Starting your own Garden

Created by Grow Windham in collaboration with Diane Dorfer, Yali Sanchez and Vania Galicia

Funded in collaboration with The Last Green Valley 203B Main Street P.O. Box 29 Danielson, CT 06239-0029

Special Thanks

Diane Dorfer

Cobblestone Farm

Who provided me her knowledge and guidance to create this manual and workshop.

Special Thanks

The Last Green Valley

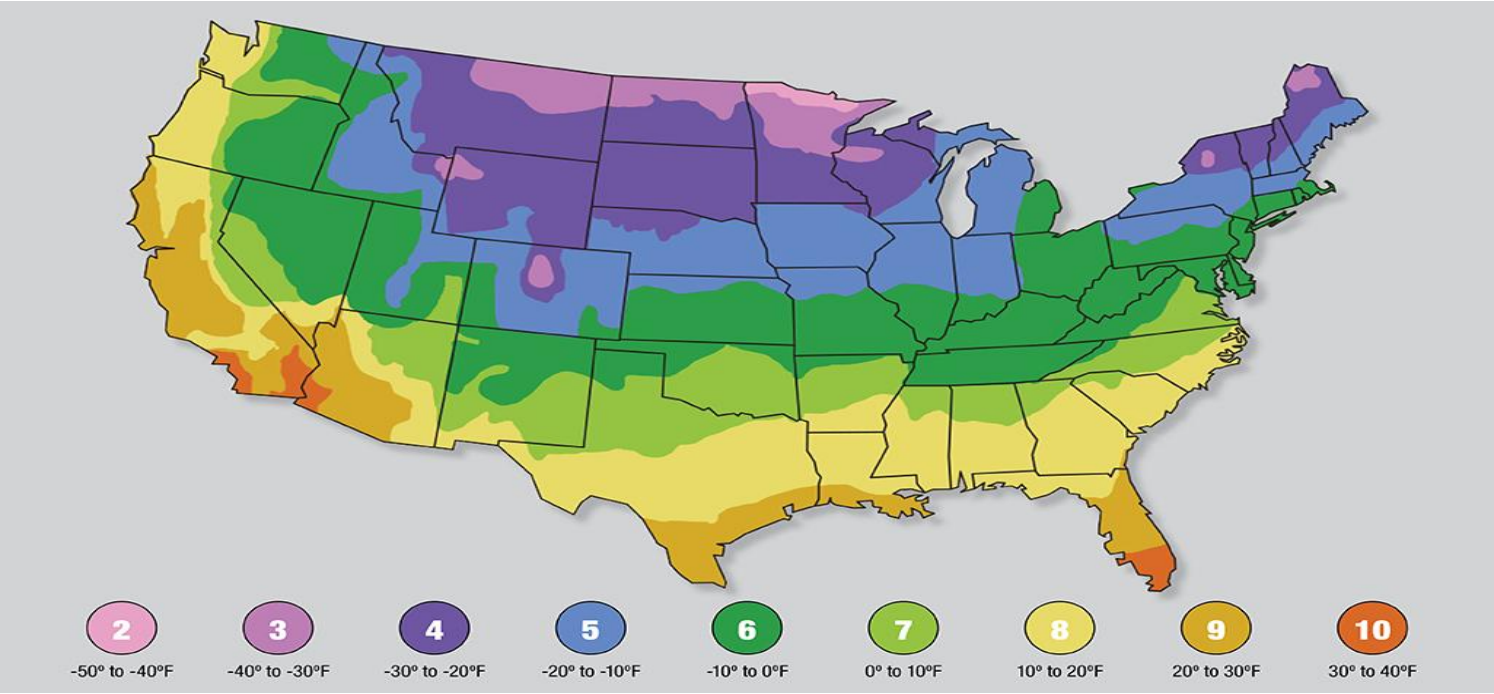
Who supported us by providing funding for The Windham Youth CORE to work on and develop a season extension guide and this workshop.

Start Your Own Garden Checklist

- ❑ Figure out your climate zone
- ❑ Choose the location of your garden
  - ❑ Sun Exposure
  - ❑ Soil Health
  - ❑ The build of your garden
- ❑ Choose how you want to garden
- ❑ Select the crops you will grow
- ❑ Decide if you will direct sow your crops or transplant them
- ❑ Research what type of gardening you would like to practice
- ❑ Create a crop care plan for your crops

Figuring out your climate zone

Hardiness zones are geographical areas divided up by climate that can be used to determine where different plants will grow best.



CT Climate zones

In Connecticut we currently experience temperatures in zones 5b to 7a. Meaning that our state temperatures on average can get as low as -15°F. This is important to know because it will help determine what types of plants can survive outdoors in CT.

What else can you gain from knowing your climate zone?

- Lowest temperatures to be expected in your zone.

EX: In Willimantic we experience temperatures in in zone 6a which can be as low as -5°F to -10 °F.

- Your Average frost date/periods (Frost is anything below 36°F)

Ex: In CT our frost-free growing season on average starts in May and ends in Mid to late September,

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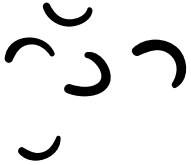
Choosing the location of your garden

1. Sunlight exposure
2. Soil health
3. How you want to build your garden.

Sunlight Exposure



1: **“Full sun”** exposure areas are areas that receive a minimum of 6 hours to 8 hours of sunlight per day.

Examples of crops that thrive in full sun: Cucumbers, eggplant, peppers, squash, tomatoes and corn.

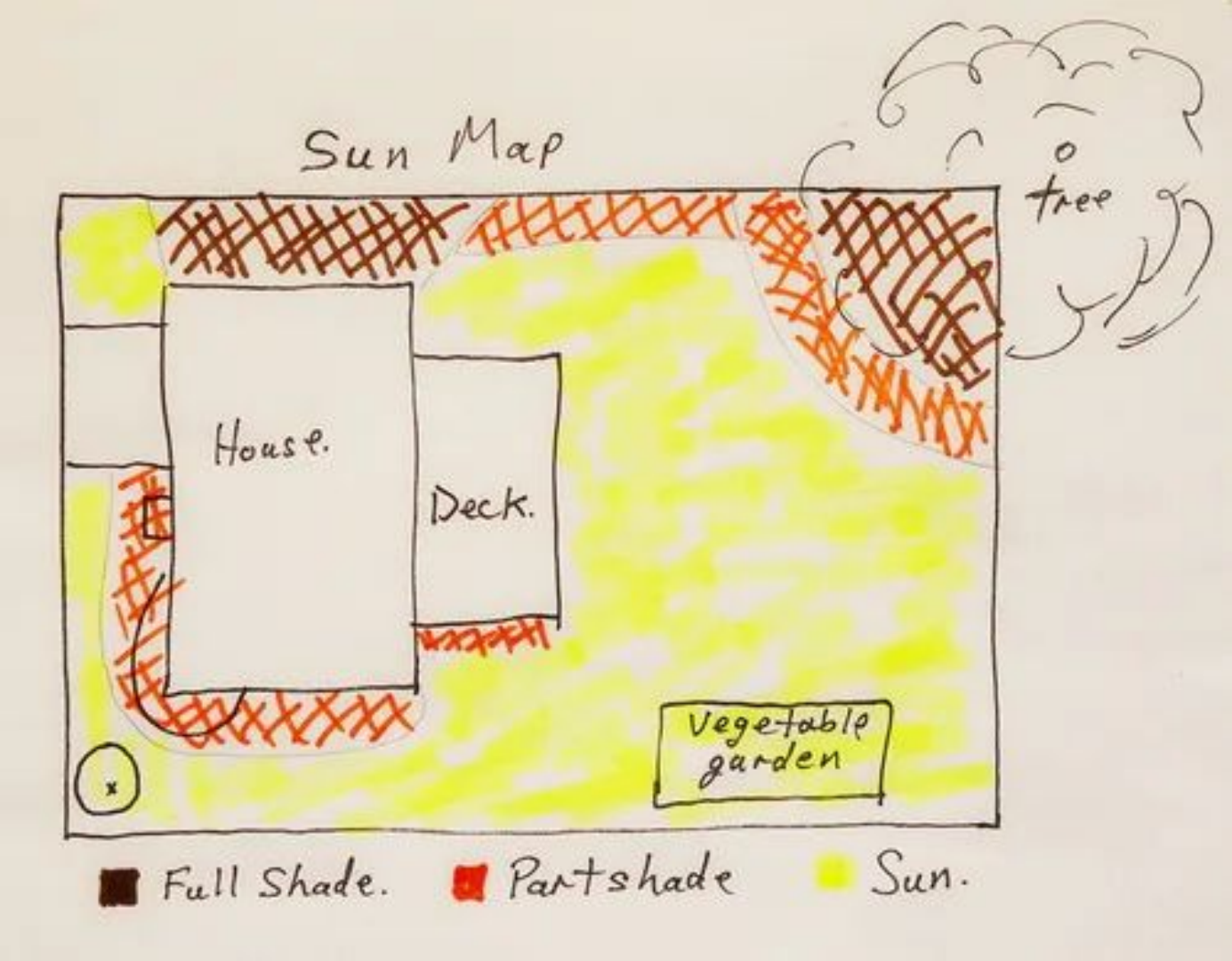
2. **“Partial sun”** exposure areas are areas that receive at least 4 hours of sunlight per day, and around a maximum of 6 hours.

Examples of crops that thrive in partial sun: Bush beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cilantro, leeks, and radishes.

3. **“Full shade”** exposure areas are areas that receive relatively less sunlight, usually 2 to 4 hours a day.

Examples of crops that thrive in full shade: Arugula, brussel sprouts, endive, kale, mustard greens, spinach, and swiss chard.

Sun Map example



Soil Health

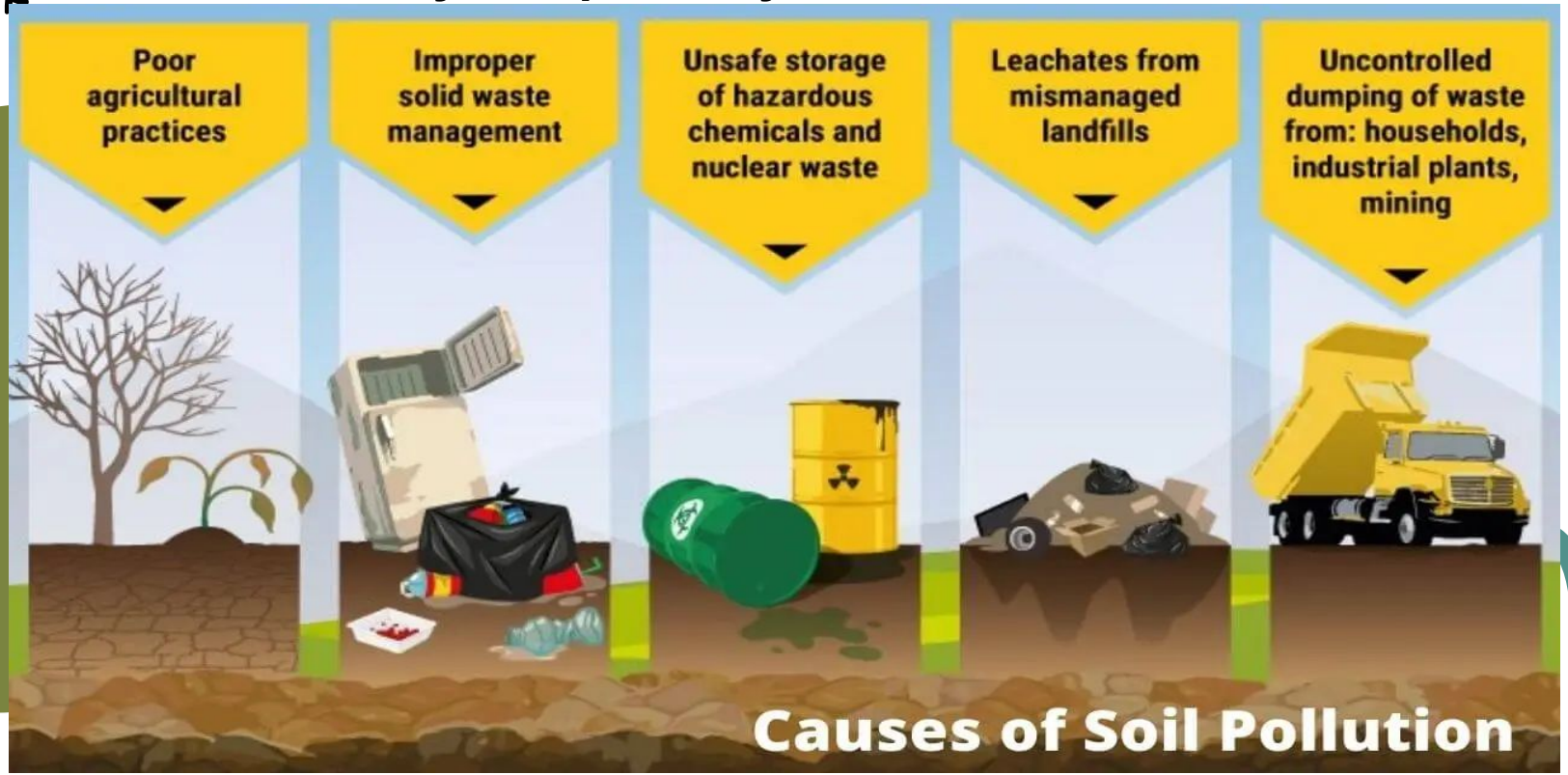
Your soil health = your health

Questions to explore more when you first begin to garden

- **Can my soil possibly have harmful toxins?**
- **Is my soil capable of sustaining life?**

Soil Health

Can my soil possibly have harmful toxins?



Soil Health

Is my soil capable of sustaining life?

What to look for in your soil

- **Color:** Is your soil dark brown, light or discolored?
- **Moisture:** How well is your soil retaining water, is it fairly moist, very muddy and wet or simply dry?
- **Texture:** Is your soil thick, porous, rocky or grainy?
- **Bio life:** Does your soil have worms, beatles or any other type of insect?
- **Depth:** How does the health of your soil change by depth, is there at least 8 inches of health looking soil?

Ideal soil:
Dark soil that is fairly moist, and contains insects such as earthworms and beetles.

Not Ideal soil:
Soil that contains clear traces of clay, sand, dry or overly porous soil that can not retain water and does not have any type of biolife.

The build of your garden

Direct soil bed mounds

Container growing

Raised garden beds

The build of your garden

Garden bed type	Example of an advantage	Example of disadvantage
Directly growing in your soil	Uses existing soil, no need to add or buy soil.	Soil compaction can be more common, since there is no bounds to separate your beds from paths.
Raised beds	More controlled soil quality.	Does require more upfront cost, and effort to build.
Growing in a container	You can grow in small spaces, such as a porch or even window.	The soil can dry out fairly quickly so they may require more watering regularly.

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Selecting the crops you will grow

A quick glance at what we can grow in CT and when

	Color Key	Start seedlings indoors		Direct sow or transplant seedlings in ground		Harvest/crop coming to its end				
	Month	March	April	May	June		July	August	September	October
	Temperatures for survival and growth.									
Tomatoes	55-85 F									
Peppers	70-80 F									
Cucumbers	65-75 F									
Kale	65-75 F									
Corn	70-85 F									
Onions	55-75 F									
Lettuce	60-65 F									
Cabbage	60-70 F									
Beets-Can grow during all seasons	50-70 F									
Carrots	55-75 F									
Peas	55-65 F									
squash	65-75 F									
Broccoli	40-70 F									
Spinach	50-60 F									

How to read a seed packet

1. Plant Name And Botanical Name
2. Description Or Traits
3. Sowing Information
4. Suggestions For Increasing Production
5. Days To Germination
6. Planting Depth
7. Days To Harvest
8. Thinning
9. Spacing: Row And Plant
10. Hardiness Zone
11. Horticulture Company
12. Packed For / Sell By Date

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Direct sow or transplant?

Things to consider per crop

- How much success will that specific crop have in a container vs. direct sowing
- Can that crop transfer easily?
- Is it a root crop?
- How long of a season does that crop need to fully develop

Ex:

Carrots and beets do not do well as transplants, as they are inherently roots and take a lot of maneuvering to do so.

Tomatoes are great to transplant because they require high temperatures, do not tolerate frost and take a approximately 60 days to fully mature.

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Gardening Practices

Your gardening ethics

Type of agricultural practice	Examples of Pros	Examples of Cons
Non-organic/conventional Methods which do not take into account the biological life surrounding plants, the health of soil, but rather focus on the yield of a crop and ease of how it can be done.	• Lesser Costs, Higher Gains. • Increases yield production, at high rates.	• Presence of Pesticides on your produce and soil. • Can create health and environmental hazards.
Organic Methods that prioritize the way we affect our crops, focusing on the health of soil, the health of other biological life near our crops and our own health.	• Healthier soil • Supports pollinators • Decreases the resistance your pest have.	• More effort required. • More trainings/knowledge needed.
Regenerative Methods which center the process of restoring degraded soils using practices based on using natural resources and amendments.	• Increased organic matter in soil • Increased biodiversity • Healthier yields	• More effort required. • More trainings/knowledge needed.

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Creating a Crop Care Plan

What your crop care plan should include

- Important dates for your crops , such as, planting time, transplanting time, and harvest time.
- What kind of care your crops need, such as, how much water, any nutrients, or pruning.
- Possible pest and fungus to look out for
- Traits of a healthy crop.

Tip: As first time gardeners it can be easy to miss things, consider observing your crops every couple of days. Often when taking a closer look we can better see what our crops may need.

Example of what that plan or log can look like...

Tomatoes

- [x] Seedlings started on March 20th, 2022
- [ ] Seedlings can be transplanted once temperatures consistently reach 50 degrees fereinheit.
- [ ] Tomatoes should be pruned three weeks after being planted directly into the ground.
- [ ] When pruning examine leaves for any discoloration, holes, or dry leaves that can indicate pest or fungus.
- [ ] Make sure tomatoes receive 1-2 inches of water a week, or water 2 times a week if no rain.
- [ ] Plants should bear fruit 40-50 days after directly planting into ground.

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Your Ready to Start Your Garden!

Q & A