



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

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Experts from *The Edible Garden* at The New York Botanical Garden Offer 10 Tips to Help Your Vegetable Garden Beat the Heat

The New York Botanical Garden has been motivating many to channel their inner vegetable gardener through *The Edible Garden*—an exhibition about growing and preparing good food. Running through October 17, *The Edible Garden* presents locally grown, seasonal food throughout the summer through hands-on gardening for the whole family and inspirational, lush vegetable and herb gardens. With celebrity chef appearances, daily cooking demonstrations, kitchen gardens, children’s programming, a weekly Greenmarket, and home gardening demonstrations, visitors are learning how to create their own edible gardens and transform bountiful harvests into healthful, exceptional meals.

To encourage gardeners who may be frustrated by the record-high temperatures and dry conditions that have been battering the East Coast and their vegetable beds, Sonia Uyterhoeven, the Botanical Garden’s Gardener for Public Education, shares 10 tips she and her fellow *Edible Garden* experts employ that will help your garden beat the heat:

1. **Plan your garden** by grouping plants with similar cultural requirements. Uyterhoeven suggests, “Place together drought-tolerant plants such as many herbs to create low-watering zones.” Some leafy greens will grow fine in part-shade during the heat of the summer.
2. **Amend your soil** with organic matter such as compost or aged cow manure when preparing your vegetable garden for planting to improve the soil structure, increase water and nutrient retention, reduce runoff and compaction, and improve drainage. If you are starting a new garden, add 25 percent by volume. For an established garden, one to two inches of organic matter turned into the soil is sufficient.
3. **Space your plants properly** so they have enough room to grow but are not crowding each other and fighting for root space, light, water, or nutrients. Also, keep your garden well-weeded. Weeds compete with vegetable plants for nutrients and water.
4. **Mulch your garden**, not only to suppress weeds, but also to retain moisture. A two- to three-inch layer of mulch is sufficient for most areas of your garden. Shredded leaves, straw, or salt hay make good options for the vegetable garden. The finer your mulch, the more you can add.
5. **Do not fertilize water-stressed plants.** The salts in the fertilizers will burn the weakened, water-deprived roots. When the soil temperature gets too high and the moisture levels are low, plants start to shut down. This is not the time to encourage growth by feeding them. “At The New York Botanical Garden, we use fish emulsion or a combination of fish emulsion and liquid seaweed to feed the vegetable garden,” says Uyterhoeven. “Be aware that fish emulsion contains oils that could potentially burn the foliage on your vegetables in warm, sunny weather,” she warns. Use with caution or wait for a cooler, cloudy day.

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6. **Water early in the morning**, before the heat of the day, to minimize evaporation. Watering by hand at the base of plants, with a soaker hose, or with drip irrigation is highly efficient. Oscillating sprinklers tend to be less efficient, but can be used early in the day.
7. **Water deeply and less frequently** as opposed to shallow and often. “Deep watering creates deeper and more efficient root systems, Uyterhoeven says. Do not water a plant if it doesn’t need it. Botanical Garden Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections Todd Forrest says, “Whether by hose or Mother Nature, I water so that the whole garden receives about an inch of precipitation per week.”
8. **Let nature do its share.** You do not have to water your garden after a substantial rain. However, sometimes in a heavy downpour rain falls so quickly that it’s not absorbed into the ground. To check if your garden is well-watered, stick a trowel four to six inches into the ground to see if the soil is still moist. If the soil is cool to the touch, it is still holding water.
9. **Some of your plants will wilt in the heat of the day. This does not necessarily mean they need water.** It is a normal defense reaction to high temperatures. If the same plant is wilting in the morning, then it is suffering from water stress. Always check the soil for moisture levels. “Keep a watchful eye on newly planted areas,” cautions Uyterhoeven. “These plants are more vulnerable to water stress since they have not yet had time to establish a good root system.”
10. **Harvest herbs and vegetables in the morning**, after the dew has burned off, but before the heat of the day. Plants suffer from heat stress as much as we do. They are fresher in the morning.

For more information about *The Edible Garden* and to see Sonia Uyterhoeven’s schedule of Home Gardening Demonstrations, visit www.nybg.org.

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays. **ADMISSION PRICES FOR THE EDIBLE GARDEN: Weekends Featuring Celebrity Chefs – Adults \$20, Seniors/Students \$18, Children \$8, Children Under 2 and Members Free; Weekends – Adults \$15, Seniors/Students \$13, Children \$8, Children Under 2 and Members Free; Weekdays – Adults \$10, Seniors/Students \$9, Children \$4, Children Under 2 and Members Free.** Proceeds benefit the Children’s Gardening program. Discounts available for groups of 15 or more; contact Group Tours, 718.817.8687. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. **FOR More information**, please call 718.817.8700 or visit www.nybg.org Read the Botanical Garden’s popular blog, *Plant Talk: Inside The New York Botanical Garden* at nybg.org/wordpress

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden’s general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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