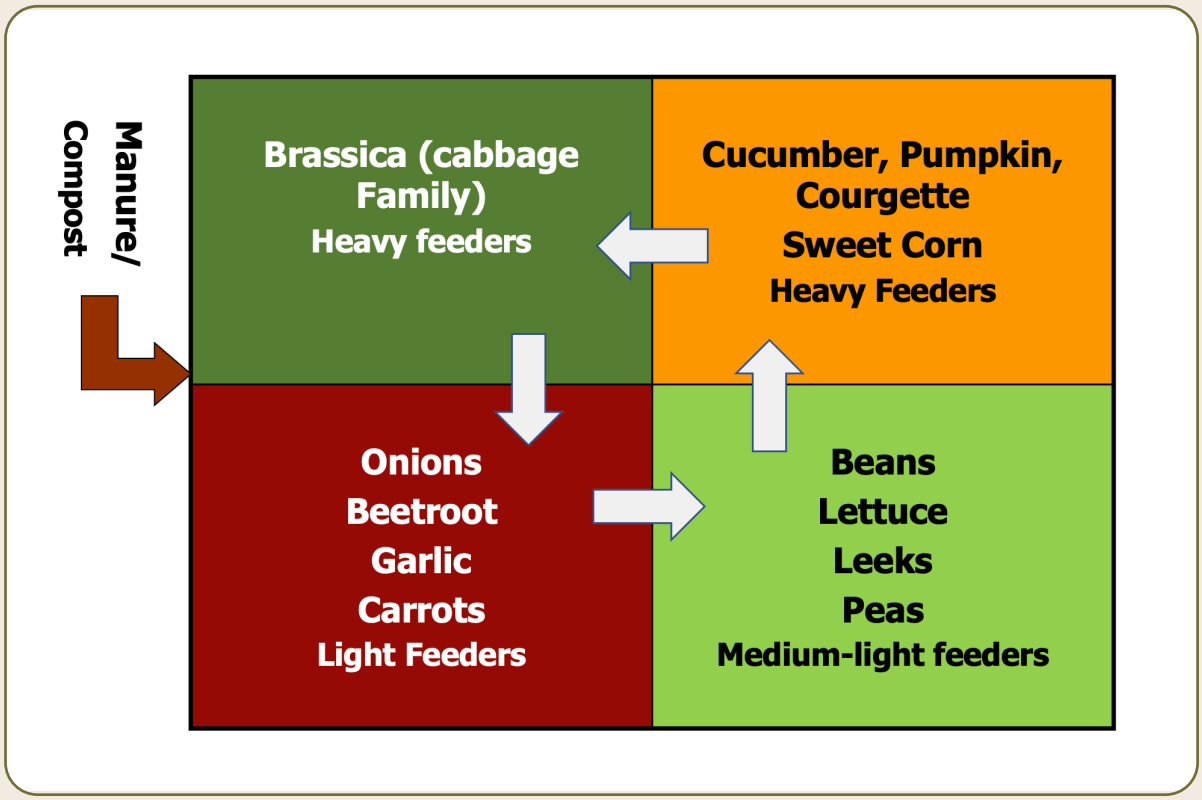
Layout



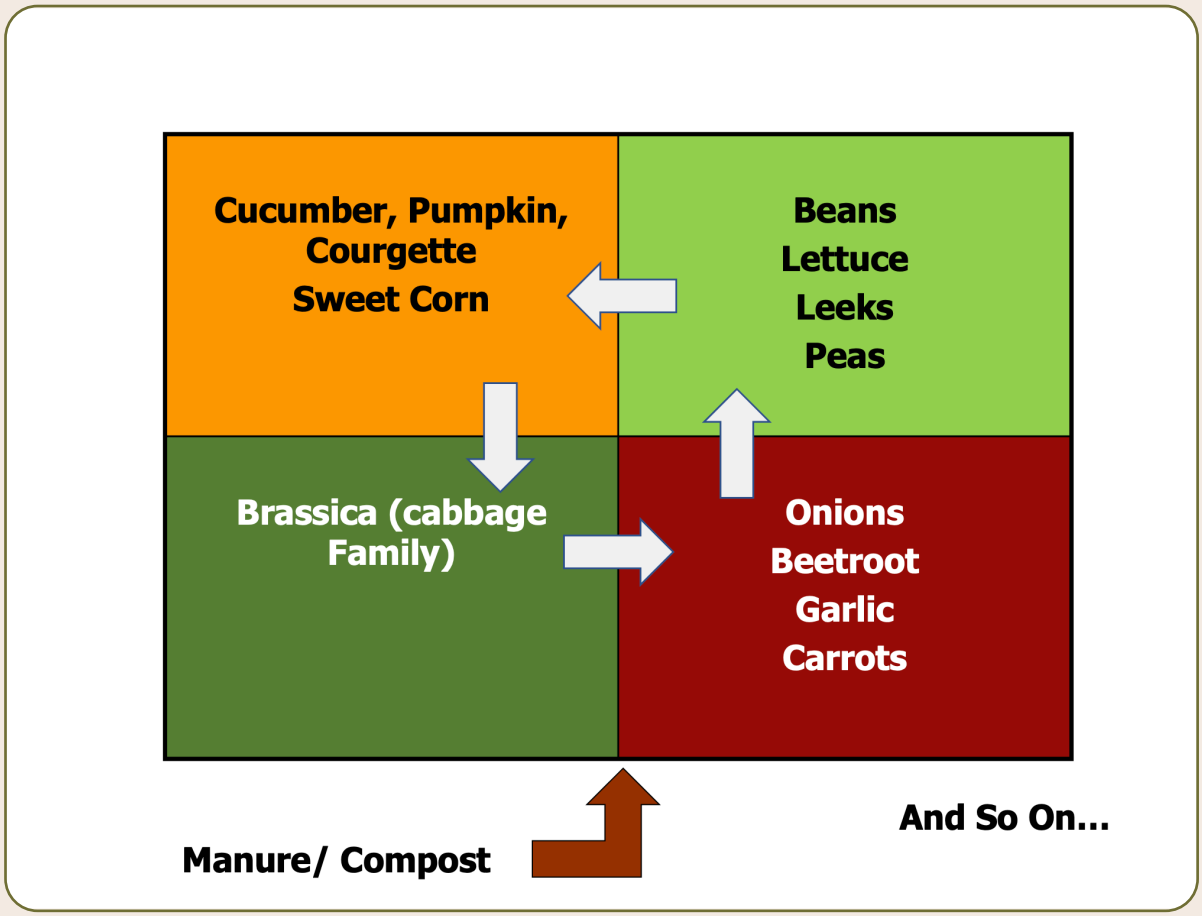
Space crops and paths to ensure you can access all the beds.

Crop rotation

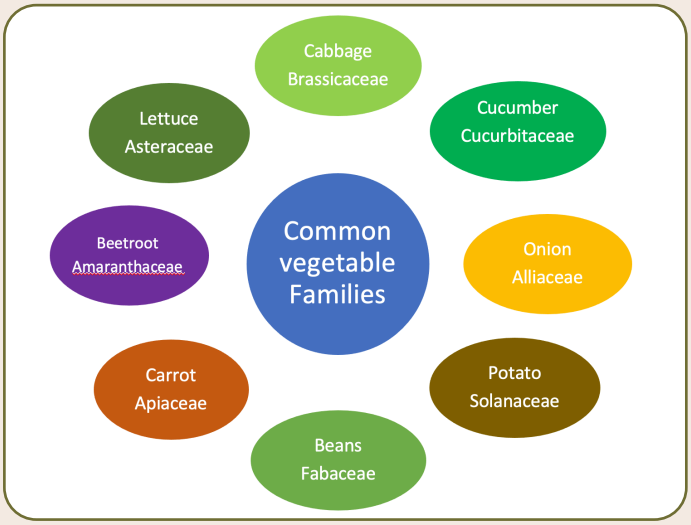
YEAR 1



YEAR 2



Plant families



Heavy Feeders Composted manure	Medium Compost/ Nothing	Light Feeders Nothing
Cabbage Family Cucumber and Pumpkin Sweet corn Potatoes Tomatoes	Lettuce Leeks Peas Beans Beetroot Sunflowers Sweet peas	Onions Shallots Garlic Carrots Parsnips Herbs Flowers

Cabbage - Brassicacae

Big variety of crops
Generally suited to British climate
Hardy- winter supply
Heavy feeders
Good weed supression
Potential issues:
Club root, flea Beetle, Cabbage white

Onion - Alliaceae

Bulbs and seeds
Biennials
Low –medium fertility
Well drained soil
Hardy- winter supply
Potential issues:
Weeds, White rot

Cucumber - Cucurbitaceae

Large group of beautiful shaped and coloured veg
Warm conditions
Heavy feeder
Good weed suppression
Potential issues:
Powdery mildew, Red spider mite, Cucumber mosaic virus

Potato - Solanaceae

Also called 'Deadly Night Shades'
Heavy feeders
Warm conditions
Potential issues:
Blight, Red spider mite