



Garden Planning & Companion Planting

Tuesday, March 31, 2026



Welcome!
Please complete the activity on p.1 of your notes packet.



Sola Gratia Farm

1821 E Mumford Dr. Urbana, IL 61802

217-378-0340 • info@solagratiacsa.com • www.solagratiacsa.com

Mission:

Making healthy food accessible for all by nurturing productive land and cultivating diverse, inclusive communities.

Vision:

Our thriving communities are growing and eating healthy food as part of a vibrant, robust, and just food system.



Production Farm

- 1821 E Mumford Dr. Urbana
- Established in 2022
- 29 acres of land
- Brand new farm building
- 2025 stats:
 - ~25 staff
 - Hundreds of volunteers
 - 84,000+ lb food harvested, 24% donated

Community Classroom

- 2200 Philo Rd. Urbana
- Established in 2024
- 4 acres of land
- Outdoor education, demonstration, and recreation growing space designed for learners of all ages. **Open to the public from dawn til dusk starting on Earth Day!**
- Host events, workshops, educational programs, field trips, tours, etc.



Community Cooler

- 2200 Philo Rd. Urbana
 - north of the brown shed
- Opens 5/1/26
- A cooler to store your excess garden produce, which is distributed to our community feeding partners
- We welcome all types of produce, just be sure to fill out the donation log so we know what you have brought



Today's Outline:

Garden planning:

1. Choose crops.
2. Identify crops' seasons.
3. Identify crops' preferred planting methods.
4. Draft a planting calendar.
5. Identify growing space(s) & draft a garden map.

Companion planting.

Garden planning: 1. choose crops & 2. ID crops' seasons.

If you're a beginner gardener, it is strongly recommended to limit the number of crops you grow to a select few based on what you, your friends, and your family love to eat or regularly shop for.

In alignment with our mission to increase access to healthy foods to our community, please consider growing one of the following most requested veggies by our donation partners:

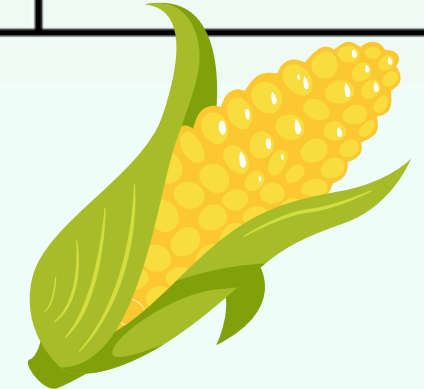
Cool season crops (spring & fall)	Warm season crops (summer)



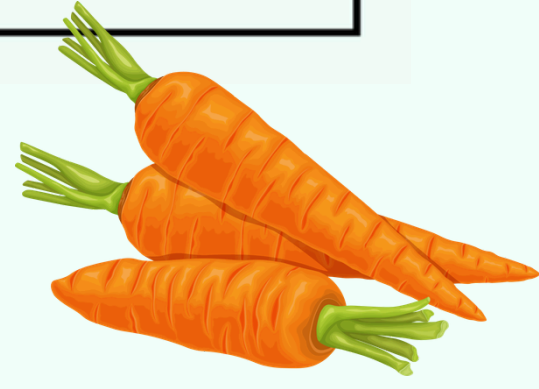
Collards



Potatoes



Sweet corn



Carrots



Tomatoes



Green tomatoes

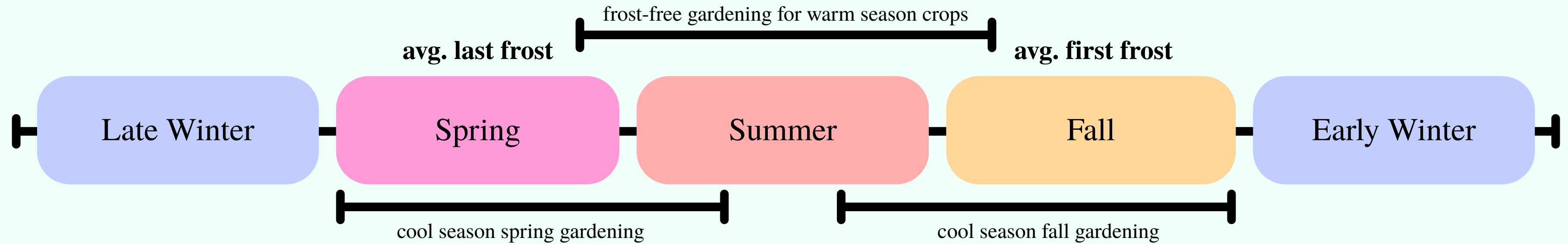


Green peppers



Mustard greens

Garden planning: 2. identify crops' seasons.



The average last frost in the spring is **April 15th**.
The average first frost in the fall is **October 17th**.

There are 3 gardening seasons in 1 calendar year: spring, summer, and fall. Gardeners plant cool season crops in spring and fall, and warm season crops in the summer.

Garden planning: 3. ID crops' preferred planting methods.

Direct Sow



Some crops prefer to have their seeds directly sown into the garden. Follow the instructions on the seed packet to determine seed depth and spacing requirements.

Transplant



Other crops require a bit more time and care to start, so it is recommended to either start seeds indoors or purchase seedlings, then transplant them into the garden.



Spring Plant Sale

MAY 8-10 & 15-17
9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2200 Philo Rd. Urbana, IL



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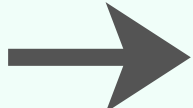
Salad greens, like lettuce, spinach, and arugula	Cherry tomatoes
Cooking greens, like chard, collards, and mustard	Slicing tomatoes
Beets	Sweet peppers
Carrots	Hot peppers
Radishes	Cucumbers
Turnips	Summer squash, like zucchini
Potatoes	Winter squash, like pumpkins and butternut
Broccoli	Green beans
Cauliflower	Sweet corn
Cabbage	Melons
Peas	Eggplant
Onions	Okra
Leeks	Sweet potatoes
Celery	Tomatillo
Herbs: cilantro, dill, parsley	Herbs: basil, thyme, rosemary, oregano

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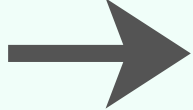
Garden planning: 4. draft a planting calendar.

MARCH 2026

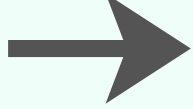
6 weeks before average last frost



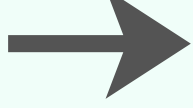
5 weeks before average last frost



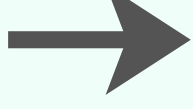
4 weeks before average last frost



3 weeks before average last frost



2 weeks before average last frost

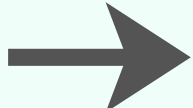


SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 start peppers inside	2	3	4	5	6	7
8 start tomatoes inside	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 direct sow mustard	30	31	1	2	3	4

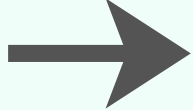
Garden planning: 4. draft a planting calendar.

APRIL 2026

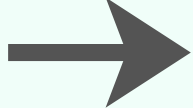
2 weeks before average last frost



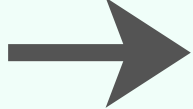
1 week before average last frost



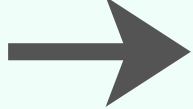
Average last frost!



1 week after average last frost



2 weeks after average last frost



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5 DS beets	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 Avg. last frost!!	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2

Garden planning: 4. draft a planting calendar.

MAY 2026

2 weeks after average last frost →

3 weeks after average last frost →

4 weeks after average last frost →

5 weeks after average last frost →

6 weeks after average last frost →

7 weeks after average last frost →

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4 T tomatoes	5	6	7	8 SGF Plant Sale!	9 SGF Plant Sale!
10 SGF Plant Sale!	11 T peppers	12	13 harvest mustard?	14	15 SGF Plant Sale!	16 SGF Plant Sale!
17 SGF Plant Sale!	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 harvest beets?	26	27	28	29	30
31 add tomato cages	1	2	3	4	5	6

Garden planning: 5a. identify growing space(s)

In ground

- Can be for larger spaces
- Need to remove grass
- May be more weeding
- Won't need potting mix
- May need fertilizer



Raised beds

- Can be for smaller spaces
- No need to remove grass
- May be less weeding
- Will need potting mix
- May need fertilizer
- Will need a raised bed



Containers

- Ideal for smaller spaces
- No need to remove grass
- Less weeding
- Will need potting mix
- May need fertilizer
- Will need containers



Garden planning: 5b. draft a garden map



You've chosen your favorite crops



You know whether to DS or T and when

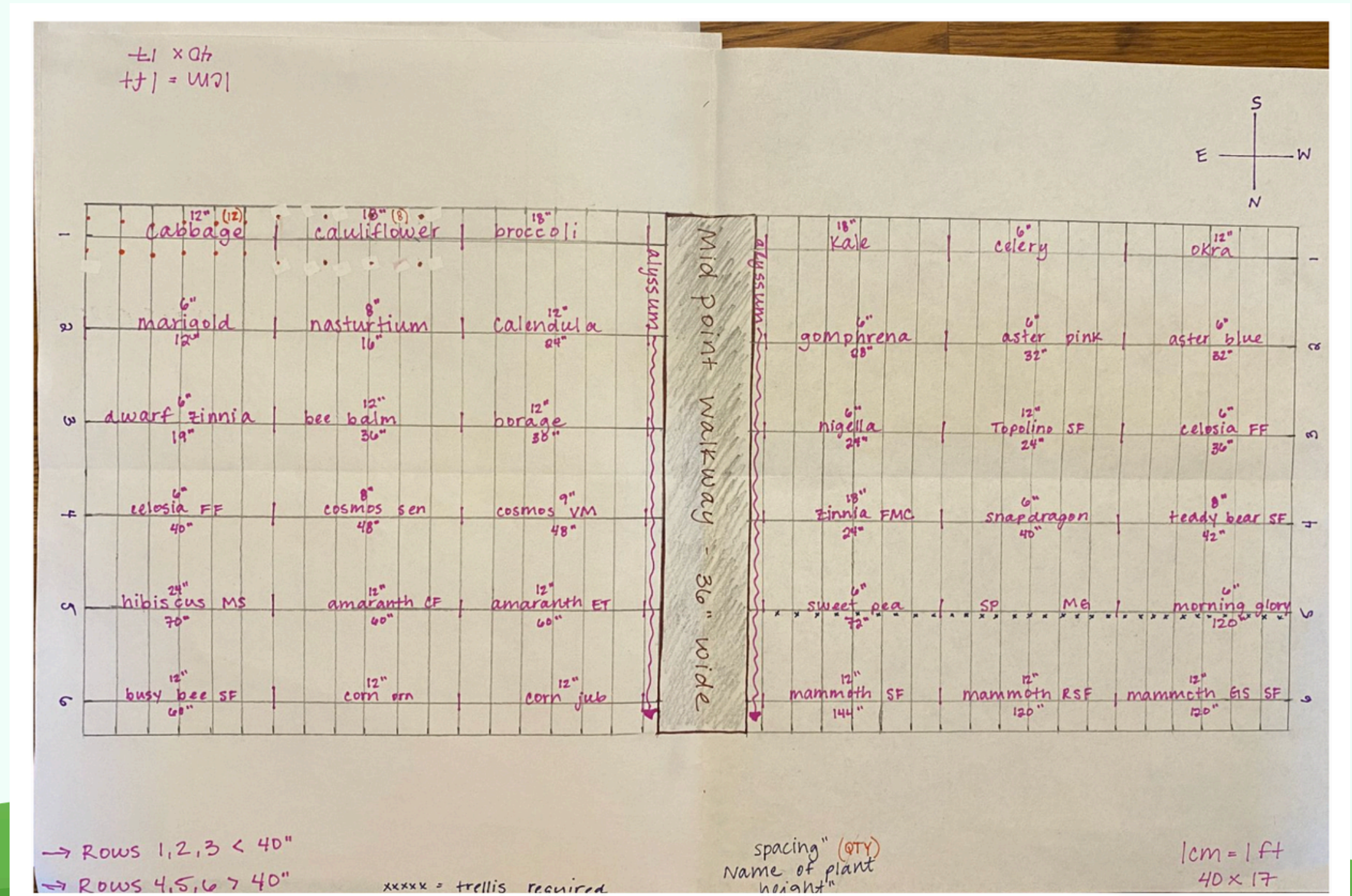


You've chosen & prepared your planting space(s)



Time to draft a map!

15' x 40' in ground bed



Garden planning: 5. draft a garden map



You've chosen your favorite crops



You know whether to DS or T and when

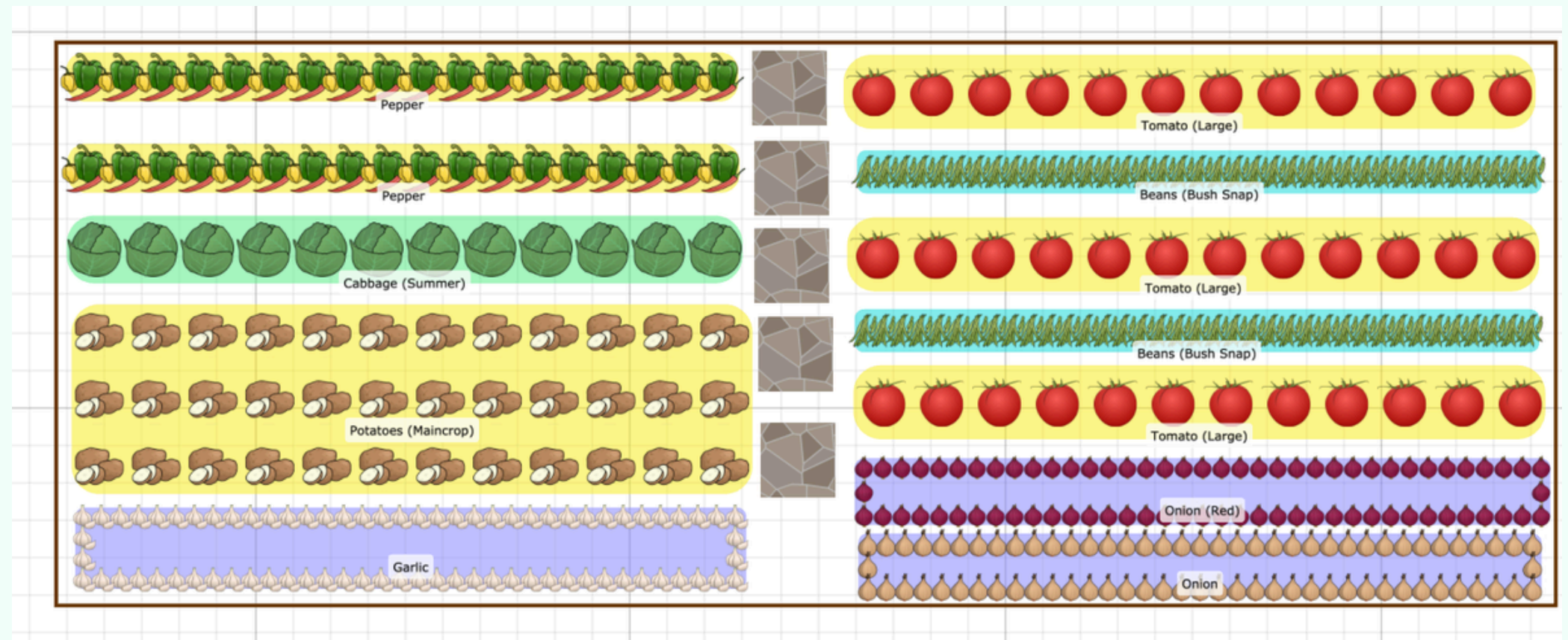


You've chosen your planting space(s)



Time to draft a map!

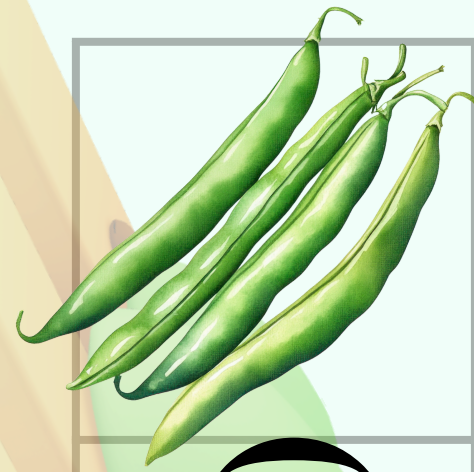
15' x 40' in ground bed



Farmer's Almanac Garden Planner Tool



4 x 8 raised bed



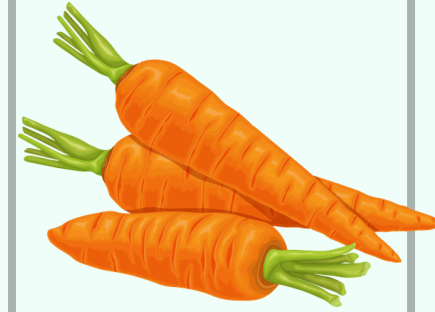
Beans (36)



Pepper (4)



Broccoli (4)



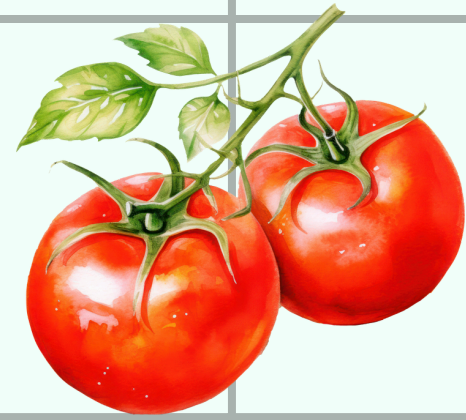
Carrots (64)



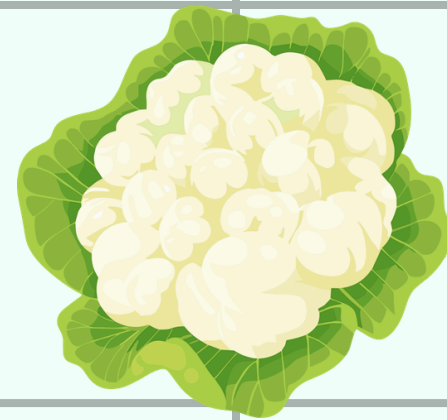
Beets (18)



Lettuce (36)



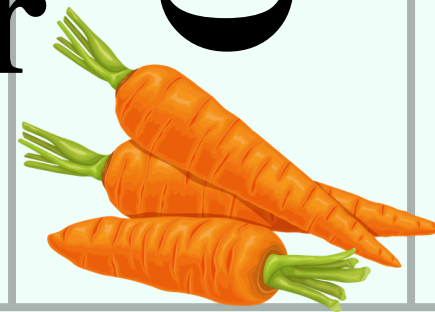
Tomato (2)



Cauliflower (4)



Radish (32)



Spring

Summer

Companion Planting

There is growing public concern about pesticides' non-target effects on humans and other organisms.

Companion planting is a pesticide-alternative, organic gardening technique that involves intentionally planting 2 or more different crops near each other to deter pests and thus, to enhance crop production.

Types of companions:

Disrupt pests' abilities to locate their host plant, chemically and/or visually.

- Draw pests away from their host, i.e. “trap crops”
- Repel pests away from their host via aromatics
- Mask host odors
- Camouflage or block host plants
- Enhance conservation by supporting natural pest predators.

Bonus: Companion Planting

Companions draw pests away from their host plant, i.e. “trap crops.”

A trap crop of mustard greens (companion plant ++) is planted in the middle of 2 rows of broccoli (pest host +).

Once pests are trapped, they can be removed by removing, destroying, or tilling-under.



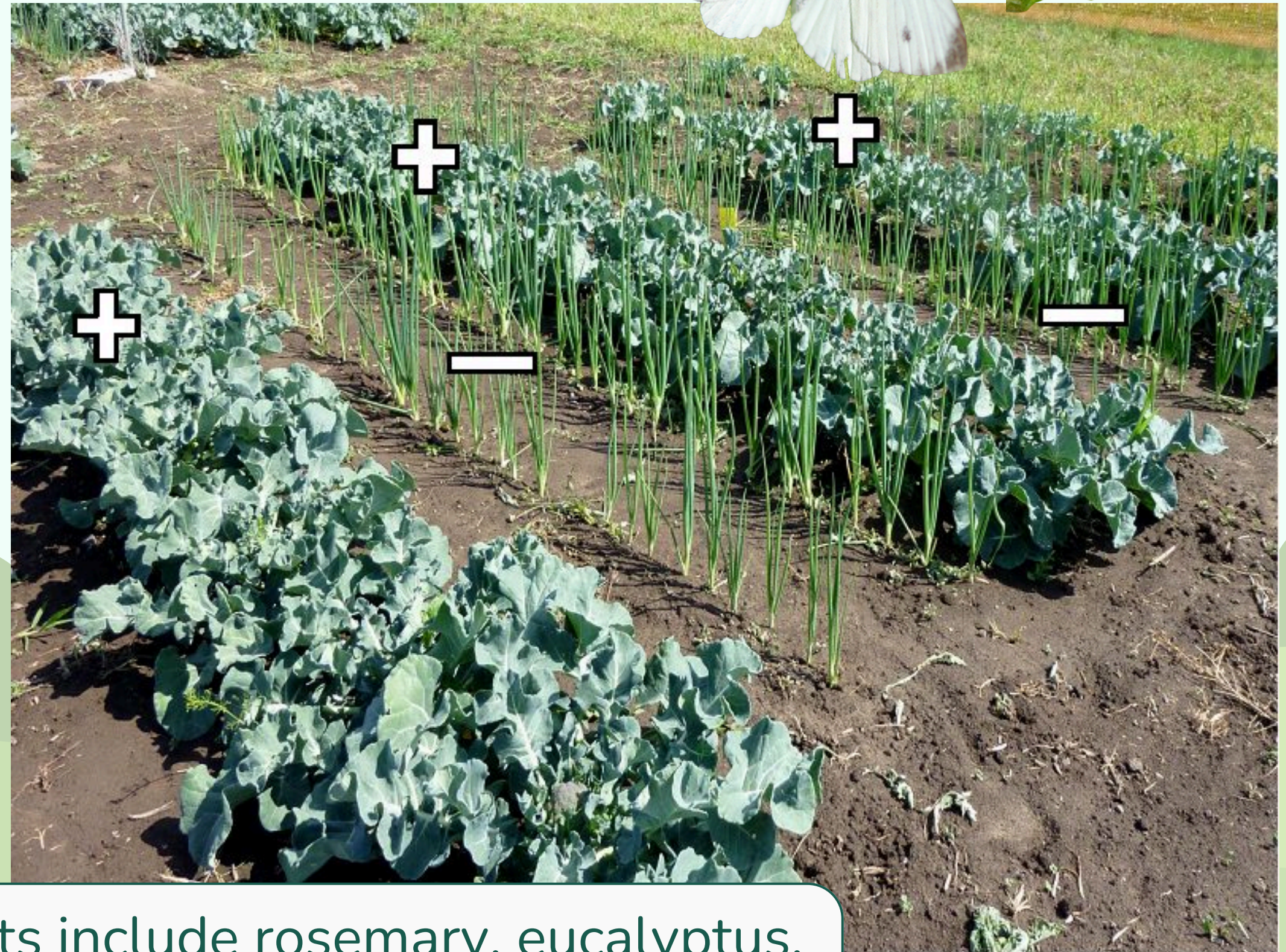
Bonus: Companion Planting

Companions that repel pests away from their host via aromatics.

Plants with strong aromatic qualities contain volatile oils that may affect host plant location.

Spring onions (-) repel pests away from broccoli (+)

Other examples of natural repellents include rosemary, eucalyptus, clove, thyme, mint, basil, sage, hyssop, dill, and chamomile.



Bonus: Companion Planting



Companions that mask host odors, interfering with host plant location.

The scent of marigold masks the scent of the host plant, broccoli (+).



Bonus: Companion Planting

Companions that camouflage or physically block host plants.

There is a theory that suggests green surfaces surrounding the host plants may disrupt host plant location.

Dill (companion plant) is used as a physical barrier to protect broccoli (+) from pest attack.



Bonus: Companion Planting

Companions that enhance conservation.

Natural pest enemies or predators are more abundant in diverse habitats.

Incorporate non-crop vegetation (flowers) into garden plans.

Sweet alyssum (companion plant) attracts ladybugs, which is a natural predator of aphids.



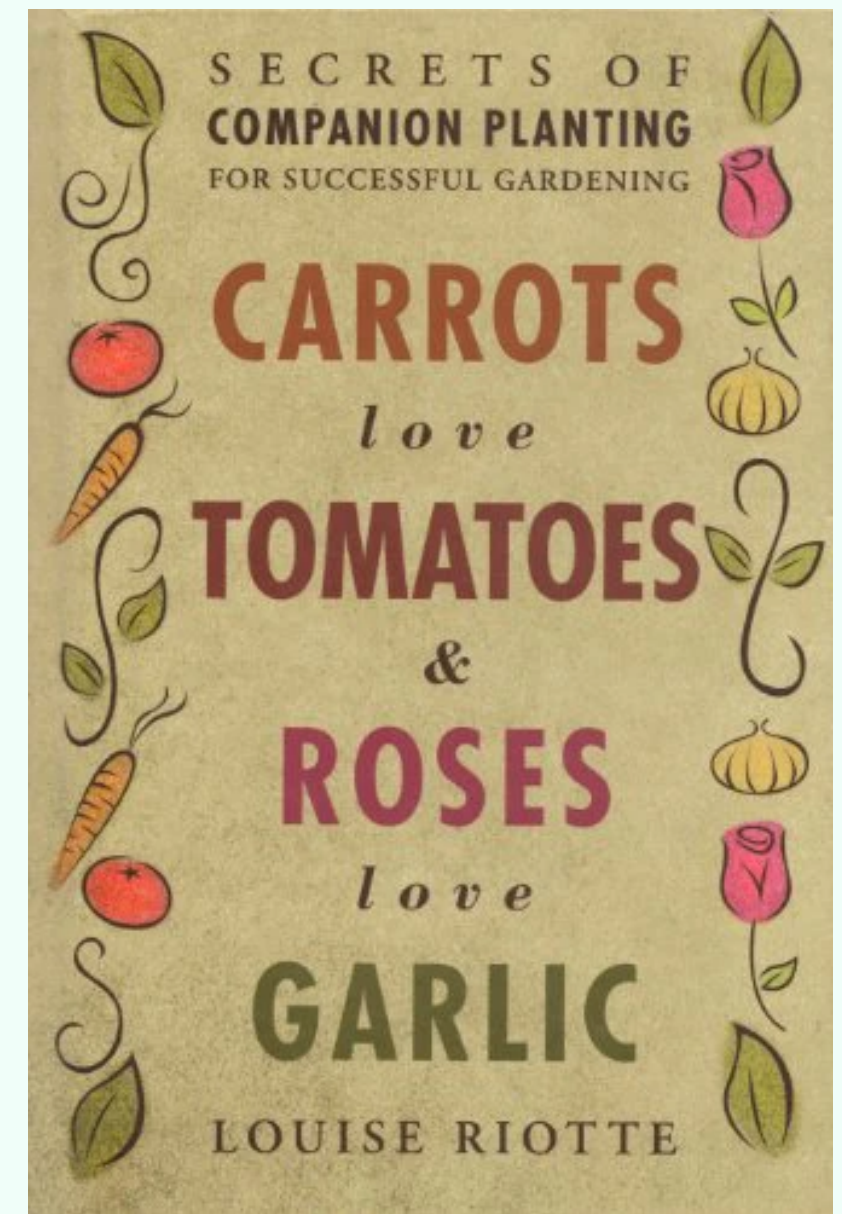
Companion Planting

Companion planting relationships can be discovered through books, online resources, experimenting in your garden, and sharing notes with others.



Champaign Public
LIBRARY

THE OLD
FARMER'S ALMANAC
GARDEN PLANNER



Acknowledgements

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under agreement number 2024-38640-42989 through the North Central Region SARE program under project number ONC25-171. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



We hope you'll consider using the skills you've learned here to grow more food to feed your community! The **Solidarity Gardens network** can help! Solidarity Gardens is a collaborative project to build a resilient, community-based food system through gardening. It connects volunteers with community gardens and offers donation sites for garden produce. Solidarity Gardens is a project of Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office, Sola Gratia Farm, and Urbana and Champaign Park Districts. To learn more and get involved, visit www.solidarity-gardens-cu.org.