

Suggestions to care for the plants you purchased today!

Plant characteristics

If you need specific growing information, visit these websites:

Missouri Botanical Gardens, www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/plant-finder.aspx

Grow Native, www.grownative.org

MU Extension Vegetable Guide, G6201

Temperature

Plants grow best in temperatures from 50 to 80 degrees. If frost is in the forecast during the next few weeks, bring your plants inside or cover them with frost cloth or old sheet until the sun warms the temperature the next morning. The 10% probability for the last spring frost for our area (Zone 5 - 6) is April 17, but there have been frosts later than that, so be prepared to protect your plants.

Light

Light intensity affects overall plant health. Check light requirements for selected plants and use this chart to find the best spot for your plants.

Plant	Light
Vegetables and herbs	Full sun = 6 or more hours of strong sun
Perennials and annuals	Full sun = 6 or more hours of strong sun Part sun = 3 to 6 hours of sun Shade = less than 3 hours of sun

Soil

Have your soil tested at the extension center if you are working in a new garden or it has been three years since your last test. Native soils in our area often have high silt content, low nutrient supplying power, and poor structure. Adding compost or other organic matter, such as peat improves soil texture, nutrient content and improves root mass. If gardening in containers, use a good quality potting soil. These mixes are usually lighter than garden soil and contain fertilizer and water retention crystals that help hold water for plant use. Bags of these mixes can be found in any local nursery or store.

Water

Test soil moisture by placing a finger a couple of inches into the soil. If it feels dry, water. It is best to water at ground level avoiding leaves and stems if possible. Use of soaker hoses or trickling water from a hose allows roots to absorb easier. Recommended rate is about 1 inch per week. Supplement water if it does not rain. Containers require more frequent watering, so check often. Use mulch under plants to avoid water evaporation--It can be ready mixed or use chopped leaves.

Planting

To plant most annuals, perennials, natives or vegetables, dig holes that are at least two times the size of the plant's pots. Add additional compost to the removed soil until the fill is crumbly. Place plant in the hole and fill so that it sits at the same level it enjoys in the pot. Water well to eliminate any air pockets. Check daily for a week and add water as needed until new growth appears. Now the plant is ready for general garden care.

Special planting directions

Tomatoes

Plant only when soil has warmed and there is no danger of frost, usually after Mother's day. Select a well-drained area and space the plants 2 -3 feet apart. Tomatoes grow best when planted deep (up through the first true leaves). Then trim off lower leaves to improve air circulation and avoid disease from leaves touching the soil. Try not to get the tomato leaves wet when watering. Water deeply at soil level, early in the day -- light watering encourages shallow roots that dry out quickly. Staking will be required, and mulch is a must for tomatoes. Mulch also reduces soil splash onto lower leaves and results in reduced or delayed incidence of leaf disease.

Peppers

Peppers love heat and require 6+ hours of sunlight. Well-drained soil is required with spacing about 18" apart. Staking is usually needed. Plant at the same soil level as in the pot. Pinch off any blooms or fruit at the time of planting. Like tomatoes, water deeply and use mulch to retain moisture.

*If you have questions, email the Master Gardener Hortline
at mgstcharles@gmail.com.*