

Getting Started With Your Milpa Garden Mix

We aim to ensure every participant enjoys a seamless and rewarding experience with their Milpa Garden. To ease the learning curve, we've prepared this guide to address common questions and provide direction through your inaugural season.

Our Purpose:

Our initiative seeks to distribute complimentary garden seeds to those interested in cultivating a Milpa Garden. This project allows the SWCD to emphasize food security, seed preservation, soil health, and nutrient cycles while fostering community engagement.

What is a Milpa Garden?

Milpa Gardens are founded on the companion planting methods developed millennia ago by the Maya and other Mesoamerican cultures. Recently, Milpa gardening has gained popularity in southern regions, prompting the SWCD to develop a Milpa Garden seed mix tailored to our shorter and cooler growing season. The cornerstone of the Milpa tradition is increased biodiversity. A diverse and healthy ecosystem boosts microbial activity, facilitates nutrient sharing among plants, attracts beneficial insects, and mitigates the presence of harmful pests.

Requirements:

In exchange for your free seeds, we ask that you donate at least 10% of your harvest to a local charity, food bank, or senior center. Please ensure the produce is cleaned of soil before donating. While Milpa Gardens generally require less labor and fewer inputs, regular watering, weeding, and fertilizing are necessary for a successful garden. Planting in healthy soil is ideal. Given the diversity of the seed mix, some seeds may not thrive in your specific growing conditions, and that's perfectly fine. We request that you submit photos of your gardens to butteswcd@outlook.com for grant reporting and publication purposes. Additionally, we welcome end-of-season feedback on what worked and what didn't, along with any tips for improving next year's garden. We also encourage seed saving, and tips can be found on our website.

The Seed Mix:

A comprehensive list of seeds is available on your seed bag and on our website, www.butteswcd.org. All seeds are heirloom varieties with a maturity period of less than 90 days. The recommended broadcast seeding rate is 49 pounds per acre. Our 1-pound bag is designed to cover 1000 square feet, while our 1.8-ounce packet covers 100 square feet.

Planting Tips:

For optimal results, scratch the soil surface before planting and cover the seeds as thoroughly as possible after broadcasting. Applying a thin layer of mulch will help deter birds and other animals from scavenging seeds. Water the garden area daily to ensure good germination. If thinning plants, focus on baby greens suitable for salads. Thinning allows corn and other plants to reach full maturity, but reduced density may create space for weeds. Adapt your approach as needed. Seed corn is packaged separately to facilitate planting in rows or bunches for better pollination. The more care your garden receives, the higher your yields will be.

Harvesting:

Due to the high diversity of the seed mix, harvesting times will vary widely. Harvesting a Milpa Garden has been likened to a scavenger hunt! Detailed harvesting windows for each plant in the seed mix can be found on our website and are summarized in the table below.

Days to Maturity		
20-45	50-70	80-90
Arugula	Contender bush beans	Table king acorn squash
Purple plum radish	Profilic straightneck summer squash	Yellow crimson watermelon
White icicle radish	Yellow bush scallop summer squash	Tuxana Sweet Corn
Pink celebration radish	Dwarf blue curled scotch kale	Iroquois melon seeds
Barese swiss chard	Perpetual spinach swiss chard	Black diamond watermelon
Tendergreen mustard	Homemade pickles cucumbers	Starburst manna parching corn
Bloomsdale spinach	Cocozelle summer squash	Wee be little pumpkin
Tatume summer squash*	Lemon cucumber	
	Minnesota midget melon	
	Danvers carrot	
	French horticulture green bush bean	
	kentucky wonder 125 pole beans	
	Sugar snap	
	Green arrow garden peas	
*Tatume summer squash can be harvested at 45 days and used like zucchini or allowed to fully mature and harvested as winter squash		

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