

Review: Crop Planning for Organic Vegetable Growers

Are you growing produce for repeated harvest and direct sales throughout the growing season? *Crop Planning for Organic Vegetable Growers* is a new book to help you plan how much to plant and when, in order to have sufficient harvests for all your sales outlets and meet your financial targets.

It's not easy to make a living growing and selling vegetables, and crop planning is a complicated process. Here it is presented in manageable and logical steps, with lots of guidance on how to do it, and good reasoning behind why each step is important.

There are eleven steps:

1. Set your financial goals
2. Develop a marketing plan
3. Make field planting schedules
4. Create crop maps
5. Choose vegetable varieties and finalize planting schedule
6. Generate greenhouse schedules
7. Fill out a seed order
8. Make a field operations calendar
9. Carry out the crop plan
10. Analyze crop profitability
11. Plan for next year

The steps are interspersed with real world examples of vegetable operations that showcase the importance of, and success due to, crop planning. Bruce and Hanna are a fictitious couple whose decision-making process, alongside their worksheets, supports the text. The planning process will appeal equally to non-organic market growers, but the organic focus includes crop rotations that are the basis of soil building.

“Impressive. I am very appreciative of this project. It is detailed and complete. Bruce and Hanna are very helpful,” says Danielle Chevalier, of Highwater Farm in Washington State.

Michelle Jory of Farimeadow Farm in Ontario comments “The vegetable growing reference charts are great, containing a lot of important info that is often time consuming to track down – I bet some growers would find it worthwhile to read for these alone! The authors strike a nice balance between covering the essential points (such as how to calculate each date you need for different crops) and including other considerations in the sidebars (such as what field conditions might affect yield, and how to decide on ‘safety factors’).”

The authors are Frédéric Thériault and Daniel Brisebois, two of five partners in Tourne-Sol Cooperative Farm in Les Cèdres, Quebec. Founded in the fall of 2004, Tourne-Sol now produces certified organic vegetables, flowers, seeds, seedlings and herbal teas on 12 acres. Tourne-Sol sells through a 250-share CSA (Community Supported Agriculture, a subscription-based sales method), a farmers market, and an online seed catalogue.

“The guys at Tourne-Sol are the experts in many domains,” says Jean-Martin Fortier of ferme Les Jardins de la Grélinette in Quebec. “I have not encountered a better organized group of people farming. Their success is, without a doubt, a reflection of the quality of their clear planning. The ideas, the data and the examples presented in this book are great for beginning growers who have so much to learn about planning their farming operation, but maybe even more for all of us

experienced growers looking for ways and ideas to improve our managerial skills and most importantly our bottom line.”

Just released by Canadian Organic Growers (COG), *Crop Planning for Organic Vegetable Growers* is the third book in their Practical Skills series (each book is \$22). The first two titles were *Living With Worms in Organic Sheep Production* and *Growing Potatoes Organically from Market Garden to Field Crop*.

Organic agriculture is now the fastest growing sector in agriculture, and as such it is the most economically and environmentally viable solution for Canada’s rural areas. More information, more books, and ordering information are available on the COG website at www.cog.ca or by calling 613-216-0741.