

Ready, Set, Garden!!

You spent the winter planning every detail of your garden for this year so you are ready to go, right? Instead, March just blew past and now that there have been some warm days you feel that sense of urgency. So, let's catch up and figure out what needs to get done to get some vegetables in the ground.

Step 1: Collect a soil sample for testing. To do this, dig down to about 6 inches in a variety of locations throughout your garden plot. Mix all those samples in bucket to make a composite sample, about 2 cups worth. Under normal circumstances, you can take your sample to the Douglas County Extension Office at 2110 Harper St. and we'll send it off to K-State and get back to you with recommendations for amending your soil. Until the County office is open again, you can send your sample directly to the K-State Soil Lab at K-State Research and Extension 2308 Throckmorton PSC, 1712 Claflin Road, Manhattan, KS 66506-5503. You can find detail, shipping labels, and more information at the soil lab website: (<https://www.agronomy.k-state.edu/services/soiltesting/>).

Step 2: If you haven't done so already, and the soil is not wet, incorporate some organic matter (aged compost or manure) into your garden.

Step 3: Make a list of all the things you want to grow this year and then go back out and look at your garden space. Make a more realistic list.

Step 4: Using graph paper or a ruler, sketch out what you are going to plant and where. Do you remember where you planted the tomatoes, peppers, or potatoes last year? Don't plant those crops in the same space as last year.

Step 5: If you are planting early season veggies like lettuce spinach, radishes, and peas, plant them now and make a plan for what to plant after those early crops are harvested. You can still add soil amendments or fertilizer once you get your soil test recommendations.

Step 6: Take inventory of your garden tools and support structures. Do you have what you need? Are the tools in need of repair or sharpening? Are you going to use a trellis or cages for your tomatoes?



This is not a proper tomato cage. Indeterminate tomato plants grow continuously and can easily reach six feet. If you are stuck with short cages, consider growing semi-determinate or determinate tomatoes.

Step 7: Breathe in spring and take a moment to sign-up for our free Horticulture Newsletter at <http://www.ksuhortnewsletter.org/>. This newsletter will help you stay on track with seasonal gardening information. Also helpful is the Garden Calendar (<https://www.johnson.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/gardening-calendar/march.html>) from our friends in Johnson County, a month by month task list for those of us who gaze at our gardens and yards with a bit of hesitancy and a dash of panic.

