

I. Advice for a beginning gardener:

- A. Proceed inch-by-inch, and slowly grow your garden.
- B. Choose an area such as near your front or back door where you can observe and tend as you pass by it each day as part of your routine. In other words, it is possible to grow a garden in other places, but if further from your house, the work and joy of harvest can become out-of-sight-out-of-mind, creating problems.
- C. Share seeds, seedlings, and ideas with other gardeners.
- D. Avoid seeds and seedlings from large corporate sources that may have issues analogous to issues of large confinement operations for livestock.
- E. Buy from local and area farmers
 - 1. Food produce that you are unable to grow in your circumstances.
 - 2. Bulk quantities of produce for projects such as making large quantities of salsa, pickles, jam.
 - 3. Bulk quantities of produce to store, freeze, dry, or can.
- F. Learn from local and area farmers as well as the Iowa State University Master Gardening Program and Practical Farmers of Iowa and Internet sources.

II. The principles of this Ames urban farm:

- A. Engaging with the environment.
- B. Cooperating with nature.
- C. Improving and maintaining soil health.
- D. Developing diversity.
- E. Growing and sharing good, if not great, food.
- F. Buying, using, and promoting the use of locally-grown produce.
- G. Viewing the opportunity for labor as part of the gift of the place.
- H. Fostering hospitality.
- I. Creating community.
- J. Being grateful for the gift of this place.

III. No-Till Methods of Growing Food

- A. My first major project was to prepare a raspberry bed. I used what has been called the lasagna method with layers of manure, leaves, straw, and cardboard atop the turf. I did no roto-tilling or digging. Earth critters worked underground during the winter, and in the spring, I cut holes in the cardboard and planted 24 raspberry plants.
- B. There may be a book on lasagna gardening at the Ames Public Library. You can also Google the topic and find lots of sources. Perhaps start with the long article in Mother Earth News, then watch some of the videos from other sources.
- C. Also, Practical Farmers of Iowa has produced a good video on no-till vegetable production. After watching this, I now leave most, if not all, of my vegetable roots in the ground after harvest. Those decaying roots are good for soil health.
<https://practicalfarmers.org/2019/02/no-till-vegetable-production/>

- IV. Grafting a new apple tree** involves collecting a piece of wood from the previous year's new growth on the tree you want to preserve (clone). It's called scionwood (the parent wood). Also, determining whether you will want a dwarf, semi-dwarf, or standard size tree and obtaining the appropriate apple rootstock from a nursery. I order from Raintree Nursery in Oregon. The bottom end of the scionwood and the top end of the rootstock are cut, and the two pieces fit together in

somewhat of a tongue-in-groove manner and bound with special tape. I use Buddy tape from A.M. Leonard. The newly-grafted tree is kept indoors in a protected area for a few weeks. Then I put each tree in a pot of soil mix, water with rain water, and grow it in a protected area that I like to think of as a nursery, and the trees grow over the summer and are ready to plant in the ground in mid-September. Check in the winter to see if places such as Iowa State University Extension or Seed Savers Exchange (www.seedsavers.org) in Decorah will be offering workshops on how to graft apple trees.

V. Developing diversity

- A. Choose different kinds of plants and seeds
 1. Grow as wide of variety of tree, prairie, or vegetable plants as possible.
 2. Grow more than one variety of each plant. Example: we have four apple cultivars and, for the most part, more than one kind of seed for each of the kinds of vegetables we grow.
- B. Apple guilds are similar in principle to what many people refer to as the “Three Sisters Guild” in which corn, squash, and beans are grown together with each of the kinds of plants complementing the others. We do not mow near our apple trees. Instead, we have planted perennial plants around them.
 1. The apple trees, yarrow, rhubarb, and comfrey all benefit one another.
 2. (According to coldhardyfruits.com) Companion plants are meant to provide multiple functions to benefit the apple tree and the other plants in the guild. Some companion plants are great at providing more than one function, so those are the plants we try to incorporate first. The main functions we look out for are:
 - a. Suppress Grass and Weeds
 - b. Attract Beneficial Insects
 - c. Repel Damaging Insects
 - d. Provide Biomass for Mulch
 - e. Fertilize the Soil

VI. Some sources of true prairie plant seed or seedlings

- A. American Meadows www.americanmeadows.com
- B. Mustard Seed Farm northwest of Ames
- C. Prairie Moon Nursery www.prairiemoon.com
- D. Strictly Medicinal Seeds <https://strictlymedicinalseeds.com/>

VII. What we grow on the urban farm

- A. Fruit and nuts: apricots, aronia berries, cherries, elderberries, gooseberries, hazelnuts, pawpaw fruit, peaches, plums, strawberries.
- B. Vegetables: Beets, broccoli, butternut squash, cabbages, carrots, collards, dry beans, garlic, green beans, kale, onions, peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, zucchini squash, and other.
- C. Herbs: basil, cilantro, fennel, parsley, rosemary, thyme, and other.
- D. Edible native or other perennial plants for tea, flavor, or greens: beebalm, dandelions, lambsquarters, lemon balm, lovage, mint, perilla, pigweed, purslane, and water hemp.
- E. Laying hens.
- F. Hospitality.

VIII. The top other tools and items we think of to recommend

- A. Rain barrels, watering cans, garden wagons, and an assortment of shovels and rakes.
- B. A combo kit from [A.M Leonard](http://A.M.Leonard) that includes a soil knife, pruner, and holster.
- C. Germination soil mix for starting seeds and either fish emulsion or seaweed fertilizer or a combination of the two.
- D. A good hat and long-sleeve cotton shirts from your closets, a friend, or a thrift store.
- E. Use your Ace Hardware Rewards coupons toward a pair of leather work gloves at their store.