

Every winter when the snow buries my garden under drifts of white and the gardening season feels far, far away, I like to cuddle up next to my woodstove with a cup of tea and my seed catalogs and let myself dream.



I think we gardeners are natural dreamers. It takes a lot of faith and vision to put a tiny seed into the ground and trust that it will turn into a huge plant that will feed us dinner for many nights of the season. In winter, we're able to look at our dormant gardens and imagine them bursting with beauty and fresh food at the height of the harvest season.

And we're also smart. The most successful gardeners I know take some time in winter to plan and prepare for the gardening season. These are the gardeners that get results all season long - abundant harvests and beautiful

gardens with less work invested. Planning doesn't have to be complicated or take up a lot of time, and it should be lots of fun!

During these cold, dark nights of winter, allow yourself some time to dream and plan for next year. The sweet anticipation of spring is sometimes just as joyful as the reality. Make a fire, or grab your favorite blanket, and head for your comfiest chair. Surround yourself with colorful seed catalogs and gardening books and spend some time indulging in the fun process of envisioning the season ahead.

Happy dreaming!

Megan

10 Step Guide to Smart Spring Planning



1. REFLECT

Learning from your successes and mistakes is what helps you become a better gardener over time.

Dig In: Take a moment and think about last year's garden. Jot down your answers to the questions - What went well? What do you want to do differently this year?



2. DREAM

Before you get practical it's important to spend some time gathering inspiration and dreaming about your garden. My favorite way to do this is to sit down with my favorite gardening books and have fun flipping through the pages. I jot down notes for next year's garden as I go.

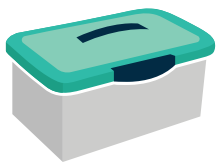
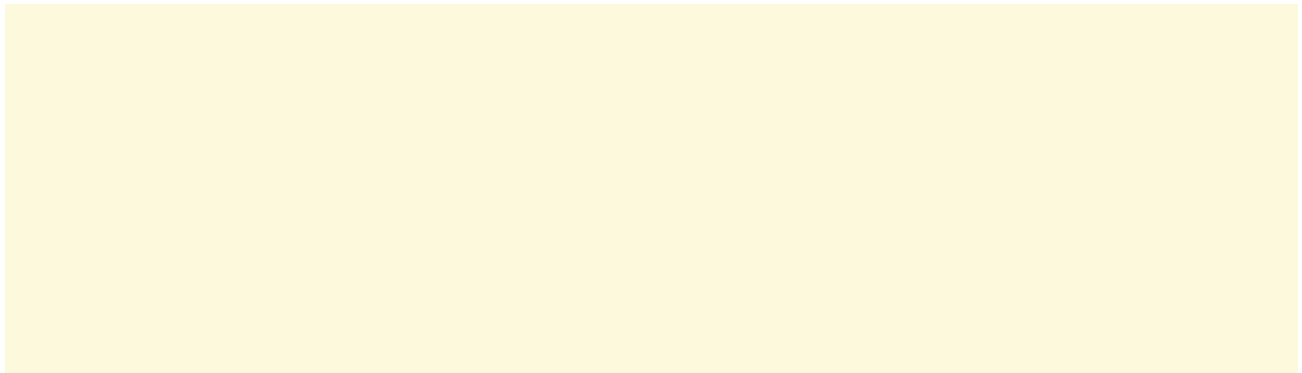
Dig In: Request a stack of gardening books from your local library. Some of my favorites are: *The Beautiful Edible Garden*, *Designing the New Kitchen Garden* and the *Edible Estates* series. See more of my favorites on my Pinterest board [here](#).



3. PRIORITIZE

Most people don't have room to grow everything they eat. So, it's important to set some priorities in your garden. Based on my diet and cooking habits, every year in my garden I always grow: onions, garlic, red peppers, kale and salad greens.

Dig In: *Take a look at your family's eating habits to help you decide what you want to grow. What do you buy from the grocery store on a regular basis? Make a list of which of those things you'll grow in your garden this year.*



4. ORGANIZE

Are your seeds scattered around your house? Gather them all into one place and go through them. Don't take a chance on old seeds that might not germinate. It's worth the investment to keep your seed stock fresh.

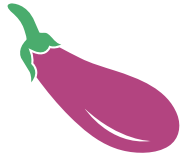
Dig In: *Go through your seeds and throw out anything older than 2-3 years. Buy a storage container for your seeds. I use a rectangular plastic storage box with a lid.*



5. ORDER SEED CATALOGS

Don't wait until the season starts to buy your seeds and plants. Ordering seeds ahead of time from catalogs allows you to spend time thinking and planning. You'll make smarter decisions and be prepared when the first sunny spring day arrives!

Dig In: *Sign up to get seed catalogs at home. Two of my favorites are Johnny's Selected Seeds and Seed Savers Exchange.*



6. ADD EXCITEMENT

Plan to grow some unique and fun vegetables in your garden. I love Dancer Eggplant for its electric purple color, Dragon Tongue beans for their beauty and taste, and Fish Pepper for its variegated foliage. Visit my [Pinterest board for more of my favorite varieties](#).

Dig In: Look through your new seed catalogs and order something just for the fun of it. Tag me on [Instagram @creativevegetablegardener](#) and show me what you're ordering!



7. MAKE YOUR GARDEN BEAUTIFUL

Add color and beauty to your garden by mixing flowers with your vegetables. Some of my favorites are verbena bonariensis, Prairie Sun Rudbeckia and State Fair Zinnia.

Dig In: Order some flower seeds with your vegetables this year. Plan to start a few kinds at home.



8. SWAP WITH FRIENDS

Most of the time we have more seeds than we need for our own gardens. Invite some gardener friends over for tea and garden talk. Have them bring their seeds and share your favorites with each other.

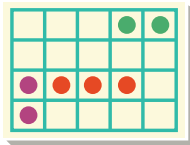
Dig In: Invite a friend or two over for a seed swap. Or, share seeds through the mail with faraway friends.



9. START YOUR OWN SEEDS

You can save a lot of money, start the gardening season early, and grow interesting and hard to find varieties if you start your own seeds at home.

Dig In: Set up a seed starting rack and learn how to start your own seeds. Do it with a community of like minded gardeners when you join *The Flavorful Life Garden Club*. Read all about it [here](#).



10. CREATE A MAP

Now that you're organized and ready to go for spring, keep the momentum going once the season starts by creating a map of your garden. Jotting down notes and keeping track of what you plant makes the planning process much easier in winter.

Dig In: Take a piece of paper and pencil out to your garden and draw a quick map of your garden, or create one on the computer. Put it with your seeds and use it to keep records of what you plant this spring.



Want to really make this the best gardening season of your life?

The best way to master the art of gardening is to immerse yourself in its transformative lifestyle. And when you do that with a community of other passionate gardeners? You learn more quickly, make less mistakes, and have way more fun.

That's the idea behind The Flavorful Life Gardening Club — a new kind of gardening club built for avid food growers that are ready to up their gardening game together, while indulging more fully in all of the pleasures of the lifestyle.

If you're passionate about fresh food and outdoor adventures, come join us! You can read more about the gardening club at creativevegetablegardener.com/club.