

NORTHWOODS YARD & GARDEN

Weekly Column

September 2, 2024

Assessing 2024 Vegetable Gardens

As the calendar turns to September, the vegetable garden season is gradually ending. Now is an excellent time to assess 2024 results and plan for the 2025 garden.

One of the first things to do, if you have not already done so, is to make a sketch of the 2024 garden plot area and include all crops grown.

Specifically mark where each crop was located. This will be valuable next spring when you make plans on where to plant each crop, as one of the fundamental ways to reduce major diseases is to rotate crops.

When rotating crops, consider not just the individual crop but the three major rotation groups. Crops within the same group share the same problems so when rotating in 2025 crops within the same group should not follow each other. For example, the cucurbits include cucumber, squash, melons, and pumpkins; all share the same disease and insect pests. Likewise, the solanaceous crops include tomato, pepper, eggplant, and potato. The third major group are the crucifers, which include cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, and kale.

So, where tomatoes grew this season, planting peppers in that same spot next season is not sound crop rotation. Instead, pick a crop from one of the other two groups mentioned above or any other crop not found in the solanaceous group.

Ideally do not plant crops, in this case tomatoes, back in that same spot for at least three years.

Another valuable piece of information is the list of specific cultivars (or varieties) of each crop planted this year. Make notes now on how each cultivar performed in 2024, including positives and negatives. High yields and harvest quality are major positives; diseases or poor-quality harvests are major negatives. Research during the offseason potential replacements if the cultivars you planted this year did poorly. Always consider disease resistant cultivars, as that is the best defense against serious disease outbreaks.

Practicing good sanitation this fall will also help reduce problems in the 2025 garden. Start by removing any weeds, in particular perennial species. As crops are finished for the season, remove vine crops, as they may provide overwintering sites for insect pests. Likewise, crops like tomatoes that may have had diseases should be cleaned up to help avoid carryover into 2025.

Finally, fall is an optimum time to address soil improvement. Adding compost and other organic materials will help soils both with excess sand and clay. Consider soil testing, especially to determine the pH, so adjustments can start prior to next season.



Interested in learning more about Horticulture in Iron County? Feel free to contact:

Bruce Spangenberg
Horticulture Educator
Extension Iron County
300 Taconite Street, Suite 118
Hurley, WI 54534

Phone: 715-561-2695
Email: bruce.spangenberg@wisc.edu

