



Gardening Q&A with Farmer Ken

Can you save and store non-heirloom seeds?

Generally, the answer is no. Most of the hybrid seeds will return back to one of the parents in their lineage, and it may yield, it might not grow and it might not reproduce the same the following years. Every seed will be different.

When you're planting, do you use anything other than coffee grounds and manure?

I make a slurry with a combination of fish guts, coffee grounds, egg shells, composted manure, Epson salt and water. It's like a smoothie for your vegetables. I drill a 2-inch hole about a foot and a half down and pour about 2 cups in each hole and then cover with dirt for the winter. In spring, it is ready for your plants.

Is compost good for your garden, too? Is there anything that shouldn't go in to compost?

Yes. I side dress with composted manure all year long. Only vegetable materials can go into a compost pile. It needs a little bit of water and to be turned weekly. You can also purchase a machine that will turn it for you.

Any tips on how to grow herbs inside during the cold months?

You can grow your herbs all year round. I grow mine in our greenhouse. If you bring them into your home, make sure the plants have a full spectrum light bulb 12 to 14 hours a day, or they have a southeast facing window.

When it comes to harvesting, should I harvest when the vegetable gets to a certain size, or should I wait until the days on the seed packet?

Neither. The day on the seed packet lets you know when the first one might be ripe. Once you start picking, the plant will continue to produce more vegetables or fruit. Harvest as each fruit or vegetable comes ripe. Things like onions, carrots, beets and lettuce are good through their entire life span, along with herbs.

How do you support tomato plants well? My cages flip over as the tomatoes grow.

The only way to properly support a tomato plant is with cow fencing configured in an 18- to 24-inch circle. It will never fall over, and the plant will not fall out. We secure ours together with zip ties at the top, making them almost indestructible. Traditional tomato cages are weak, flimsy and tend to collapse when the plant gets tall.

Any tips on what to use for cucumbers to climb on?

You can make your own trellis or obelisk out of small trees, or buy one. You can also grow bush variety cucumbers and they'll grow on the ground.

Any tips on the little green worms that are eating my broccoli?

Those are the larva from the cabbage butterfly. You'll want to pick those off.

Can you please repeat what you said about watering at the roots and not the top of the plants?

There are a variety of reasons as to why I recommend only watering at the root of a plant. I prefer to use a weeping hose or a drip line so no water is wasted and all water goes to the root system. Plants generally don't like to be wet; it will cause all types of wilt and fungi. In cold, wet years it happens naturally, but in dry years we can control it by only watering from the root. The only exception would be during stretches of long, hot, dry weather you could spray the plants early in the morning before the sun comes up. Never water a plant from the top on a hot summer day.

