



CROP SELECTION FOR HIGH YIELD GARDENS

By Jenn Steinfeld, Davis Park Community Garden

For All Space-Intensive High Yield Growing:

Soil and Water are CRITICAL

- Soil enrichment is part of each season
- Fertilizing is critical to season-long health
- Watering is important throughout the season
- Mulching helps with water and fertility
- Stay on top of weeds!
- Plant management – pinching back, harvesting regularly,

Environment

- Sun Exposure
- Soil and Water
- pH
- Lead levels

Crop Habits

- Growth Habit
- Size at Maturity
- Harvest season
- Time to ripen
- Length of season
- Personal taste

Plant Maintenance

- Trimming and pinching back
- Pruning
- Trellising/Staking
- Harvesting and gleaning
- Proper spacing for mature plants
- Air Circulation

Use All Available Space

- Staggered Planting
- Vertical growing
- Trellising
- Interplanting
- Containers: hanging tomatoes, bucket towers, window boxes

Use All Possible Time

- Plant Early
- Succession Planting
- Indoor seed starting
- Buying healthy seedlings
- Cold-hardy crops
- Repeat spring and fall crops
- Season extenders: row covers, tunnels, etc.

Things that make good high-yield crops

- Volume of production per plant
- Continuous fruiting/harvest
- Short time to maturity
- Long season



My Growing Environment

Home Environment

- Part to Full Shade
- Soil with elevated lead levels
- Two 3-ft x 1.5 ft raised beds
- Large Container Garden

Community Garden

- Full Sun
- 3.5 ft x 8 ft raised bed
- Garden in a city park near a middle school
- Garden shares a fence with a playground

Questions I Use to Plan

- What do I like to eat?
- What is difficult to find – grocery store or farmer's market?
- What do I eat in different quantities than it is sold?
- What can I grow more cheaply than I can buy?
- What is more convenient to harvest at home?
- What seeds did I save/swap?
- What grew well? Poorly?

Priorities for High Yield in Small Space

- Very short season; bridge season: radishes, green onions, baby lettuce
- Very long harvest period: kale, collards, peas, cherry tomatoes
- High fruit volume: cherry tomatoes, green beans, peas, hot peppers, summer squash
- Different “layers”: vining, bush, low growing, roots
- Companion planting: three sisters, tomatoes and basil

After 5 years of planning and record keeping:

- My community garden theme is greens, beans, and peas – all high volume.
- I also grow cherry tomatoes and hot peppers in my community garden bed.
- I leave space for one “experiment” each year.
- I grow potted herbs and leaf lettuce at home for ease of harvest.
- I grow garlic in two part shade raised beds at home

Things I No Longer Grow

- Beets
- Full Size Tomatoes
- Bell Peppers
- Eggplant
- Zucchini
- Broccoli
- Cabbage

Things I grow LOTS

- Peas: 4 heirloom varieties
- Leaf lettuce: 6 heirloom varieties, red and green leaf
- String beans: 1 green bush, 2 green and 1 yellow vine
- Kale: 2 heirloom varieties
- Hot peppers: 2-3 varieties depending on year

Red Russian and Tuscan Kale

Long season

High yield

Harvest as needed



Green Arrow and Cascadia Peas

High yield shelling peas
Trellised; shade protected
area to extend lettuce season



Fava Beans

High yield shelling variety,
fresh and dried
Also tall shading crop



Multicolored Heirloom Leaf Lettuce

5 varieties – good for various
salads

Short season, ongoing
harvest, high yield

Garden to Salad Bowl



Garlic: My Big Exception

Low yield, Long growing season, single harvest

Flavor FAR EXCEEDS grocery store varieties

Long storage season



Bottom Line: Grow What You Like!

Things you want to eat
Things you find beautiful
Unusual or rare varieties
Heirloom varieties for seed
saving

