

Benefits of Community Gardens



I live in an apartment in San Francisco. I have a porch, windowsills with different light levels, and some counter space to do any gardening that I'd like to do. However, I don't have a yard. Therefore, if I wanted to get serious about outdoor gardening, I would need to explore other options. That's gotten me wondering about community garden.

San Francisco Loves Community Gardens

[San Francisco has over 40](#) community gardens. In case you didn't know, this sixte is approximately 50 square miles in total. We have lots of people. And yet, we have lots of green space. You'll find mini parks, small parks, rooftop gardens, and large parks all over. Plus we have beaches and other natural landscapes.

So, we have a lot of community gardens. You can join them as a

resident. However, a lot of people want to get in on these. Therefore, there's typically a waiting list.

Benefits of Community Gardens

From what I can see so far, there are a lot of [great benefits](#) to community gardens. There are benefits for the individuals who do the garden as well as for the larger community.

Community Benefits

Gardens strengthen and beautify the local community. They bring the health and wellness of nature to urban areas. People come together in new ways, saying hi to their neighbors as they swap seeds and work side by side. In San Francisco, we often miss out on opportunities to mingle with different generations of people. Community gardens offer a great place to do that.

Sometimes these gardens give back through various programs. They might teach kids about gardening. Perhaps the healthy produce grown is given to people in need. Each garden is different but there are many ways that they give to the community.

Individual Benefits

I actually got started thinking about this when I was recently reading the popular book about Swedish Death Cleaning by Margareta Magnusson. The book is primarily about decluttering, but she mentions gardening several times. She loves gardening, and yet as she aged, she realized that she couldn't do the massive gardening projects that she had done in the past. Therefore, when she downsized to a smaller house, she gifted all of the tools in her gardening shed to the new homeowners, who were thrilled to take on her gardening hobby.

7 Benefits to Consider

She moved to a place that has a garden for the apartment building. And she listed some of the benefits as:

- The whole area is kept beautiful whether or not she does the work.
- There's always someone new to take on gardening tasks if you're no longer up to the task.
- Sharing seeds and tools makes gardening more affordable.

She continues to grow small things on her balcony while also enjoying the community garden. Additional benefits for the individual include:

- An opportunity to learn more about gardening from those who know
- Friendship, connection, a reprieve from loneliness
- All of the mental and physical health benefits of connection to the earth
- Easy access to many different kinds of plants and produce even if you only grow one type yourself then barter

Have you ever tried a community garden? What are your thoughts?

Read More:

- [Expand Your Gardening Possibilities With Seed Swapping](#)
 - [Gardening: More than a Solo Activity](#)
 - [10 Ways to Get Free Plants](#)
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5 Reasons To Use Fish Amino Acid on Your Plants



There are so many great reasons to use fish amino acid in your garden. Also known as fish fertilizer, this product provides nutrition to plants in ways that are similar to, but arguably potentially better than, other organic garden fertilizers. There are different types of fish fertilizer and different reasons to use fish amino acid in your garden.

What Is Fish Fertilizer?

There are [different types of fish fertilizer](#), which all rely on the healthy ingredients in fish to feed your garden. These types include fish meal, fish emulsion, and hydrolyzed fish fertilizer. They're each made a little bit differently. Some smell fishier than others, which people may find deters them from using those products. Some you can make yourself. The point of all of them is to maximize your garden's health and

growth in a natural, organic way.

What Is Fish Amino Acid?

[Fish Amino Acid](#) is a product that you can purchase or make yourself. Basically, you use a fermenting process to bring out the amino acid in fish scraps. You then use this product to improve the organic, natural growth in your garden.

5 Reasons To Use Fish Amino Acid on Your Plants

There are a lot of different reasons to use fish amino acid in your garden. Here are the top five:

1. It's An Age-Old Organic Practice

Indigenous Americans often planted fish in their gardens because they knew that this would help grow their plants. Similarly, fish amino acid has historically been used in Korean natural farming practices. This age-old custom takes us back to the roots of gardening and crop-growing, when people relied on affordable, natural, organic materials. Getting away from commercial, chemical fertilizers is one of the most common reasons to use fish amino acid in your garden.

2. Naturally Provides Nutrients to Plants

Fish fertilizer provides many different nutrients, minerals, and vitamins to your plants. These include calcium, iron, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Help your plants get everything that they need naturally with just a little bit of fish!

3. Plus, It Feeds The Soil

Fish fertilizer feeds your plants. However, it also feeds all

of the soil that your plants are growing in. Your entire garden benefits from adding this product to your gardening process. [Pennington](#) explains that unlike fast-acting chemical fertilizer, slow-acting fish fertilizer feeds the whole garden in the best possible way. Bacteria, worms, and fungi in the soil all use what they need, processing it before it gets to the roots of the plant so that the plant can get exactly what it uses best. This aerates the soil allowing the roots of the plant also to have the best soil in which to thrive.

4. Put Fish Scraps to Use

Frugal gardening goes hand-in-hand with avoiding waste, right? If you already eat fish in your home, then avoid wasting the parts that you don't eat by putting them right into your garden. You can also ask your local butcher for fish scraps. Save them from wasting away in a landfill by turning them into fertilizer.

5. Affordable Fertilizer Option

If you use fish that you or the butcher would throw away anyway to DIY your own fish fertilizer then it's basically going to cost you almost nothing extra at all. Therefore, you save money. You don't have to buy fertilizer when you can make it on the cheap.

Read More:

- [4 Cost-Effective Organic Garden Fertilizers](#)
 - [5 Things to Consider When Recycling Soil](#)
 - [How to Get Free Worms For Your Garden](#)
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DIY Squash Trellis Under \$10



Growing squash is a great idea. There are many great squash varieties to feed your family. However, you want to plan ahead when growing squash. If you don't, then this plant can take over your entire garden. In particular, you'll want to train your squash to grow on a trellis. Here are some great ideas for how to make a DIY squash trellis under \$10.

Why You Need a Squash Trellis

[Rural Sprout](#) explains that squash will absolutely overrun a garden if you plant this vegetable without a trellis. Like an octopus, they'll reach their tentacles all over the place.

This can wreak havoc on your other plants. Therefore, you want to use a squash trellis. You can train the squash to grow up a vertical trellis. According to Rural Sprout, the benefits of vertical gardening for squash plants include:

- Saves space, allowing for more squash growth while retaining space to grow other plants
- Keeps squash fruit off of the ground, improving the fruit and the plants as a whole (yes, squash is a fruit)
- It's easier to harvest squash grown vertically on a trellis
- The vertical design gives you opportunities for enhancing your garden's aesthetic design

Squash To Grow on a Trellis

There are many different types of squash that you can grow in your backyard garden. [Gardening Know How](#) says that some of the best squash for vertical gardening include acorn squash, delicata, yellow summer squash and zucchini. You can grow other squash vertically but the heavier varieties will require stronger trellis reinforcement.

How to DIY Squash Trellis Under \$10

You can purchase a squash trellis. However, frugal gardeners can easily make a DIY squash trellis under \$10. Here are some great examples of how to do so:

Put some basic woodworking skills to the test to create this DIY Squash Trellis under \$10. As you can see, you'll make some simple cuts in your wood. You'll actually use 10 1x2x96 furring strips, which cost less than \$1 each at most home improvement stores. Assemble the smaller and larger pieces as shown in the video, propping them up together to create the squash trellis. As long as you already have the saw and drill,

this is a very affordable project.HJ

Here's another great example of how to DIY a squash trellis. In this example, you buy 5' stakes designed for growing tomatoes and other plants. You attach them to the planter at an angle so that the squash (or in this example, the cucumbers) can grow upwards at that angle. Then you build out the frame to create a fuller trellis. You add wires horizontally within the frame. The vine tendrils from your squash will climb those wires. This is another super simple project under \$10.

Tips For Growing Squash

Here are some additional tips for vertical squash gardening:

- You can adapt these DIY ideas to any wood or fencing that you already have at home. It's great to repurpose those items.
- Secure your vertical trellis posts deep in the ground. You want the bottom of the trellis to be able to bear a lot of vertical weight as the squash plants grow.
- Make sure that your plants get plenty of sunlight.
- Train the plants to grow where you want them to by guiding the vines onto the trellis wires as they grow.
- For heavier squash plants, either grow them on the ground or add slings to support the squash as they grow. Otherwise they can break off at the stems. Watch as they grow in size to get a sense of whether or not you'll need this additional support.

Read More:

- [5 Winter Squash Varieties for the Frugal Gardener Short on Space](#)
- [7 Plants You Can Direct Seed](#)
- [Is It Worth It To Grow Your Own Pumpkins?](#)

Protect The Garden From Excessive Rainfall: Frugal Tips



Farmer in rubber boots standing on muddy dirt road in countryside, feet from above

While it's not necessarily a problem in all locations, many people have to worry about protecting their garden from excessive rainfall.

Plants love [water](#)! Too little, and they'll wither away. But too much water can also cause problems.

Plants that are stuck drowning in waterlogged soil can succumb

to root rot.

These days, [unpredictable weather](#) is more and more commonplace. Periods of drought followed by flash floods are not unheard of. And this wild weather can have negative consequences for your home garden.

So how can you protect your garden from excessive rainfall? Here are a few tips.

How to protect the garden from excessive rainfall

Here's what to do to keep your plants from drowning after a rainstorm.

Plan ahead.

I'm not talking about checking the weather. I'm talking about being particularly careful during the garden planning process. Avoid starting a garden in an area where water pools. After heavy rainfall, plants in these areas are more likely to die due to root rot.

And make sure the soil drains well. Add organic matter to the soil to improve its condition and drainage capabilities.

Stop walking on the soil.

Make sure you can reach all areas of your garden plot without having to walk on the soil. Walking on soil compacts it and can make it more likely to become waterlogged in the future.

The [University of Delaware Cooperative Extension](#) has some helpful tips on how to avoid soil compaction.

Quit watering!

This is an obvious one, but it's something people forget to do. Keep an eye on the weather forecast and turn off your sprinklers and irrigation systems before a rainstorm. And I know the weather seems nice right now, but unless your plants are dying of thirst, skip hand watering when a storm is brewing.

Clean your gutters.

Grab a ladder and clean out your gutters to protect your garden from excessive rainfall. Clogged gutters can cause water runoff and flood your garden beds.

Pick plants wisely.

If flooding is an inevitability where you live, choose plants that can tolerate moist, humid conditions. Select disease-resistant varieties that aren't as likely to pick up fungal or viral infections brought on by very wet weather.

Use raised beds.

Raised beds and containers (with drainage holes) are less likely to become waterlogged than in-ground beds. You can find one on [Amazon here](#). They're also great for areas where the soil isn't super fertile. Bonus: No more kneeling and way less bending over!

Add a French drain to your yard.

DIY this helpful drainage solution called a French drain to improve drainage on your property.

Using Shredded Paper As Garden Mulch



USING SHREPPED PAPER

As Garden
Mulch

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Should you use shredded paper as garden mulch? Normally, I spend my time telling you that the [advice you've heard countless times is bogus](#). But using shredded paper in your

garden is actually a great idea.

What is mulch?

[Mulch](#) is a substance added to the garden that helps soil retain moisture and stay cool. It also keeps weeds away and can prevent frost damage in the winter. Organic mulches break down and can eventually improve the condition and nutrient composition of the soil. Non-organic mulches, like plastic mulch, can't break down but can often be reused year after year.

Other things you can use for mulch include:

- wood chips
- leaves
- straw
- coco coir
- compost
- plastic

And yes, you can use shredded paper as mulch! One huge benefit of paper mulch is that it's FREE and super easy to make. If you regularly use a paper shredder, emptying the canister and using the remnants in your garden is a good way to recycle them since [most recycling plants don't accept shredded paper](#).

How to use shredded paper as mulch

The main task you need to complete before using paper as mulch is shredding. You can use a paper shredder to rip the paper into pieces or do it by hand.

If you need to make a lot of paper mulch and don't have a shredder, try getting the family involved in shredding paper.

Be careful when selecting the paper you'll be shredding. Anything thick and glossy—like pages in a color magazine—contains heavy metals that can leach out into the

soil. But newsprint and regular printer paper are generally safe to use as mulch.

As with any kind of mulch, cutting it into small pieces is key. Plus, if you tried to stick sheets of paper over the soil, they'd quickly end up blown elsewhere.

After applying shredded paper to your garden, dampen it with water to keep it from flying all over the place.

Did you know that you can also add shredded paper to your compost bin? If you have plenty of mulch and not enough room in your recycling bin, shredded paper can go into the compost and takes about 2 to 6 weeks to break down. It's considered a "brown" ingredient, so if you drop a lot of shredded paper into your bin, make sure to balance it out with "green" ingredients like grass clippings.

Staying Safe While Gardening During a Heatwave



STAYING SAFE WHILE

Gardening During a Heatwave

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Many gardeners look forward to the [summer](#) because it means that the gardening season is in full swing. By mid-July, plots are lush with produce, and flowers are in full bloom. But mid-

summer is also a ripe time for heatwaves. As the summers get hotter, it's getting more and more important to prepare for scorching weather.

After all, you can't garden if you're suffering from heatstroke. Gardening in the heat requires careful planning and listening to your body.

Tips for gardening in the heat

These tips for gardening in the heat have less to do with caring for your plants and more to do with taking care of yourself. Plants can grow back. But you can't. So let's make sure you stick around to garden another season!

Here's how to stay safe when digging during the hottest months of the year:

- **Avoid the afternoons.** The middle of the day is always the hottest. Don't try to do effort-heavy tasks when the sun is out in full swing. You're asking for trouble if you do this. The morning and evening are the best times for hot weather gardening.
- **Stay hydrated.** If you must go out when it's very hot, make sure to stay hydrated. Bring water with you—ideally with ice.
- **Find some shade.** Chances are, your garden is probably in full sun. If you need to, use some kind of portable shade to keep from overheating.
- **Take breaks.** Regularly stop what you're doing and head to cooler spots in the garden (or inside where there's air conditioning.) When it's really hot outside, don't try to do tasks in long chunks. Split up your gardening day into short mini trips.
- **Cool off with the hose.** I don't usually advocate for wasting water like this, but don't hesitate to use your garden hose to cool down if you're overheating.
- **Ask someone to check on you.** Some people are more

susceptible to the effects of heat. If you know that you struggle in hot weather, ask a housemate or neighbor to check on you periodically.

Signs of heatstroke

Heatstroke is a potentially fatal yet preventable condition that first starts with heat exhaustion. If you notice you're experiencing symptoms of heat exhaustion, find a spot to cool down and make sure you hydrate.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), signs of heat exhaustion include:

- Excess sweating
- Pale, clammy skin that feels cold to the touch
- Rapid heartbeat may feel weak
- Nausea and vomiting
- Cramping
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Headache

If you throw up, get worse, or have symptoms that last longer than an hour, the CDC recommends seeking immediate medical attention.

If a person has an extremely high body temperature, hot skin, and a rapid, strong heartbeat, they may be experiencing heatstroke. They may also be confused or pass out. Heatstroke is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention.

Another tip: Whenever you're outdoors, don't forget to wear sunscreen. Just because it's cloudy or cold outside doesn't mean you should skimp on sun protection.

How To Get Plant Spacing Right



When I started gardening over a decade ago, I was so excited to grow things that I would cram many seedlings into tiny spaces. My first garden was my pride and joy, but looking back

on it, I made so many mistakes. Mistakes are good! They help you learn. But some of them are entirely avoidable. Spacing plants properly is one of those preventable mistakes.

Cramming lots of seedlings into a tiny planter or jamming in 10 [tomato plants](#) into a raised bed with enough room for maybe 9 at most seems like a bright idea. It's all about maximizing space, after all, right? Except, improper plant spacing can easily leave you with a disappointing yield. It seems like filling in every bare spot in your garden is a brilliant way to maximize the harvest, but, in reality, it can actually harm your efforts. Frugal gardeners should pay close attention to plant spacing because ignoring those guidelines can cause you to waste a lot of time, effort, and money.

What's the big deal?

Okay, so why is plant spacing so important? Who cares?

For one, your plants do.

Putting plants too close together means they may not have access to enough nutrients. You may end up with spindly, weak plants if you don't space them far enough apart.

Suffocatingly close plants may also experience higher instances of pest and disease activity. That's because there's usually limited airflow between squished-together plants. The foliage can't dry quickly after it gets wet and becomes a hot spot for nasty bugs.

What's the correct spacing?

Close quarters aren't always a bad thing. You don't need miles of space between plants to be a successful gardener. In fact, too much room between plants makes it easier for weeds to settle in your garden.

Most seed packets will give you exact spacing requirements for

particular plant varieties. When in doubt, check Madame Google or ask a fellow gardener.

Sometimes, close spacing is ideal for harvesting things like baby greens. If you plant the seeds or seedlings too far apart, you'll leave more room for weeds. Moisture loss is also likely to occur with spacing that's too far apart.

I like using the [Square Foot Gardening method](#) for help with spacing. I hated geometry as a kid, so as an adult, spacing requirements on the backs of seed packets give me vertigo. 2 inches? 2 centimeters!? As someone with poor spatial abilities, I'm not about to take out the ruler to make precise measurements. Instead, I go by SFG measurements which specify plant spacing per square foot. A [stamping tool](#) helps me get spacing precisely correct.

Here are a few SFG spacing guidelines for common edibles:

- Tomatoes: 1 per square foot
- Peppers: 1 per square foot
- Kale: 1 or 2 per square foot
- Lettuce: 1 or 4 per square foot, depending on size and whether you want to harvest baby leaves or not
- Carrots: 16 per square foot
- Beets: 9 per square foot
- Beans: 9 per square foot

Here's the thing, though. Sometimes, different varieties have varying spacing needs. While I follow these guidelines, for the most part, I sometimes stray from the set rules regarding spacing to experiment. Sometimes it's a win, and other times it's a big disappointing failure.

If you want to experiment with spacing, I recommend taking notes so you can remember what works down the line. There's no use making the same mistake twice!

Should You Use Diesel To Kill Weeds?



SHOULD YOU
Use Diesel To
Kill Weeds?

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Should you use diesel to kill weeds? Short answer: Nope.

Weeds can be annoying. They compete with other plants for

nutrients and can turn a pretty, organized garden into a patchy mess. Still, I'll continue to stand up for weeds. Some of the plants we consider weeds are actually beneficial. They offer up food to hungry pollinators and beneficial bugs. True weeds are plants that have been introduced to an environment in which they have no natural competitors or predators. That means they grow unchecked and sometimes harm habitats and ecosystems.

BUT. Even with true weeds, I'm wildly hesitant to recommend something toxic like diesel. As someone who tries to do their best to grow organically, the thought of using diesel anywhere near my garden fills me with dread.

Can you use diesel to kill weeds?

Some people might recommend that you use diesel to kill stubborn weeds. This tactic is often recommended for lawns littered with weeds. I don't think we should be wasting valuable resources on curating green lawns that have no purpose. Second, even if you're using it on a non-edible surface, know that diesel is highly toxic and can contaminate nearby areas.

If you're growing anything [edible](#), stay away from toxic substances like diesel.

You also run the risk of harming animals and beneficial [insects](#) like bees and butterflies. With bee and pollinator populations on the decline, it seems incredibly risky and irresponsible to use a toxic substance just to get rid of a few weeds.

"But my weed problem is terrible, and I heard I could use diesel to fix it!"

There are plenty of other ways to tackle pesky weeds. Getting rid of weeds isn't easy, but if you want a hobby to replace your leisurely walk in the park, gardening might be the wrong

choice. Additionally, diesel is pricey and flammable! You'll do better by spending your money on something else for the garden.

Gardening is an approachable hobby because it's simple to get started with some dirt and some seeds. But to turn a landscape around involves a lot of work. You can be a frugal gardener, but any kind of digging in the dirt requires some form of effort.

Other ways to get rid of weeds

If you can't use diesel to kill weeds, what else can you do?

Here are a few ways to [get rid of weeds](#) in an environmentally friendly manner:

- **Mulch.** My favorite way to suppress weeds is mulch. It not only suffocates most weeds but also helps beautify beds and provides a uniform blank slate.
- **Stop over-digging and tilling.** Most weed seeds sit beneath the surface and won't sprout unless exposed to sun and moisture. Minimize digging and tilling to prevent unearthing hidden weed seeds.
- **Target your watering efforts.** Get rid of the sprinkler. It's a waste of water and money. Use targeted irrigation systems to get water to your plants. No desire to budget to set up an irrigation system? When you water by hand, don't water where there are no plants. Empty spaces don't need moisture! All you'll do is help the weeds along.

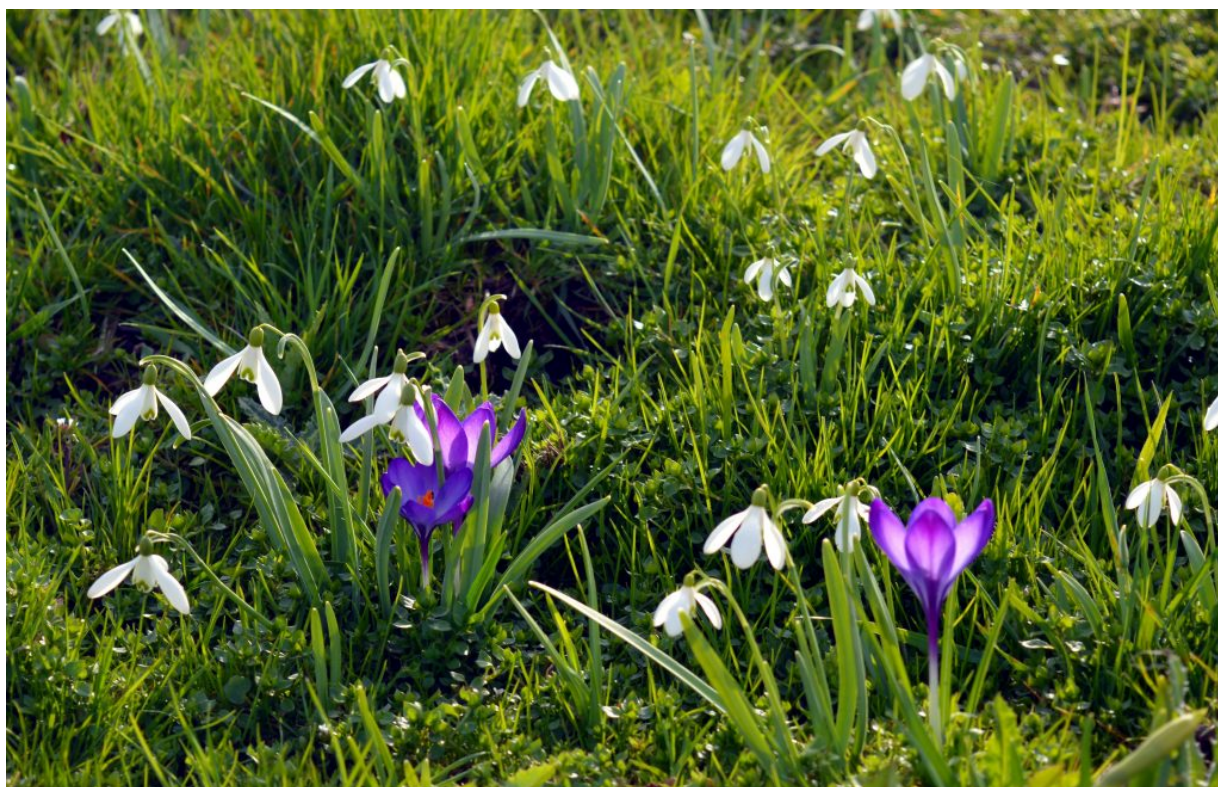
Read More

[Yes, you can garden for free](#)

[Ten ways to get free plants for your garden](#)

[How to get free plants](#)

How To Do A Spring Garden Clean-Up



It's springtime! The season that signals to every gardener that it's time to get started is here. In my neck of the woods, it's also the ugliest time of year. I become tempted to start my spring garden clean-up right away, but I know that soon the buds from my maple trees will fall and make a new mess. I might as well wait and avoid having to contend with mud and grime. It's also important to wait a bit so you can [prevent harm](#) to hibernating beneficial insects hiding in garden debris.

Planning a Spring Garden Clean-Up

Here's how to plan your spring garden clean-up.

- **Wait until it's warmer.** The temperature should consistently fall in the 50 degrees Fahrenheit range before you start your big spring clean-up. Tackling spring tasks too early may disrupt overwintering [insects](#) and other critters—some of them helpful garden creatures.
- **Grab the rake.** Clean up any leftover leaves from the fall. But don't toss them all away. Put them in your compost! Remember never to rake when the ground is wet. It's bad for your grass, and it makes the job tougher.
- **Prune dead branches.** Spring is a great time to prune many trees and plants. Not all plants have the same pruning requirements, though. I recommend keeping a notebook handy for all regular garden tasks, so you know exactly what needs to be done—whether it's planting out kale or pruning perennials.
- **Remove dead plants from garden beds.** Toss them in the trash and not the [compost](#)—just in case. I also like to start beds fresh by adding a top layer of compost. It adds nutrients and provides a clean slate.
- **Purge.** Throw away anything that's broken, rusting, or looks worse for wear. This seems like a no-brainer, but trust me, it doesn't take much for a person to hoard garden accessories and tools. Keeping dirty, rusty implements won't save you money. You might even lose cash in the long run by using contaminated tools.

What to Start in April

Can you believe it's already the end of March!? Time flies!

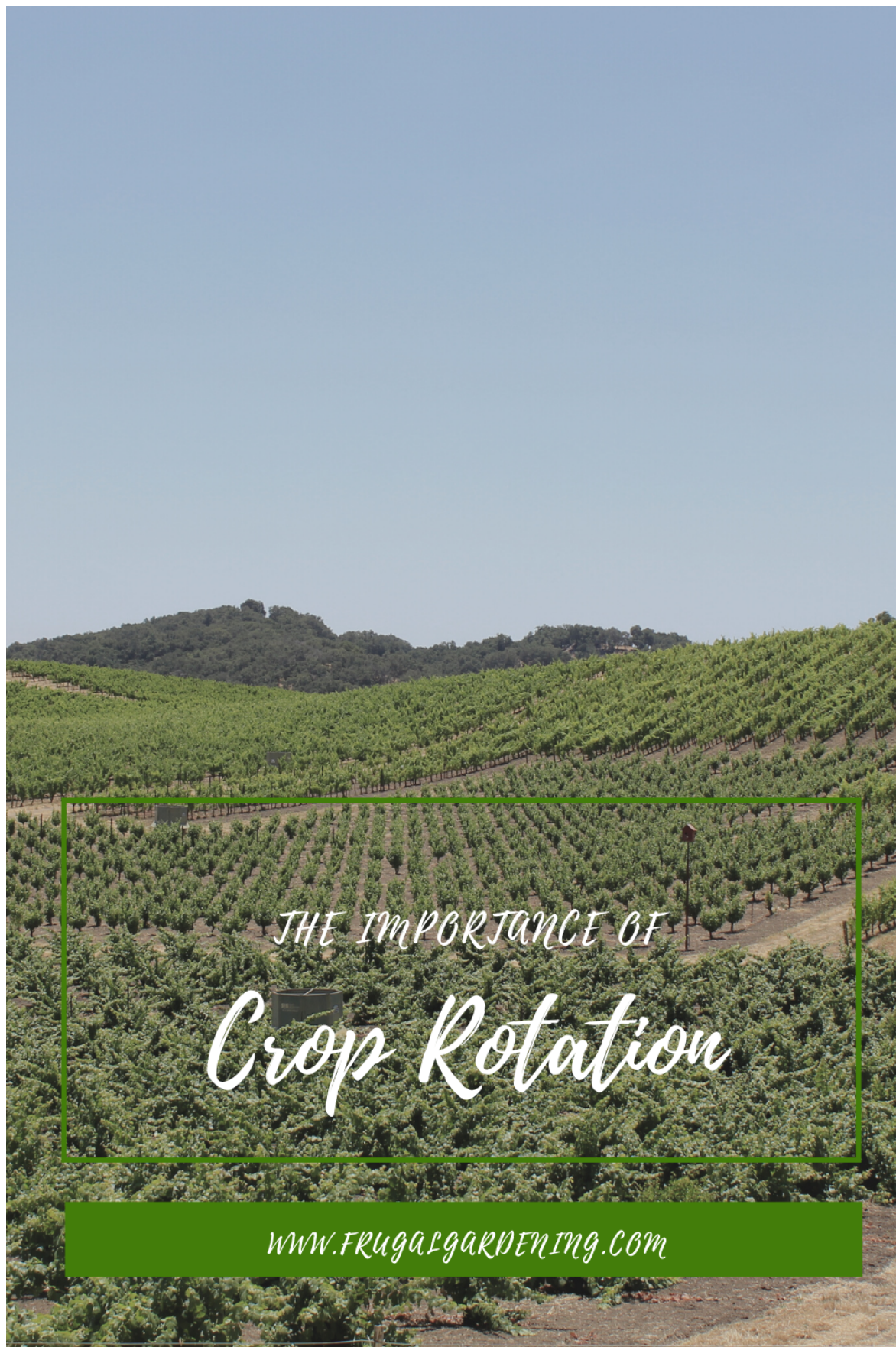
I'm pretty relaxed these days when it comes to planning my planting schedules. I used to work hard to start things way in advance, but the weather is way too unpredictable, and, in the end, it doesn't save me labor down the road.

West Coast Seeds has great, [region-specific planting charts](#) to help you get started with your gardening season this month. In

my area, April is usually around the time when the soil warms, and it's no longer frozen. However, it's still cold, and there's a high chance of frost, so I focus on planting hardy greens and other cool-season crops.

Like I mentioned previously, this year, I'm keeping this super simple. I haven't done any seed starting, and I'll be focusing on planting flowers and crops that are easy to grow by direct seeding. As for more demanding plants? I'll probably plant a pepper and tomato plant, but that's about it. I've had so much trouble with squash bugs that I'm likely going to skip squash altogether this year. Hopefully, skipping a year will deter pests from returning in 2022. What do you hope to grow this year?

The Importance of Crop Rotation



THE IMPORTANCE OF
Crop Rotation

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It's that time of year again! Gardeners are starting to plan out the season. Usually, I spend this month sketching out a rough plan for my garden—taking crop rotation principles into

account. I also start some seeds in my basement. This year, though, the pandemic has me changing up my plans. I'm giving my garden a break. I'm still going to grow stuff, but it'll be less intensive. My focus will be to support pollinators and beneficial bugs by growing food sources like nectar-filled flowers. I'll also try to build healthy soil by sowing cover crops. I'll grow a few edibles in containers on my patio, but I think it's time to give the soil a break this year.

Growing food is an inherently taxing process. It requires a lot from the soil. Over time, if you continue to grow and grow without returning anything back, you'll end up with depleted, unhealthy soil.

Rotating crops and planting nitrogen-fixing plants like beans can help reduce soil "fatigue." By introducing crop rotation into your gardening routine, you also:

- Reduce instances of [pests](#)
- Limit disease
- Improve the soil's ability to retain water
- Recycle nutrients
- Reduce the need to use store-bought products like fertilizer and pesticides
- Improve soil condition

What does it mean to rotate crops? By rotating crops, you don't plant stuff from the same family in the same spot for several years.

You can also let some of your beds rest for a season—which is what I'm doing this year.

It definitely involves a lot of planning, so I recommend using a spreadsheet or notebook to keep notes. I know you think you'll remember your plan a few years down the road, but it's unlikely that you'll remember what you planted in bed 'A,' 3 years from now.

Other considerations for successful crop rotation:

- **Test your soil.** Test the soil for [nutrients](#) and pH every year or so. Never fertilize for no reason. You should know what's missing before you dump fertilizer willy-nilly.
- **Keep a close eye.** Carefully monitor your garden to catch pests and diseases before they become a huge problem. You may need to alter your plans if a specific pest is an issue.
- **Use cover crops.** Recycle nutrients into the soil and prevent carbon from getting released into the atmosphere by sowing cover crops or green manure.

Source:

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1167375.pdf