

Growing Your Own Food at Home in Salisbury Series

Pack A Notes 1 GETTING STARTED – ASSESSING AND PLANNING



Though it is tempting to start quickly; buying a few punnets of veggies and putting them in the ground, it is far wiser to take the time to plan well and base your decisions on an understanding of your garden, its soils, how to manage them, and your resources. This planning will save you a lot of time, effort and frustration. These notes focus on building a resource for planning for success; looking at features and factors in your yard to find the best potential sites for growing food, and your personal resources and desired outcomes. You'll make a scale map of your specific site, and with this and a resources assessment you can work out the opportunities, restrictions, and the best approach in your circumstances. You can develop long term direction or plans, prioritising and break them down into smaller projects, which will help with budgeting and allocating resources.

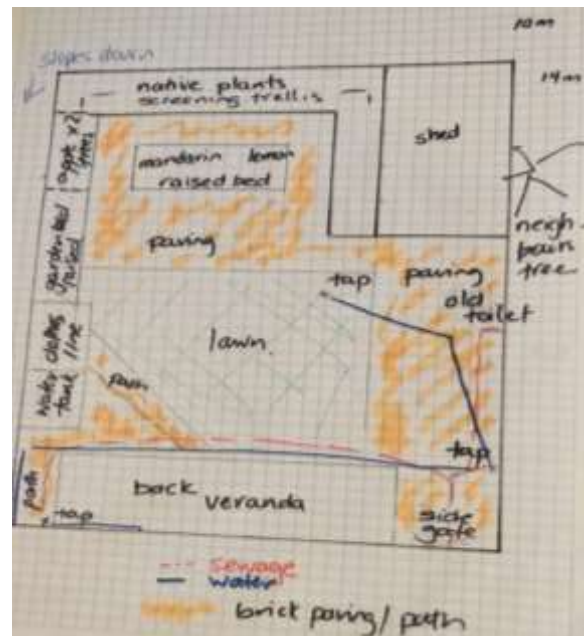
There are 8 stages to this process which are listed below. The stages are:

1. Draw a to scale map of your garden and surrounds that affect it
2. Fill in details on the map
3. Identify potential growing spots. These will be where the sunlight is
4. Decide what you want to grow in. (In the ground or in containers)
5. List what you want to harvest
6. Sketch out ideas
7. Assess your personal resources
8. Start planning, and finally planting!

It's a lot of work initially and you may need to do some extra reading from the other packs to help you make some decisions, or ask experienced growers. Successful produce gardening requires a lot of knowledge, believe me, we are trying to make it simple!

1) DRAW A MAP

Start by drawing a to scale map of your yard on graph paper, or use the grid on page 2. Include: fixed features (e.g. house, sheds, pergolas, fences); utility underground pipes (e.g. water, sewage, electrical or gas pipes); water tanks; water taps; existing vegetation (trees, shrubs, garden beds); paths and access points; slope and drainage patterns.



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2) ADD DETAILS

Draw the features of sunlight paths, wind channels and the type/s of soil on the map. To assist mapping these features, answer the following questions. More information on these features are explained below this list.

- How open is your yard to light?
- Where is north (winter sun)?
- Is there light to the east (winter warmth) or west (summer heat)?
- How much shade is there from trees, buildings or shade structures?
- Are there any wind effects from nearby buildings or fences? What direction does it blow?
- Is there a slope to the site? If so, how much and what direction?
- Are there rises and depressions? If so, how do they affect wind and water flow?
- What is the soil like? There may be different soil types in your yard, map each of these

Sunlight Most vegetables need 6 - 8 hours of light a day to grow especially fruiting crops like tomatoes. Though lots of leafy vegetables can grow in less especially in summer. Generally, the best patches for growing vegetables are where you can grow lawn, because this where there is good light (twelve hours plus per day) and open soil with little root competition from bushes or trees. Perfect for vegetables. # Note: Facing veggie beds north east means they get more even spread of morning light.



How to work out the sunlight? Monitor the movements of the sun, ideally across the seasons. There will be more sunlight in the north over winter, therefore for winter growing beds will need to receive sunlight in the morning (light from the east). In summer the afternoon sun can be severe and plants may benefit from shelter from it, especially after 3.00pm. Notice the shade that is provided by trees or buildings. You may need to supply more shade for plants in summer, which can be permanent or temporary. Refer to notes in [Pack G](#).

Protection from the wind In an open site you may need to protect vegetables from the prevailing winds, generally from the south west. Wind can also be channelled by buildings and fences. Windbreaks may need to be added, and can be permanent such as bushes or fences, or temporary such as a shade cloth screen. Shifting pot plants can alleviate this stress on plants.

Soil Much of the soil in the City of Salisbury is very good and can be very productive. Export quality agricultural crops of oranges and almonds have grown here previously, and were exported globally. Both the soils along the coast and east of the Para Fault line, (hills sections) offer challenges that might be overcome by growing in containers. For most of the plains, the simple action of increasing drainage and improving soil fertility will reap rewards. Refer to information in [Pack C](#) for assessing and altering soils.

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3) IDENTIFY POTENTIAL GROWING SPOTS

Looking at the areas where there is most sunlight, little wind and animals moving through now add to your map:

- a. Areas with enough sunlight for growing food
- b. Where can you grow in the ground
- c. Where you can grow in containers

A combination of containers, pots, wicking beds and in-ground may suit your needs.

4) WHAT DO YOU WANT TO GROW?

List in order of priority what would you like to harvest from the garden, including fruit. This is a wish list, and later when you are choosing what to plant, for various reasons you may choose not to grow some of these things. Write down what you want to harvest, an estimate of how much you would like each week, and why you want to grow it at home. Sometimes it's not cost effective to grow something but eating it fresh from your garden is what you value most, or the particular variety you like is not easily available. These things add weight to the decisions of what to grow. Later we will look growing seasons and more details on individual plant requirements, which will also factor into your decisions.

What would I like to harvest?	How much do I need each week?	Reason for growing at home e.g. its better fresh, like variety
e.g. Snow peas	500gm	Freshness. Big harvest from a small plant. Expensive to buy. Easy to pick. Like flowers
cauliflower	1	Expensive to buy and I have plenty of space and can wait the 3 months for it to grow

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5) **DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO GROW IN**

There are lots of decisions from this point onwards and increasing your knowledge about soils plants and their growing habits will help making these. You may want to read information in **Packs B, Pack C, Pack D** and **Pack E** before you make further decisions. Or decide to keep it simple for now that you know where the best locations are and grow a few greens or a tomato in a pot, and make changes later as your knowledge and experience increases.

Decide whether you are going to grow in the ground or in containers, and if growing in containers whether these are wicking beds. It is also useful to know what you wish to grow and how much space you will need to grow it in to assist in making this decision round this time, and this could be an exercise to do before deciding how to grow. Exercise 5 addresses this, and you might like to do that before this one.

Your decision on how to grow will be influenced by a number of factors including:

- soil type e.g. very sticky clay where the efforts to improve are not worth the small number of vegetables you wish to grow, or you are unable to do the necessary soil preparation;
- slope of land may be too costly to put in bed infrastructure to ensure even watering, nutrient movement;
- whether there are large trees either on your property or neighbouring that will invade your in-ground garden beds and rob them of water and nutrients;
- amount of food and what type you want to grow; if you only want to grow a small amount of produce and it can be grown in pots;
- shade in yard means you need to move beds, and pots are suitable to grow in and able to be moved;
- water cost- it will be necessary to water your food plants refer to **Pack G**.

Other considerations are the size of garden beds and paths.

Garden bed and path dimensions Optimum garden beds width is 1.2m; this being the maximum comfortable reach from either side. The length is up to you. The ideal path width between beds is 80cm, as this allows a wheel barrow through.

How many garden beds? The number of beds you will need depends on how much food you wish to grow and the type of food. As a guide, for two people 4 to 6 1.2m x 2.4m beds will provide a steady supply of fresh produce. Note: it's always better to have one well-tended bed than many weedy beds, so starting small and planning for room to expand is wise.

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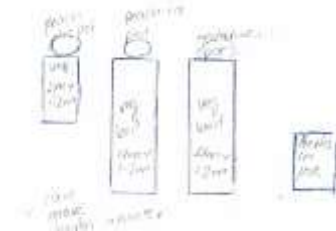
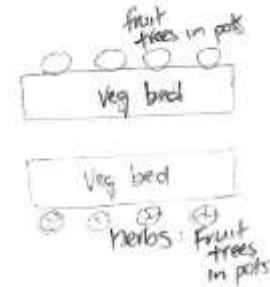
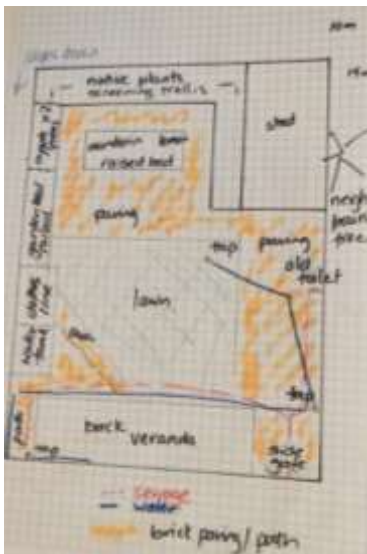
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6) SKETCH OUT IDEAS

Once you know the best place in your yard to grow in and what you're going to grow, sketch your ideas for your garden beds, or pots, to scale on tracing paper and lay it on top of the map. The reason for using tracing paper, or baking paper, for the top layer is to see the fixed features as you are trying to work out the best fit for all your ideas. It's likely you'll draw up a number of options on separate pieces of tracing paper before deciding the best one for your needs – immediate and future. It is helpful to see how it all looks together before making your final plan. Take your time to think about this as garden beds, especially raised ones, take quite an effort to put in.

You'll end up with something like this

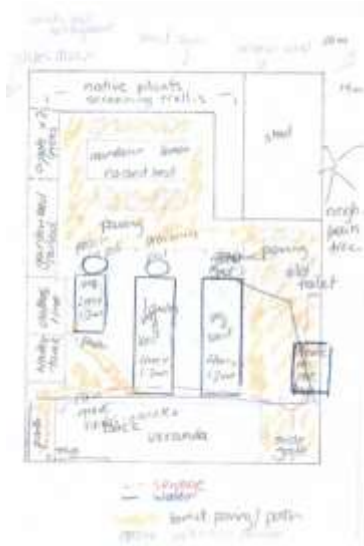


Best veggie growing area is where the lawn is. Good sunlight, close to tap, easy to access and work around. Visually fine

Ideas for garden beds and pots

Grow wish list:

Basil, beans, blue berry, broccoli, cabbage, capsicum, carrots, celery, cucumber, eggplants, fennel, fenugreek, garlic, kale, leeks, onion, potatoes, raspberry, silverbeet, spinach, tomatoes.



Final plan

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7) PERSONLISED RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

There is no question about it gardens take time and could be considered like a having pet. They do best with regular attention and feeding, and can be inconvenient when you want an extended holiday. In planning for success, the next exercise investigates your resources, as this will be a factor in your decisions around what and how to grow. It's not entirely a cold calculation based on inputs and hard returns, as there are many benefits of home gardening. The mental health ones are often realised early on for new gardeners, and prized by those long term ones. Answer the following questions to be clear about what is realistic and what gives you the most satisfaction

8) PUTTING IT TOGETHER

By now we hope you have a folder for all these pieces of paper full of ideas. With more understanding of what you want and how realistic it is, its time bring out more tracing paper and sketch out your ideas onto them. You could use several pieces or cut individual features such large garden beds, then you can move your ideas around. Then draw up your final plan and write an action list.

For more information on which veggies and herbs grow in which season and plant's individual growing needs refer to notes in [Pack D](#)



Images of Paralowie Communal Garden

Recommended reading

Your Edible Landscape Naturally, Robert Kourik

Complete book on Fruit Growing, Louise Glowinski

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