GROWING PLACES

Garden Planning
Getting Started

Make a list.

What am I **excited** to grow and what will I/my family **use**? List these crops and then put them in order of priority.

Why: If a crop falls into one or both categories – exciting and/or useful – you'll be more apt to care for it and feel it's worth the effort when the growing gets tough.

Know your hardiness zone.

Leominster, Fitchburg: USDA Hardiness Zone 5b.

Clinton: USDA Hardiness Zone 6a

Why: USDA Hardiness Zones are based on average minimum winter temps, i.e., how cold it's going to get in a particular region. Many fruits and vegetables we know from the supermarket, like citrus fruits or avocados, need warmer and/or longer growing seasons than ours in order to grow properly. Check that all the crops on your list are appropriate for your zone.

Measure space/time/effort/access against desire.

How much space does each crop need and for how long? Do any need special care, e.g. regular dividing for perennials or trellising for peas? Can you easily get this crop elsewhere – the supermarket, a farm stand, a friend's garden?

Why: With a small space garden, you might find you want to grow far more than you can fit. To evaluate whether a crop makes the final cut for your garden plan, weigh these major considerations of space, time, effort and availability against how badly you want to grow it. Go with your gut feeling; does it make the cut? Reprioritize your list as needed and, remember: you can always plant it next year!

Put it on paper.

Using the information you gathered about your final list of crops, sketch out placement for each crop on a to-scale garden plan.

Why: Sketching a workable plan now means you won't waste time or money in the spring with plants or seeds you discover you can't actually fit in the garden.

Rank	Crop / Variety	Squares