

NEWS RELEASE

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Vegetable Garden Planning

Planning for what to grow next season gets underway over the holiday break. Back in my 4-H years, the record book would call for a sketched out garden plan. That was a useful tool when I was new to gardening. For now I can keep the plan in my head. There will likely be a time when I forget what I have done and need to go back to the written record keeping.

My sketch would include the six raised beds that I use. Rotating crops through the beds is still recommended. It is preferred to not plant the same family of plants in the same soil but every three years at a minimum. This means that crops in the Solenaceae family of tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and eggplants should not be planted in the same location but every third or more seasons.

The Brassicaceae family is large. Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, mustard, radish, rutabaga, and turnips are all related. Therefore, if you plant broccoli this year followed by cabbage in the same spot the next year, you haven't done rotation. Peas and beans are in the same family of Fabaceae. Alliaceae is the family of onions, leeks, chives and garlic. Beets, spinach and Swiss chard are related.

Cucurbitaceae is the vining crops like watermelon and pumpkins. The bush or summer squash also belongs. Most of these crops take up a lot of space. Rotation becomes problematic with the difference in spacing for the variety of crops.

Crops of lettuce, corn, carrot and okra are in different families. Rotating these and all the other family of crops is used to reduce damage from insect pests, to limit the

development of vegetable diseases, and to manage soil fertility. Planting a cover crop to improve the soil in between the rotation is always a good practice.

Gardeners with limited space find it hard to rotate. Mixing compost or manure products will help the soil. Disease may be reduced by adding good microorganisms to compete with the pathogens. Many crops can be grown in containers filled with media. These containers can be used in a rotation.

Crop rotation is one of agriculture's oldest cultural practices.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the Riley County, K-State Research and Extension website at www.riley.ksu.edu. Gregg may be contacted by calling 785-537-6350 or stopping by 110 Courthouse Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: geyeston@ksu.edu.