



Kitchen garden or nutrition garden

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Kitchen garden or nutrition garden or home garden is primarily intended for continuous supply of fresh vegetables for family use. A number of vegetables are grown in available land for getting a variety of vegetables. Family members do most of works. Area of garden, lay out, crops selected etc. depend on availability and nature of land. In rural area, land will not be a limiting factor and scientifically laid out garden can be established. In urban areas, land is a limiting factor and very often crops are raised in limited available area or in terraces of buildings. Cultivation of crops in pots or in cement bags is also feasible in cities.

The unique advantages of a kitchen garden or home garden are:

– Supply fresh fruits and vegetables high in nutritive

value

– Supply fruits and vegetables free from toxic chemicals

– Help to save expenditure on purchase of vegetables and economize therapy

– Induces children on awareness of dignity of labour

– Vegetables harvested from home garden taste better than those purchased from market.

Sites selection and size: Choice for selection of site for a kitchen garden is limited due to shortage of land in homestead. Usually a kitchen garden is established in backyard of house, near water source in an open area receiving plenty of sunlight.

Size and shape of vegetable garden depends on

Table 1: Cropping pattern in a kitchen garden

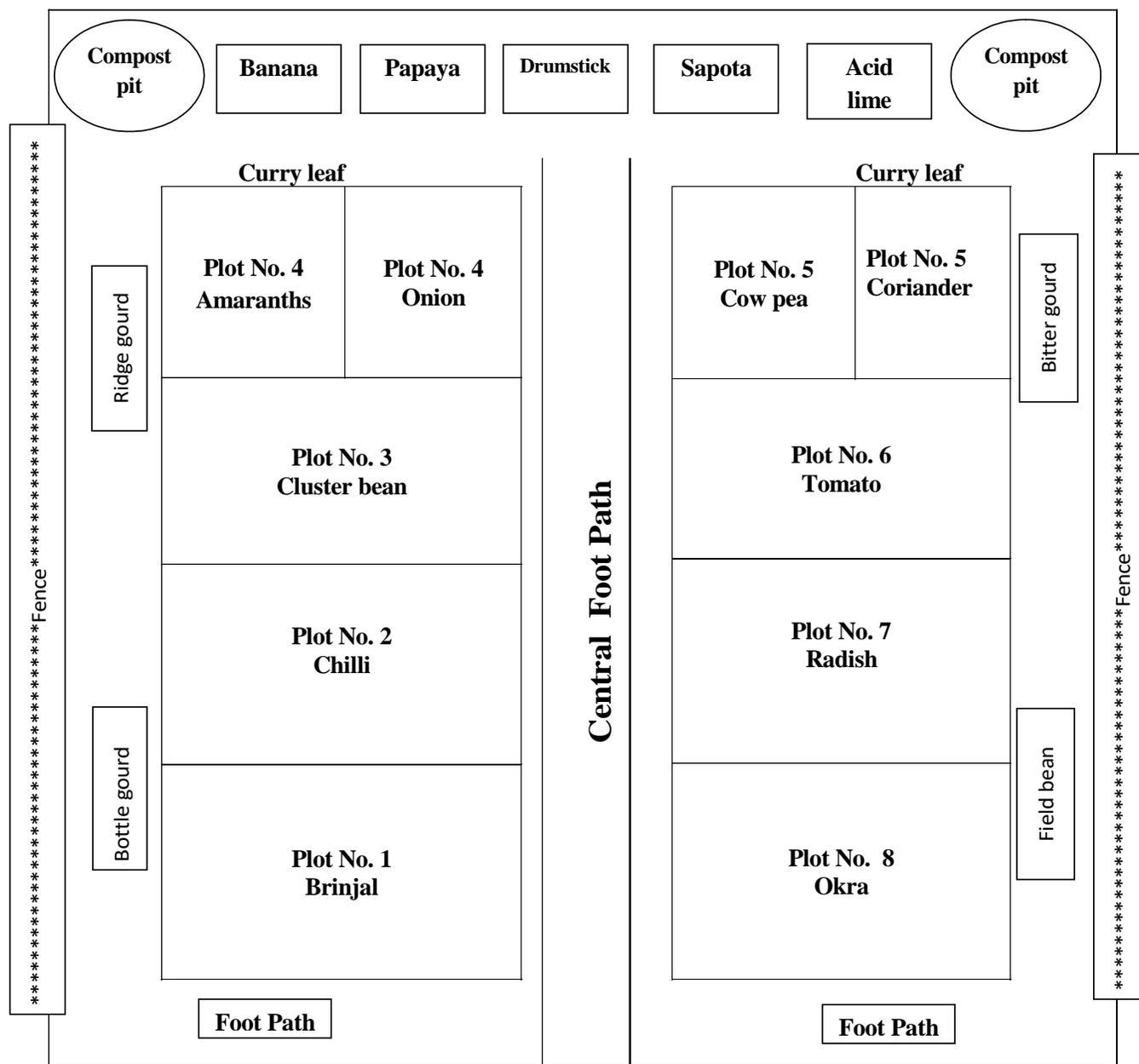
May-June to September-October	September – October to December-January	December-January to May-June
Annual crops		
Bitter gourd	Yard long bean	Snake gourd
Brinjal and chilli	Contd.	Okra
Ash gourd	Pumpkin	Amaranth
Bushy / semi-trailing cowpea	Tomato	Cucumber
Okra	Ash gourd	Chilli / Brinjal
Pumpkin	Okra	Yard long bean
Perennial crops		
Vegetables	Drumstick, curly leaf, Pointed gourd	
Fruits	Banana, acid lime, Malta lemon, papaya, West Indian cherry, guava, rose apple etc.	
Inter-crops in perennial plots		
Fruits	Pineapple	
Vegetables	Taro, elephant foot yam, yams, Chinese potato, tapioca water leaf	
Spices	Perennial chilli, ginger, turmeric, mango ginger	
Border of walking paths		
Amaranth, bush cowpea, bush dolichos bean		
Fence		
Perennials	Chekkurmanis, Ivy gourd, agathi,	
Rainy season	Sword bean, clove bean	
Winter season	Ridge gourd, yard long bean	
Rainy to summer (July-February)	Dolichos bean, winged bean	

availability of land, number of persons in family and spare time available for its care. Nearly five cents of land (200 M₂) is sufficient to provide vegetables throughout year for a family consisting of five members. A rectangular garden is preferred to a square plot or a long strip of land.

Layout: Layout of garden and selection of crops suited to each season depends on agro-climatic conditions prevailing in the area. Depending on climatic and seasonal changes, modifications are to be done in layout and crop allotment. General features / principles to be followed in the layout are follows:

– Perennial vegetables like drumstick, curry leaf should be allotted to one side of the garden so that they may neither shade remaining plants nor they interfere with intercultural operations. Shade loving vegetables like water leaf may be planted in perennial plot. One or two compost pits may be provided on one corner of kitchen garden for effective utilization of farm / kitchen waste.

– Fences on all sides should be made with barbed wire or with live stakes. Fencing on four sides may be planting Chekkurmanis, Ivy gourd, Dolichos bean, trailing cowpea and ridge gourd. Fence may be made strong by



Layout of a kitchen garden

planting agathi (*Sesbania grandiflora*) at 1.0 m. distance along the fence. An arch made of red or green Basella may be erected at entry point or gate of kitchen garden.

– After allotting areas for perennial crops, remaining portion is divided into 6-10 equal plots for raising annual vegetable crops. By following scientific crop rotation, three annual crops can be raised in the same plot. Companion cropping or accession cropping, inter cropping and mixed cropping can be followed for effective utilization of space.

– Provide walking path at centre as well as along four sides. Path can be made attractive by planting red and green amaranth or indeterminate tomato on either side.

– Utilize ridges, which separate individual plots for growing root and tuber crops.

– As intensive and continuous cropping is done in a kitchen garden, fertility and texture of soil may be maintained by applying adequate quantities of organic manure frequently. Organic farming should be given thrust for a kitchen or home garden. However, in order to harvest good crop, chemical fertilizers are also essential.

– Since fresh vegetables are directly utilized, follow clean cultivation, mechanically removal of pest / disease affected plants, planting of resistant varieties, biological control, use of bio-pesticides or bio-fungicides for pest and disease control in a kitchen garden.

– In a kitchen garden, preference should be given to long duration and steady yielding varieties than high yielding ones, which require constant care.

– Crop arrangement: While allotting or arranging crops in each sub-plot, care

should be taken to plant varieties / crops at ideal time of planting or season. Principles of crop rotation also should be followed in continuous cropping.

– A bee-hive may be provided for ensuring adequate pollination of crops besides obtaining honey.

– A cropping pattern for a model kitchen garden in the warm humid tropical condition of Kerala is furnished below. However, choice of the crop depends on the likes and dislikes of family members.



Received : 25.09.2019

Revised : 15.10.2019

Accepted : 16.11.2019



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RNI : UPENG/2010/37541

ISSN : 0976-5611

ADVANCE RESEARCH JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

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