



What is Mixed Vegetable Gardening ?



Mixed vegetable gardening means planting lots of different types of plants together. In conventional gardening,



A mixed vegetable garden, Begnas, Nepal

different varieties of vegetable are usually planted in different areas of the garden. So cabbage, onion, lettuce, radish, pea, etc. are all in their separate places. However, there are beneficial relationships between many types of vegetable and herb plants, which help them to grow. When plants grow separately, these benefits are lost to the system. This is one reason why various problems can start to affect the vegetables. To solve these problems farmers must then work harder at weeding, pest control, irrigation, etc. Without this extra work, production can be lost.

Mixing different species together helps the different crops. So in this chapter information is provided on how to plant and maintain a mixed vegetable garden.

Why plant a Mixed Vegetable Garden ?

Many problems can affect the success of vegetable gardening. For example :-

- lack of seed & seedlings
- lack of water
- lack of time
- lack of knowledge
- lack of fertility
- lack of space
- pests & disease or being eaten by livestock

These problems can make vegetable production seem very difficult. They can cause the garden to fail, or productivity to be less, even with high inputs.

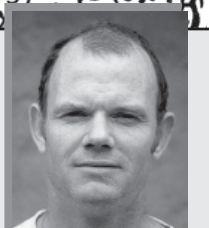
Benefits of Mixed Vegetable Gardening

- less pest and disease
- less weeding
- less need to irrigate
- many types of vegetable in the same place
- no space is wasted
- vegetables can be harvested over a longer time
- high production in a small area



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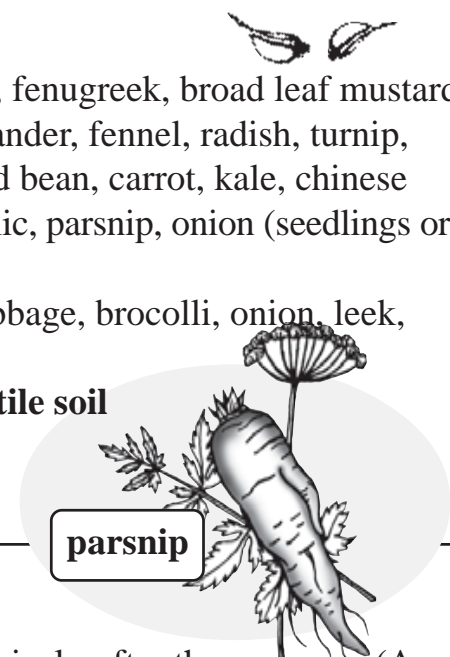


How to plant a Mixed Vegetable Garden ?

If you have your own good method of growing vegetables, don't stop all at once to try mixed vegetable gardening. Try it out on a small area of your vegetable garden and see. If it works well, you can increase it next year.

Materials needed

- **seed** :- mustard, buckwheat, fenugreek, broad leaf mustard, lettuce, chard, beetroot, coriander, fennel, radish, turnip, kohlrabi, spinach, pea, broad bean, carrot, kale, chinese cabbage, pak choy, basil, garlic, parsnip, onion (seedlings or starts), etc.
- **seedlings** :- cauliflower, cabbage, broccoli, onion, leek, marigold, etc.
- **compost**
- **light (fine) mulch**
- **ash, oil seed cake**
- **fertile soil**



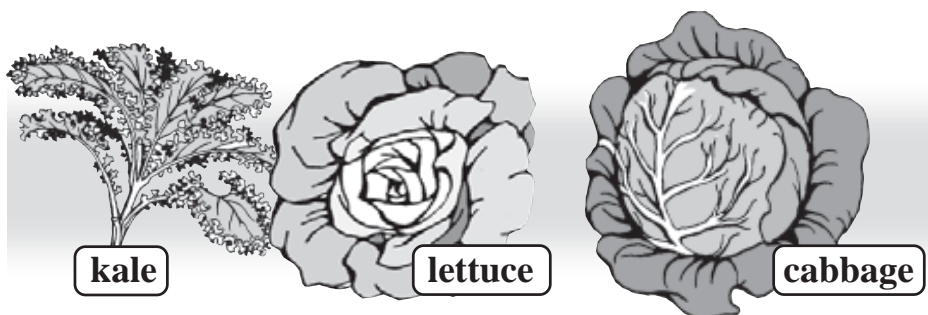
Time to plant

- low-lying tropical or sub tropical - after the monsoon (Autumn)
- high altitude or temperate areas - in the early spring

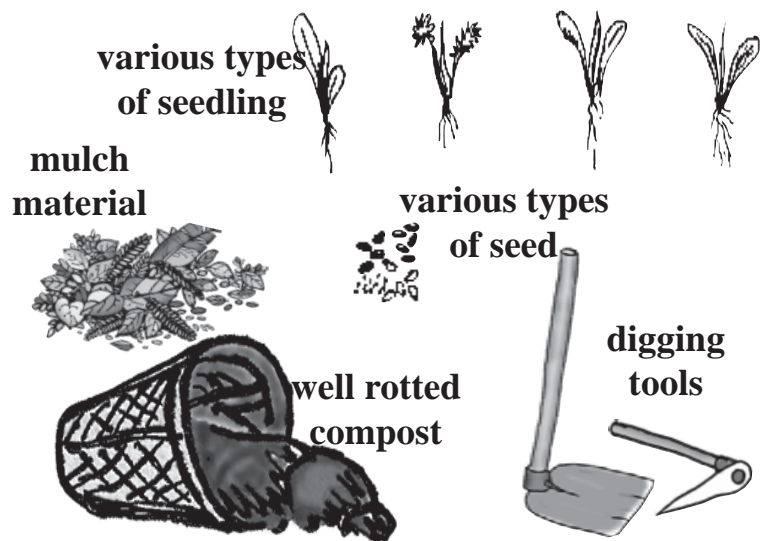


Preparing the garden

The more fertile the soil is, the less preparation is needed. Dig the area, mix in compost and make the soil fine. Make garden beds according to your needs and the shape and slope of the land. If the width of the beds is 4 feet then the centre of the bed can be reached without treading on the soil.

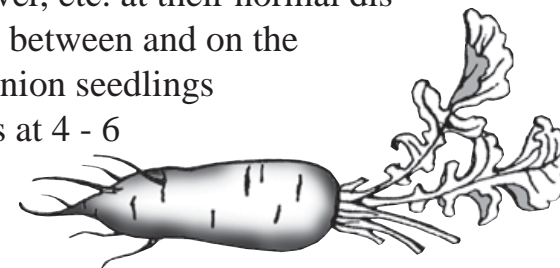


Materials Needed to plant a Mixed Vegetable Garden



Planting Seedlings

The soil should be fertile and fine to plant seedlings. Plant cabbages, cauliflower, etc. at their normal distance of 12-18 inches. In between and on the edges of the beds plant onion seedlings or starts, and garlic bulbs at 4 - 6 inch intervals.



Sowing Seeds

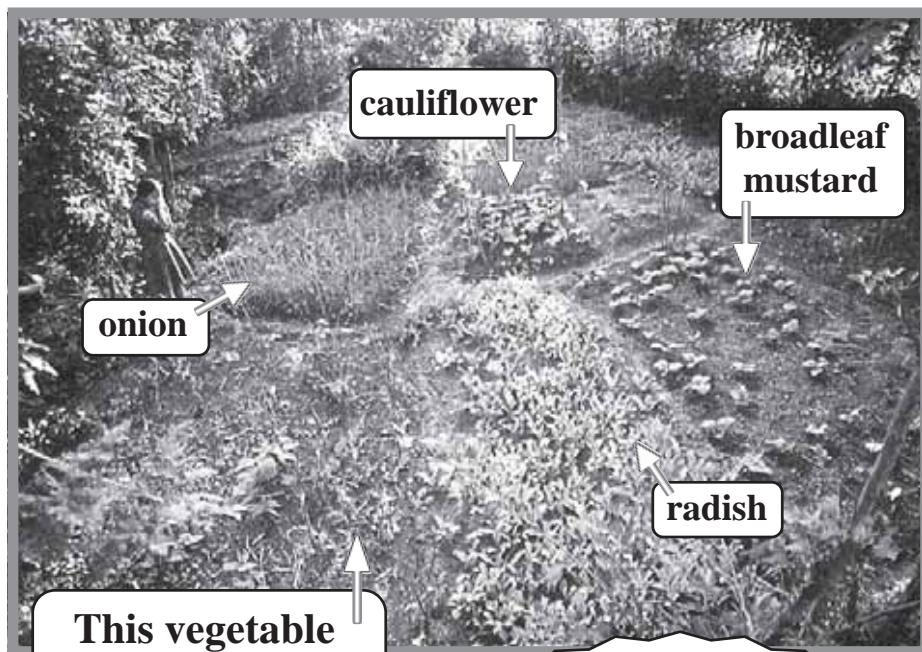
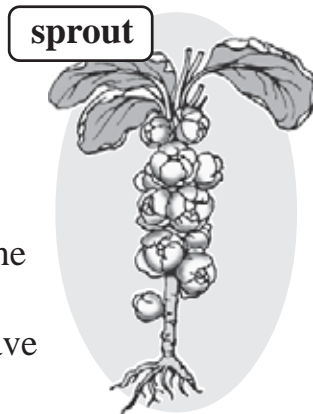
First sow the large seeds :- pea, radish, broad (fava) bean, climbing or dwarf beans, etc. are planted at intervals of 6 inches. Make a small hole with your finger, plant the seed, and cover. Then, thinly sow all other vegetable or herb seed except the mustard, buckwheat or fenugreek. Lastly, after planting the seedlings and sowing the seed, thickly sow the mustard, buckwheat and/or fenugreek. If you don't have all of these 3, any one or two of them will do. On the edge of the beds it's good to plant or sow **companion plants**, such as lemon grass, marigold, basil, worm-wood, comfrey, etc



Different types of vegetables are good for our health

Covering the soil

After planting everything, sprinkle ash on top. Then cover with fine, fertile soil - enough to cover all the seed and ash. Finally, taking care not to cover the seedlings, add a thin mulch to cover all the soil, and water well. Now your mixed vegetable bed is complete, and all you have to do is harvest !



This vegetable garden looks good, but all the species are separate, so it takes more work.

Now lets see how much work it takes to look after a mixed vegetable garden



Let's See

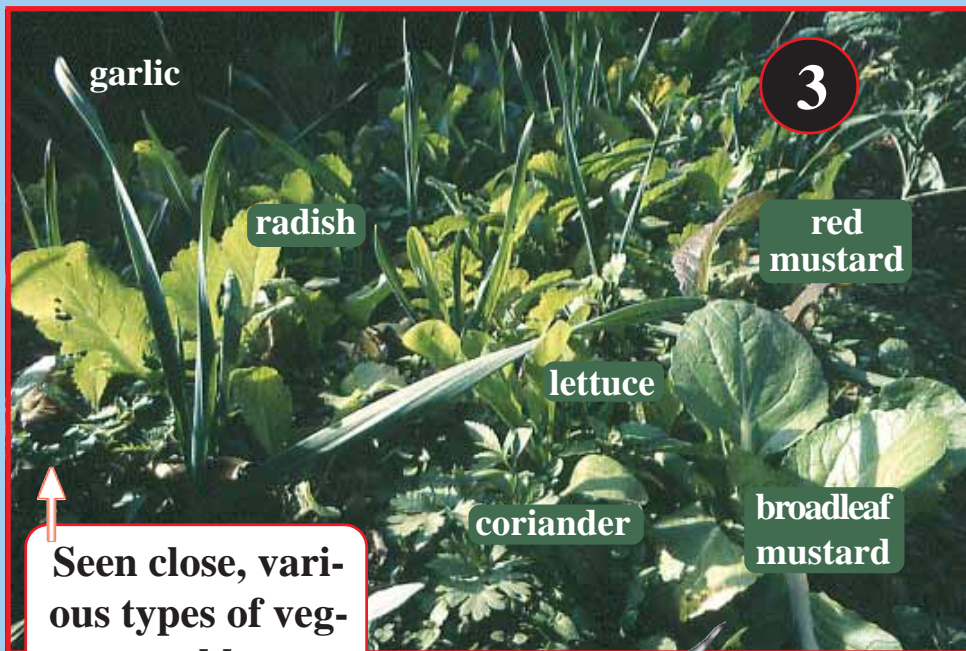
How to make a Mixed Vegetable Garden



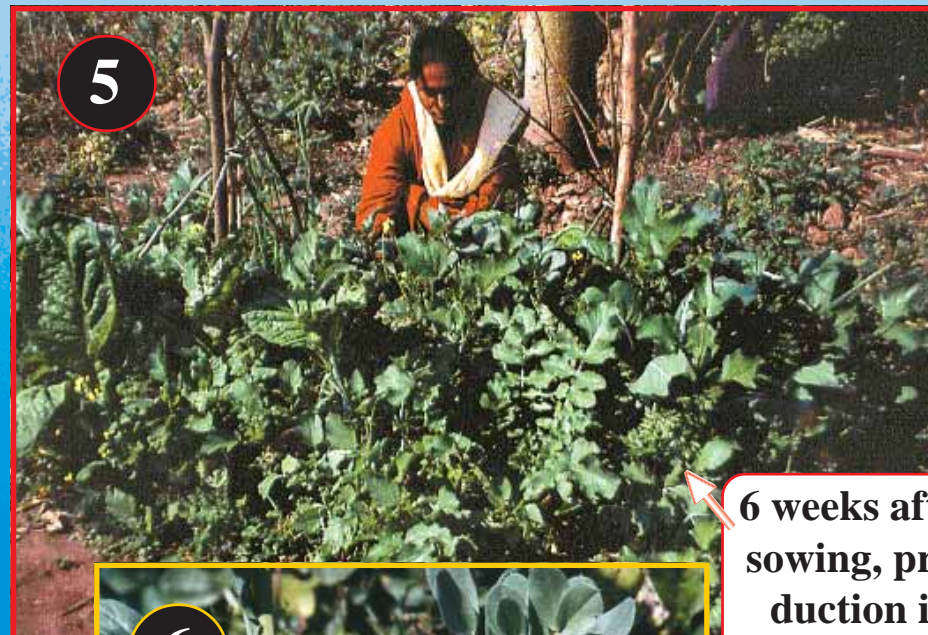
One week after sowing, mustard, fenu-greek, radish and onion bulbs have started to germinate. Cauliflower seedlings have also been planted

After 3 weeks all types have germinated. Broad bean, buckwheat, Swiss chard and kohlrabi can also be seen.

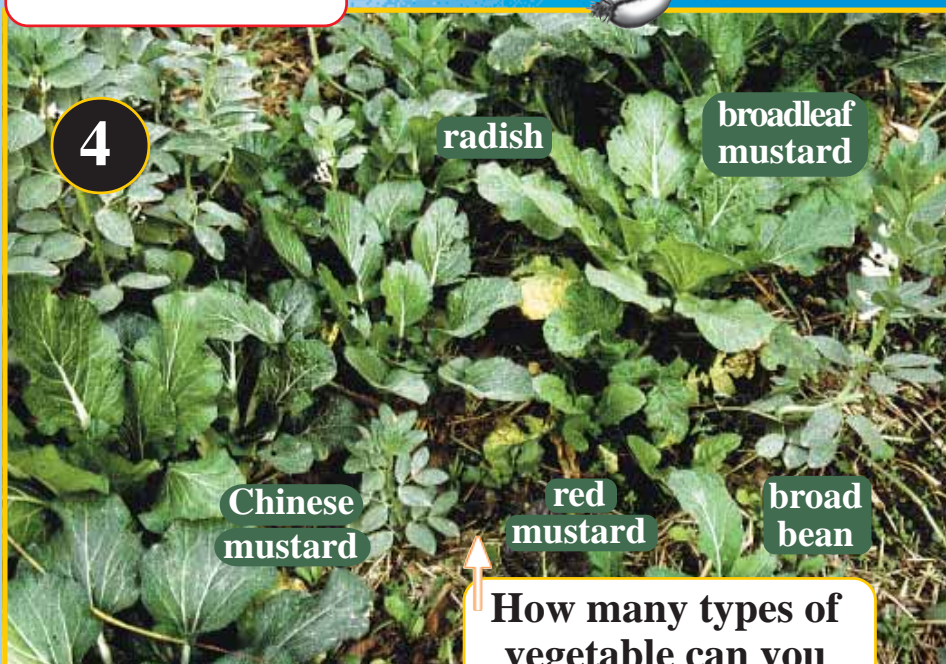




Seen close, various types of vegetable



6 weeks after sowing, production is good and bare soil can't be seen



How many types of vegetable can you count ?



Because of different types of leaf shape, leaf texture and colour, there are less pest problems

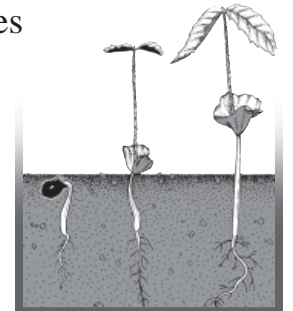


Maintenance

How to maintain a Mixed Vegetable Garden

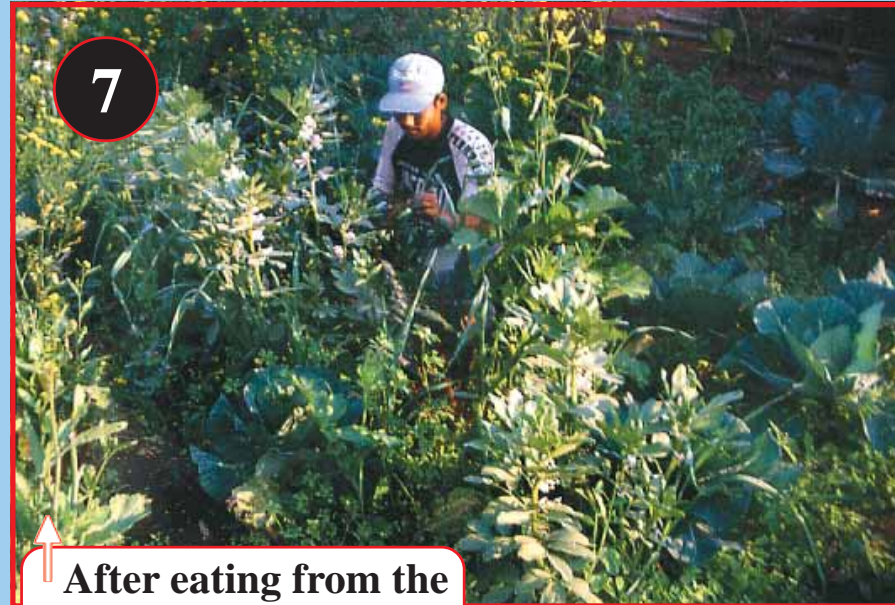
By making the bed in this way, less maintenance is needed later on. Weeding and watering may still be needed according to site, but the mulch, and the density of plants help to conserve moisture and keep weeds down.

In a bed planted like this, first the mustard will germinate. It will be followed by broad leaf mustard, radish, fenugreek, buckwheat, and so on. The mustard, fenugreek and buckwheat will grow very densely, and help prevent weeds from growing to leave minimum weeding. From 2-3 weeks, production starts with mustard leaves being picked as a greenleaf vegetable. Shortly after, buckwheat and fenugreek can be picked for the same use. Picking of these can continue over the next 2-3 weeks, until they are all gone (except for seed plants).



By this time, other vegetables will start to be ready. Broadleaf mustard, radish leaves, small radishes, lettuce, etc. can be harvested from 1 month after sowing. Fast growing leaf vegetables are picked to make space for slower, longer living species.

So maintenance of the mixed vegetable bed is really just harvesting. If this doesn't happen, the vegetables will grow too thick and the system will lose productivity. The space left by a harvested plant is quickly taken up by another. In this way, the bed never has any empty spaces or bare soil.



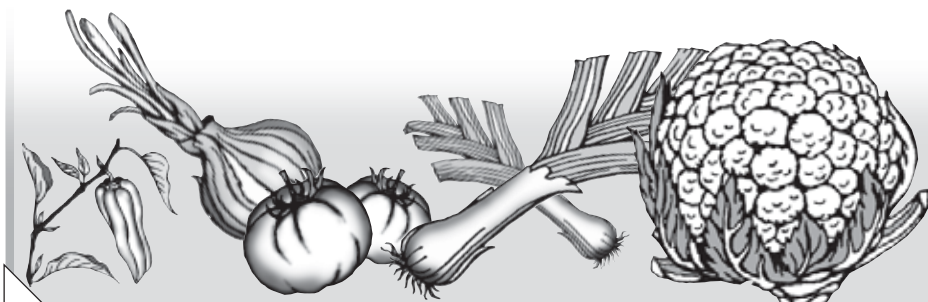
After eating from the garden for 4 months there are still lots of vegetables, and still no bare soil.

This farmer has sown 9 types of vegetable together on his large field.



When can you harvest the fruits of your labour ?

Before 3 weeks	mustard greens
1 month	mustard greens (continued); fenugreek, buckwheat greens; radish greens.
2 months	radish, broadleaf mustard, lettuce, Chinese mustard.
3 months	radish, broadleaf mustard, lettuce, chard, coriander leaves, kohlrabi, turnip, beetroot, etc.
4 months	broadleaf mustard, chard, turnip, radish, carrot, coriander, peas, chinese cabbage, kohlrabi, beetroot, kale, etc.
5 months	chard, carrot, peas, broad bean, kale, cabbage, etc.
6 months	chard, cauliflower, carrot, peas, broad beans, cabbage, onions, garlic, etc.
7 months	cabbage, sprout, onion, garlic, coriander seed, fennel seed, leek, broccoli, etc.



After all plants are harvested

Using this method, vegetables can be easily harvested and eaten for up to 7 months. Finally, after everything has been eaten, add compost and dig the bed ready for the next season. If the monsoon or summer is next, maize, beans, squash, chillies, etc. can be sown. Or a crop of green manures can be grown, or the garden mulched thickly and left fallow. It's up to you, your seasons, your crops and your needs. When the right season starts again, the cycle is complete and the process of mixed vegetable growing can be repeated.



5 months after sowing, radish, broad bean, coriander, etc. produce seed. The soil is still completely covered.



Farmers' Experience

Mrs Ekmaya Shris

From Nepal, Surkhet district, Gumi - 5, Ratadada village, and a member of "Haryali" women's group, Mrs Ekmaya Shris has planted her own mixed vegetable garden. Now let's hear about her experience.



Mrs Ekmaya Shris

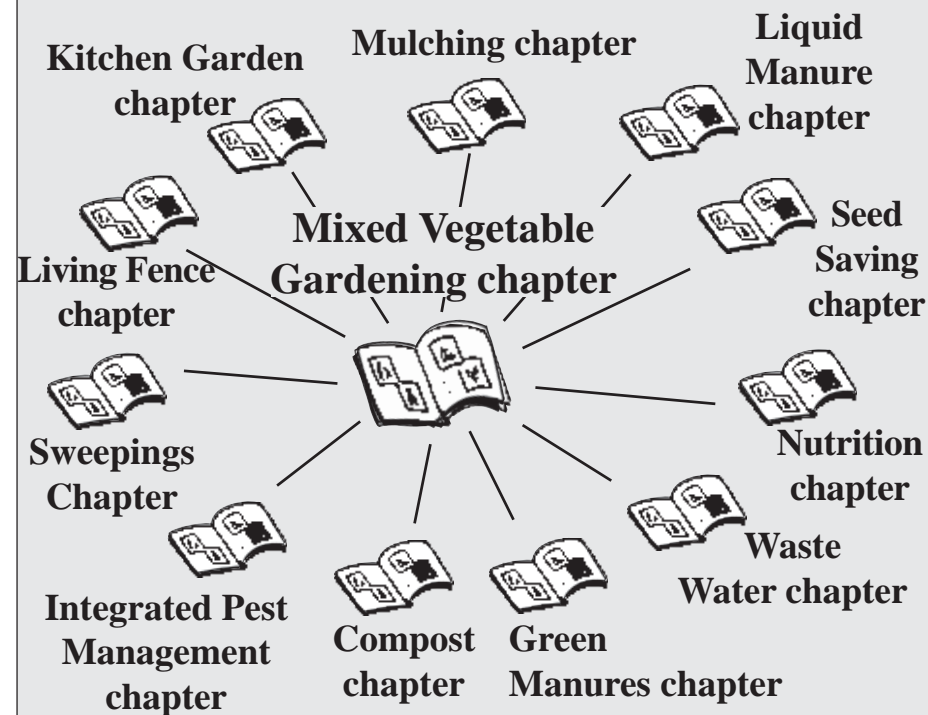
“ I learnt about mixed vegetable gardening from the homestead programme (JPP) so I could grow vegetables better. I planted greens, radish, garlic, broad beans, cabbage, coriander and others all at the same time. The beans were good young, and used for lentils when they were older. It's a good method to protect against pests as well, and by planting lots of types, if one doesn't do well the others will still produce food. After planting, there was always food to harvest, but no work for a whole 5 months. We start in September after the monsoon, and there's enough to eat continuously until April. Weeding isn't needed either even though we only put a light mulch around the plants. This is a great method. Now I can teach what I've learned to others, and I'm still learning more about what I don't know. ”



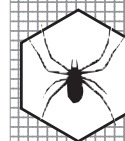
Read On !



Subjects Related to Mixed Vegetable Gardening




Integrated Pest Management chapter :-
how to use local resources and knowledge in many different methods of controlling pests and diseases



 **Kitchen Garden chapter :-** design your garden to produce healthy vegetables at low cost


 **Mulching chapter :-** how to grow more crops with less work while keeping the soil covered

 **Seed Saving chapter :-** information on methods to produce and store various quality seeds at home


 **Sweepings chapter :-** how to make good compost from sweeping the house and yard

 **Waste Water chapter :-** how to get irrigation for the garden from domestic waste water

 **Green Manures chapter :-** use green manures to add fertility to the soil and produce more crops

 **Compost chapter :-** information on how to make good compost quickly is given in this chapter

 **Liquid Manure chapter :-** use local plants to make a liquid for fertilizer and pest control

 **Nutrition chapter :-** information about needs and sources of a healthy diet for all the family

 **Living Fence chapter :-** how to plant not just a fence but also produce fodder, fuelwood, mulch and other benefits

