

Mayday Gardens Planting Guide – May 2020

Thank you for participating in Mayday Gardens, brought to you by Cultivating Connections. Have fun planting, caring for, harvesting, and eating ‘Your Future Food’! Congratulations on taking part in creating resilience for Montana by growing some of your own food. Most of these food plants and seeds are included in the spring Mayday Garden, though you may have a few extra of something or be a few short on something else. -peace, Laura+ all the crew!

Herbs and Flowers:

*Red Clover- perennial that will regrow every year. This can be planted anywhere in your yard or garden and will take up about 2 square feet (4 shakas) when fully grown next year. Harvest the dark pink flowers for use as a tea- fresh or dried. Delicious and supports female health.

*Borage- annual that produces tasty blue flowers. Needs 2 shakas.

*Calendula- annual that produces lots of yellow or orange flowers. The petals add beauty to salads, make a nice tea, and can also be used medicinally. Leave every third flower to ripen its seeds to replant in future years. Needs 1 shaka.

*Nasturtium- annual that produces spicy flowers that are fun to eat. Needs 1 shaka.

*Dill-annual herb whose leaves are delicious chopped into lots of foods and whose umbrella-shaped flower and seed head is used in pickling. Needs 1 shaka.

*Sunflower- annual flower that can grow really tall! Sunflowers are our reminder that we are all together as one humanity- and need our own food resilience. Needs 1 shaka.

Vegetables and Greens-

*Kale- the powerhouse Brassica packed with nutrition and the most adaptable to Montana weather changes. There are several different leaf types- from dark purple to frilly green or dark blue-green leaves. Harvest and enjoy weekly until late fall, but remember to always leave the inner 3 small leaves for regrowth. Needs 2 shakas.

*Chard- related to and tastes much like spinach, but it regrows! Great raw for ‘spinach’ salad or cooked into any food. Use the chopped stems to add crunch to salads or color to cooked dishes. Leave the inner 3 small leaves for regrowth. Needs 2 shakas.

*Kohlrabi- grows a Brassica bulb on the soil surface that can be harvested at baseball to softball size. Peel and grate into salads or dice into cooked dishes, sort of like jicama when chopped and eaten raw. The leaves can be eaten like kale. Young kohlrabi plants have jagged leaves. Needs 1 shaka.

*Cabbage- Brassica known for its starring role in coleslaw and sauerkraut. Slice off sections to eat raw, cooked, or fermented-the whole head will keep in your fridge's crisper drawer for three or more weeks. Young cabbage plants have very rounded leaves. Needs 2 shakas.

*Broccoli- likely the most famous vegetable, also in the Brassica family. Harvest the main head and leave the plant, letting it grow small side shoots for on-going harvests. Young broccoli leaves are lobed. Needs 2 shakas.

*Lettuce- the best carrier for delicious salad dressings! Harvest outside leaves for weeks, cut leaves very short 2-3 times, or let grow into a full-sized head. Needs 1 shaka.

*Onions- plant in pairs, harvest when baseball size, or by the middle of October. Can be stored in a cool, dry place for 2-3 months. Each pair needs 1 shaka.

***Bush Beans- super easy and can be harvested again and again. Each plant needs ½ to 1 shaka.

***Cucumbers- super sensitive to transplant shock so plant into very loose soil and firmly pack the soil around the plants. 2 to 4 plants per hill. Each hill needs 6 shakas.

***Summer Squash- put seeds as deep as your thumb into the soil and keep moist until the leaves are out. Wear long sleeves when harvesting as the undersides of the leaves can be scratchy. Harvest regularly or they will get big before you know it! Each plant needs 6 shakas.

***Heirloom Tomato- short seasoned, determinate plants will produce round, red tomatoes that are full of flavor and adapted to the short summers of Montana. The tomatoes in your Mayday Garden do not need a cage or a stake. In case of early fall frost, cover with a bucket at night, or pull the whole plant and hang in the garage so tomatoes can ripen. Each plant needs 2 shakas.

*** = Vegetables that need a bit of extra care and protection from spring frosts:

Before going to bed, cover young plants with bucket, bowl, or sheet if temperatures are predicted to drop below 32 degrees or if there is a frost warning. The coldest time of the night is usually the early morning, just before sunrise.

Measuring with the shaka:

The shaka, that Hawaiian hand signal for 'hang loose', is the distance between your outstretched thumb and pinky finger (about 6 inches for an adult). '1 shaka' means each plant needs to be at least one shaka distance away on all sides from other plants. '2 shakas' means the plants needs two shakas of distance in every direction from other plants. Elementary school children should double the number of shakas. If your hands are small, add a bit extra on either end of your shaka.



Advice from a farmer:

Plant 'Your Future Food' carefully and with mindfulness for the gift of resilience that food plants share with us. Tuck the plants into the soil, making sure all the original soil as well as the edges of the planting pot are completely covered by your garden soil. Water Your Future Food plants after you plant them, making sure to keep them moist for the first two weeks.

Tend Your Future Food with care and attention. This does not have to take a lot of time but does require a consistent schedule of watering, cultivating, harvesting, preparing, and also eating!

Make spending time maintaining Your Future Food the highlight of your day. Caring for plants feeds our need for connection, and aligns us for co-creating a healthy future: a world that works for everyone.

Adopt an attitude of open discovery. Look for new ways to understand. For example, the German definition for weeds says they are just plants growing in the wrong place at the wrong time!

Connect with Your Future Food plants. Start by appreciating their ability to grow as you watch them take hold in your garden. Smile at the creative and beautiful way nature uses chlorophyll to turn sunlight into leaves you get to eat! Thank them for growing, and thank them when you harvest Your Food.

When saving seeds, know you are part of a lineage of seed caretakers who have shared these food plants with the following generations for as long as humans have been growing plants. This is a very special thing. Your grandmother probably did it, your great-great grandmother definitely did it, and every grandmother before her also saved seeds.

Have Fun and Eat Well!!