# Dig This!

How to plant a garden that delivers delicious, nutritious produce for your table

June 6, 2016 By Gerrie E. Summers

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Test the soil. Buy a kit at a nursery and test your garden soil's pH (a measure of acidity or alkalinity), or send a sample to a soil lab for a complete evaluation that includes nutrient content as well as potential problems.

Learn how to care for specific plants. Veteran gardener Erin Leigh learned that you should water only the soil around tomato plants and not the leaves to avoid disease and fungus.

Always research pest control. "Whiteflies are an annoyance and can wreak havoc on your tomato plants," Leigh says. She uses an organic pesticide or adds a few drops of dish soap to a spray bottle filled with water that she applies to the top and bottom of her tomato leaves at night.

Track which plants are from seeds or transplants. Transplants grow faster than plants grown from seeds and could become overripe or spoil.

Know when to plant. The earth needs to be warm before things start to grow. "You also need to be aware of the season of a specific plant or produce," says Virginia gardener Savanah Williams.

Be patient and be prepared to make mistakes. "They will happen," says Leigh. For helpful tips, talk to other gardeners or search online for answers to specific questions you might have.

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