

# Right plan leads to better taste, less waste The vegetable garden

Home-grown produce just seems to taste better...and there's a reason. Corn, beans, peas, tomatoes and other vegetables taste best when they're fresh-picked. Store-bought vegetables often have to be picked days ahead of when they appear on the produce shelves, and sometimes that means they're picked a little greener and allowed to "ripen" in transit. With your own vegetable garden, you can pick them when they're at the peak of perfection.

The best vegetable gardens start with two solid foundations: good soil and a good plan.

Your soil can be improved by ensuring there is good drainage and lots of organic matter present. Compost is one of the best soil improvers you can possibly find. If you're not already composting, start soon. It's a great use for food scraps (except for meats and dairy products) and an ideal way to "recycle" leaves, grass clippings and garden vegetation. If you don't have compost, try mixing some peat moss or well-rotted manure into the garden.

Take the time to measure your garden area and draw it out on paper. That way, when you're at the garden centre standing in front of the seed packet display, you won't be tempted to pick and choose like you would at the salad bar. This approach is a recipe for frustration.

## Laying Out Your Garden

1. Relate choices and number of plants to timing. A dozen heads of lettuce may not sound like a lot, but it is if they're all ready on the same day. If you need more, consider earlier and later-maturing varieties. You could also plant the same variety at one- or two-week intervals. Just

make sure they will have time to mature before frost is likely.

2. Plant vegetables your family will enjoy eating (i.e., you can probably get Junior to weed the peas more easily than the turnips, if you're making the garden a family project).

3. Make sure you allow enough room for each type of vegetable to get the light it needs to grow to the full size. Once the risk of spring frost has passed, you can plant seeds or transplant directly into the garden. Or if you prefer, you can start them indoors in containers and then transplant.

Once the soil has warmed up (later in the spring) it's a good idea to mulch around the plants to conserve moisture and prevent weed growth. Use straw, sawdust, leaves, bark or manure. Another option is to lay plastic film or paper on the ground and poke holes through it for your vegetable plants.

Once the garden is established, it will benefit from regular weeding, watering and feeding. Use a good quality fertilizer like PINK Vigoro, Instant Vigoro Water-Soluble Vegetable Food or Vigoro Granular Vegetable Food.

You'll have to keep a constant watch for all kinds of pests, too. All kinds of critters, from rabbits to insects, will want to help you enjoy the garden. Fences will keep out the larger types, while a variety of options are available for insects. If you can, control insects by picking them off by hand or use a mild insecticidal soap. More toxic insecticides should be avoided wherever possible on food crops. If you do use them, follow label directions carefully.



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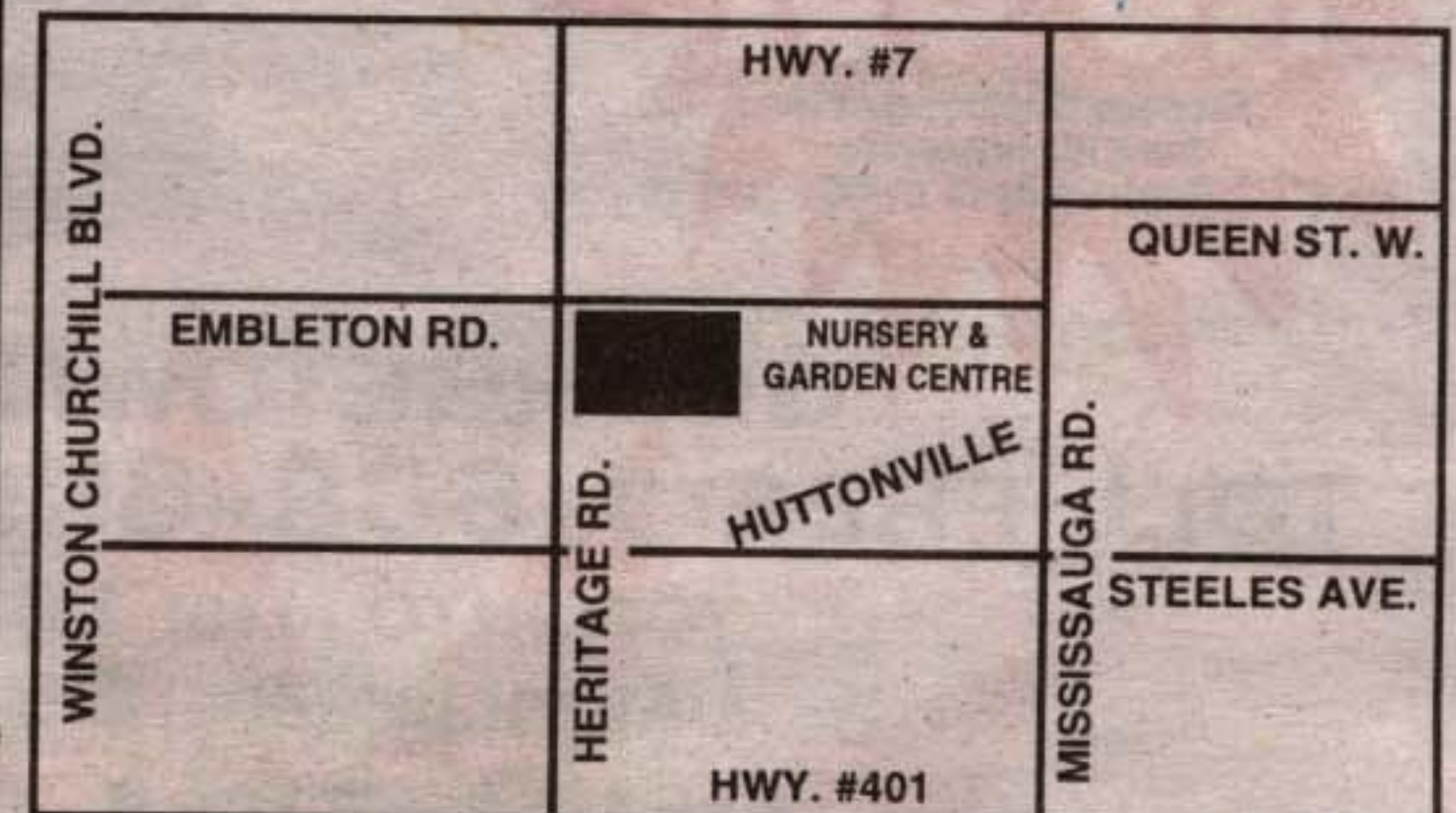
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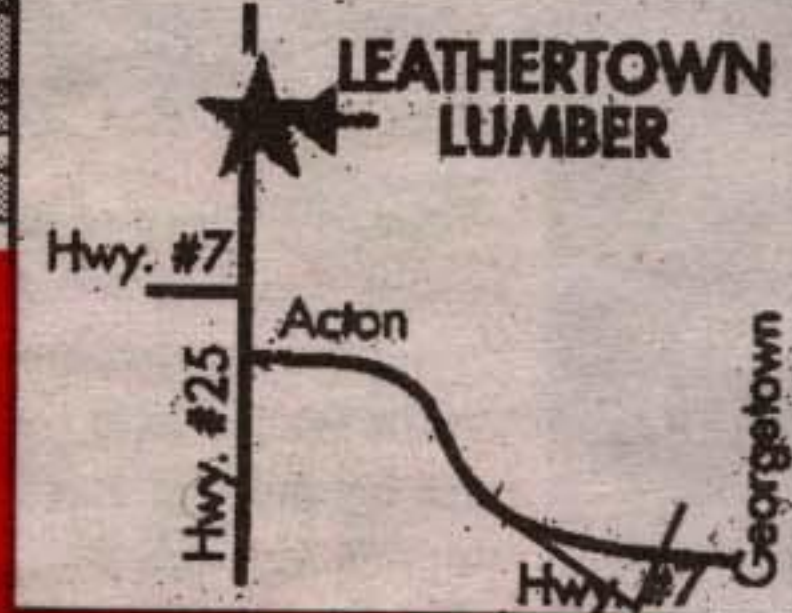
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