

An Urban Farmer's Guide to Crop Mapping

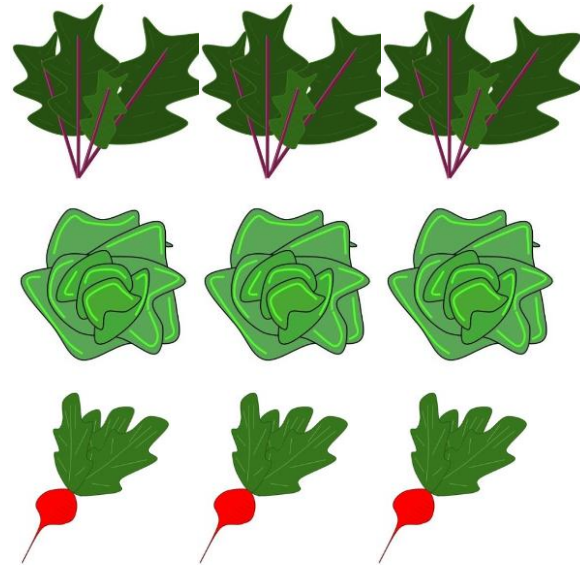


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An
Introduction
to Crop
Mapping



What is a Crop Map?

You've chosen a location to grow vegetables, and decided whether you're growing in-ground or in a container... Now it's time to select **WHAT** you're going to grow, **WHEN** you're going to grow it, and **WHERE** you're going to plant it within the area you've selected.



Why Create a Crop Map?

Creating a crop map, and following the exercises leading up to creating your crop map, will help you answer the WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, to ensure a maximum harvest and satisfaction. Without a crop map, you are more likely to have a poor harvest and be dissatisfied with the result of all your hard work.



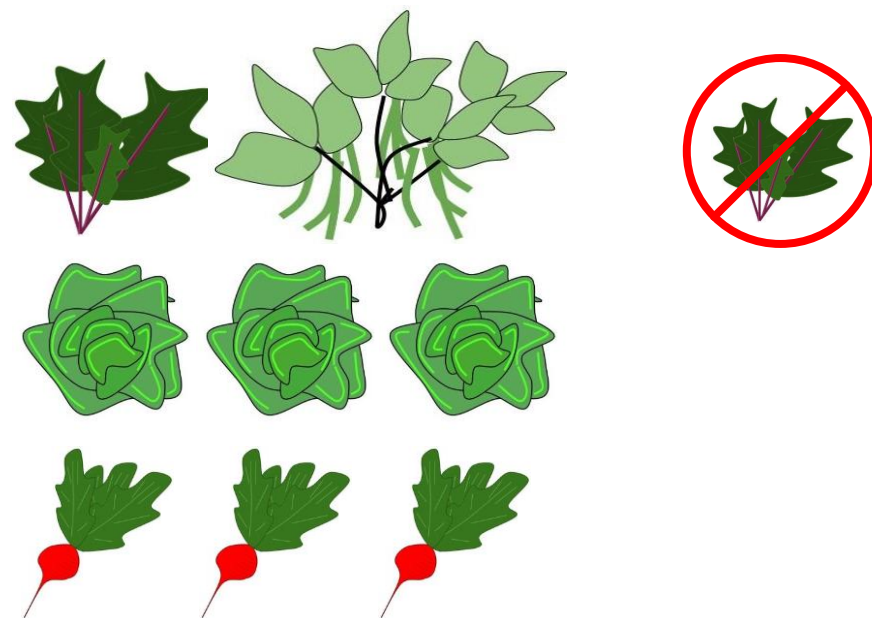
When Should I Create my Crop Map?

Ideally, you want to start creating your crop map when seed catalogs arrive in February. Thumb through the catalogs, create your “wish list” (more on this later), and then create your crop map for maximum success and harvest.



Can I Change My Crop Map Mid-Season?

Yes! Just be certain to select a replacement crop that will succeed in the space that has become available.



Use This Template!

We created a series of steps and considerations to follow, and an easy template to take the guess-work out of planning your crops. This template will walk you through the process, step-by-step.



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Priorities
and the
Planting
Area



Planting Priorities

The first step in creating a crop map is to rank the vegetables in order of highest priority. This is your vegetable “wish list”, which will help you choose whether to grow one crop over another.

Use a scale of 1-5, and rank each vegetable you want to plant with a “1” being very low and a “5” being highest priority.

Be certain to include the growing season and growing time in your list, which will help in creating your crop map.



Crop Seasons / Quick & Slow

Season	Quick Crop (<2 months)	Slow Crop (>3 months)
Spring (cool weather)	Chard, cilantro, collards, dill, greens, kale, kohlrabi, lettuces, nasturtiums, parsley, pea shoots, radishes, spinach	Beets, broccoli, cabbages, carrots, chard, collards, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce (head), onions, parsley, scallions, shallots, sugar snap peas
Summer (warm weather)	Basil, bush beans, bok choy, chard, collards, cucumbers, greens (heat tolerant), kale, summer squash, zucchini	Basil, chard, collards, eggplant, fennel, kale, okra, peppers, potatoes, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, tomatillos, winter squash
Fall (cool weather)	Bush beans, chard, cilantro, collards, kale, kohlrabi, lettuces, greens, nasturtiums, pea shoots, radishes, spinach	Broccoli, cabbage, carrots, chard, collards, kale, kohlrabi, leeks, lettuce (head), scallions, spinach, sugar snap peas
Overwintering (these crops will likely need protection from hard frosts)	Chard, cilantro, collards, greens (Asian greens, arugula, claytonia, mache), lettuces (hardy), kale, parsley, spinach	Beets, carrots, garlic, scallions



Planting Priority Example

Crop	Season	Priority
Cucumbers	Quick, Warm	2
Chard	All Season	2
Lettuce Mix	Quick, Cool	3
Arugula	Quick, Cool	3
Winter Squash	Long, Warm	4
Bush Beans	Quick, Warm	4
Beets	Long, Cool	5
Tomatoes	Long, Warm	5



Planting Priority Analysis

The goal is to grow as many plants ranked as a 4 or 5 as possible, and then to use plants ranked 3, 2, and finally 1, to fill in spaces in the crop map throughout the seasons. You'll need to choose a range of quick and slow, warm and cool crops to maximize your growing space over the spring, summer, and fall growing seasons.



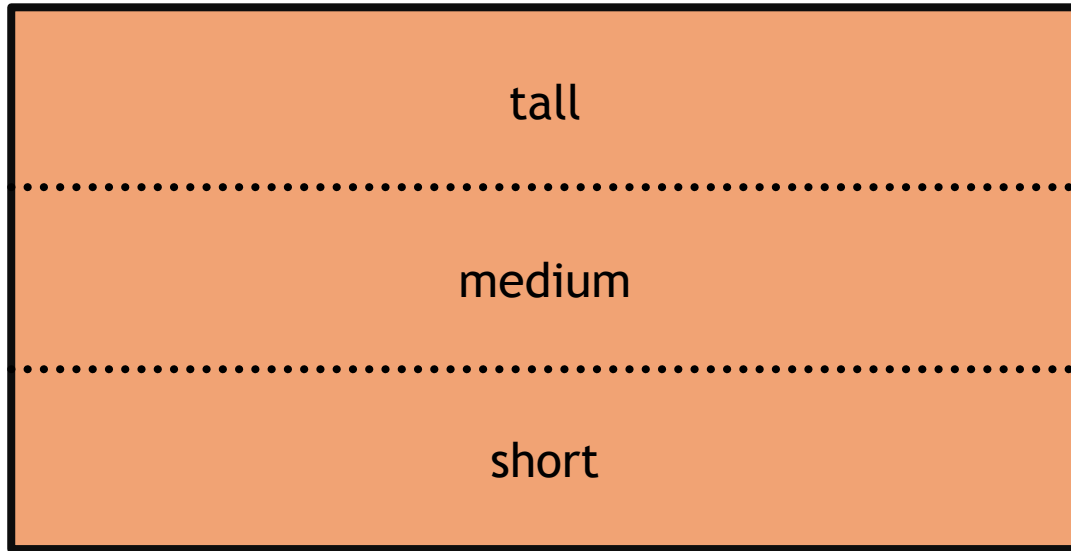
Draw the Planting Area

The second step in creating a crop map is to draw the growing area in a bird's eye view. Find the northernmost edge of the growing area and mark it on the drawing. This is where the tallest plants will go (and trellising if needed). Medium-sized plants will be planted in front of the tall plants as we move southward in the growing area, with the shortest plants along the southernmost edge.



Planting Area Example

4'x8' raised bed

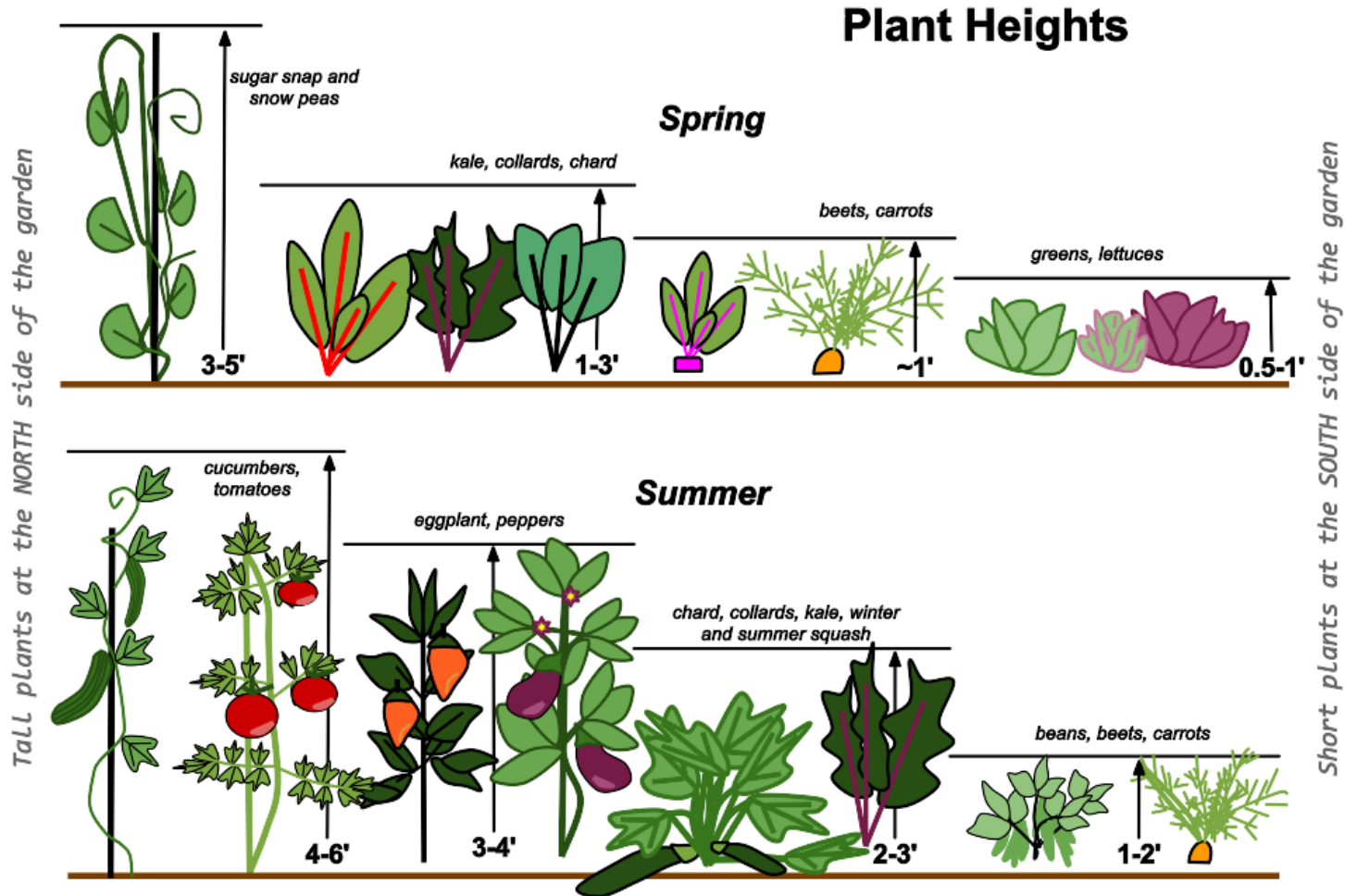


Organize Planting Area

Think about the heights of various crops in your wish list. Organize your vegetables into 3 crop maps, one for each season (spring, summer, fall), keeping in mind slow and quick crops, and whether the vegetable is short, medium or tall.



Planting Area Example



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Plant
Spacing



Know Plant Spacing

Knowing the spacing of your plants will help you estimate how much you can fit into your growing area and how much you will be able to harvest. Too much crowding, shading, and root competition will reduce production and encourage pests and diseases. Ignore the urge to crowd: sometimes less really is more.



Plant Spacing by Square Feet

We like to break up our raised beds into individual square feet. These squares help us give plants enough space to thrive, but also help to minimize unused space.

Don't always think in rows when planning your crop map, but rather treat each square foot like it's own growing area that can have different plant spacing based on what is being grown in that particular square foot.



How Many Squares Do I Want of Each Plant?

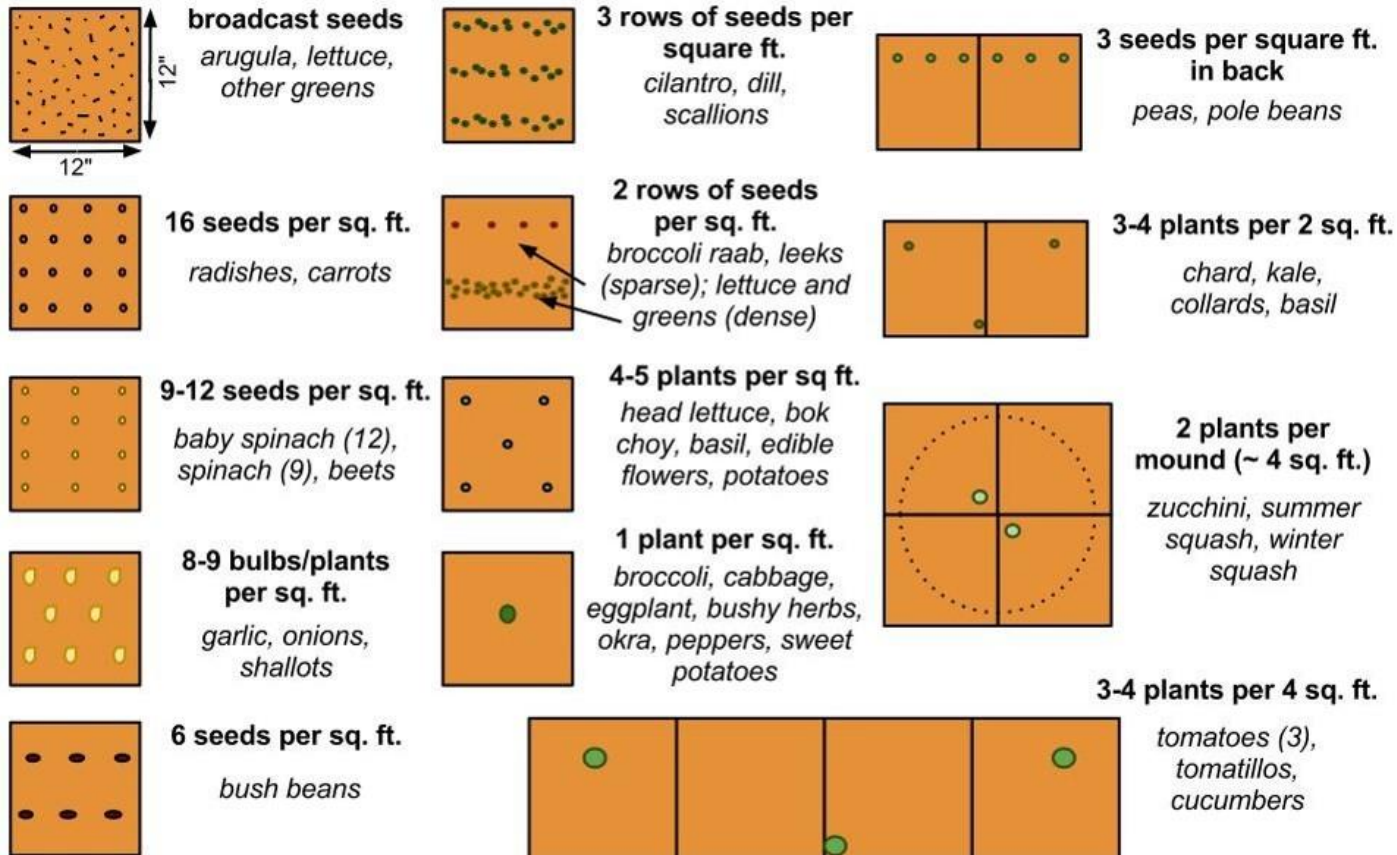
We have found a few helpful standards for a family of four's general needs, particularly if the following plants are ranked highly on your vegetable wish list:

- ▶ 3-5 tomato plants
- ▶ 4 squares of bush beans
- ▶ 2-3 zucchini plants
- ▶ 4-8 squares of snap peas
- ▶ 2-6 cucumber plants



Plant Spacing Examples

Plant Spacing



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Seasonal
Transitions



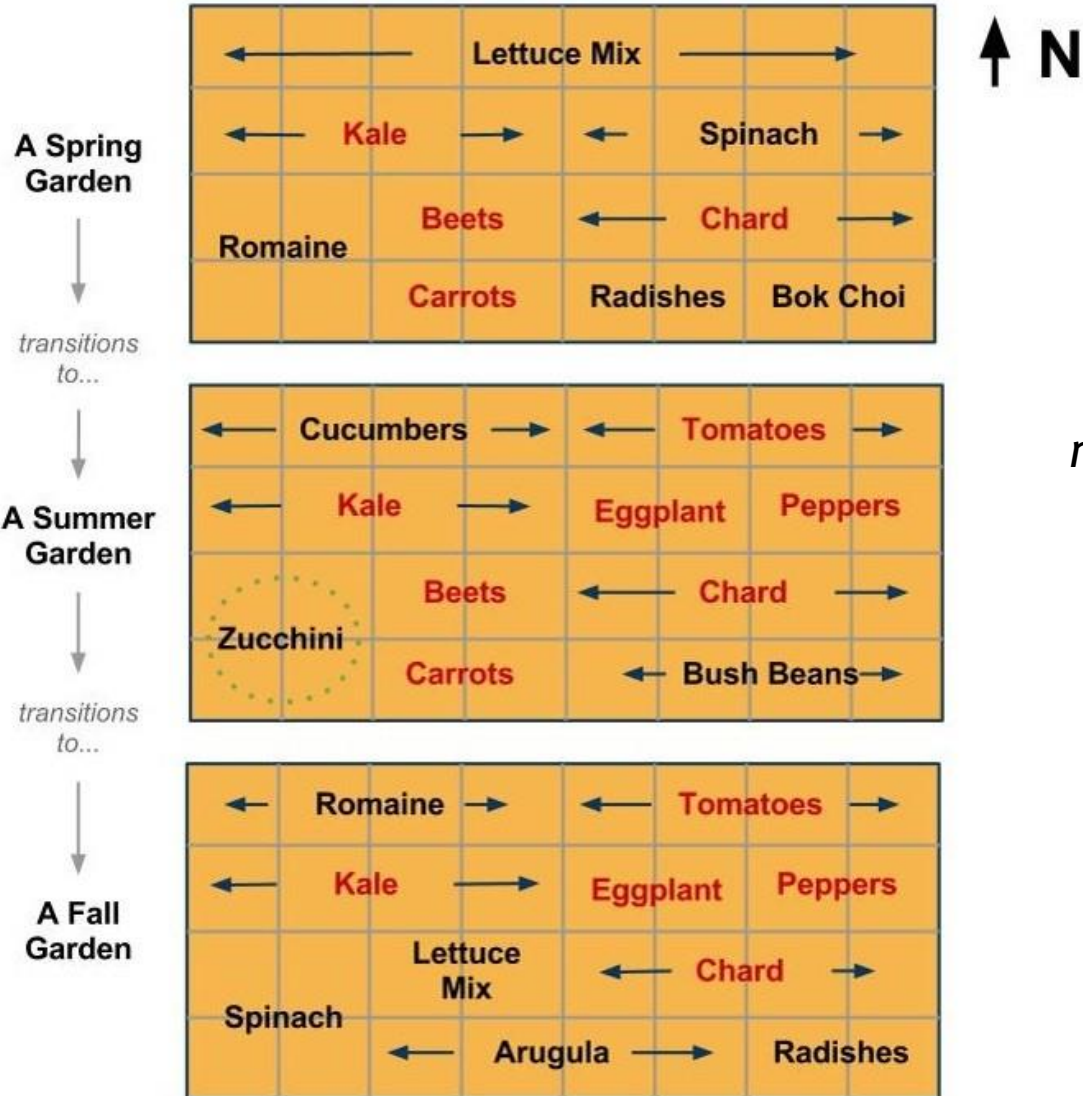
Seasonal Transitions

What are you most excited about growing? Tomatoes? Peppers? Broccoli? Whatever it is, make sure you have room in your garden to plant your choice in its appropriate season.

Let's say tomatoes are your #1 top priority. They're tall and go in the north section of your growing area, but it's too cold for tomatoes in the spring. What could you plant in that space during the spring to harvest before the tomato plants go in? Snap peas!



Seasonal Transition Example



The plants which last more than one season are highlighted in red.

Final Thoughts...

Start planning your growing season with:

- ▶ Prioritized “wish list”
- ▶ And drawing of the planting area

Remember to consider:

- ▶ Quick or slow
- ▶ Cool or warm
- ▶ Plant spacing
- ▶ Plant height



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Crop Map
Template



4'x'4 Crop Map - Season:



Want to know if you've planned a successful crop map, or learn more about urban farming?

- ▶ Order the Urban Bounty urban farming comprehensive how-to book
- ▶ Schedule an on-site Urban Garden Consultation with an experienced GCG Farmer, for an hour or more
- ▶ Register for the Urban Farming Course for an intensive weekend combination of lecture and hands-on

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