

how to garden organically

The main principal of organic gardening is to live in harmony with your garden and nature. This means no invasive chemicals or processes in preparing, planting and maintaining your garden. Organic gardening is about working with nature rather than against it. Some common practices in organic gardening are; replenishing and preparing soil organically, crop rotation, companion planting and natural forms of pest and disease prevention. Daltons has a range of BioGro certified products that will help you keep the organic integrity of your garden.

Preparing your organic garden

The importance of soil

When it comes to organic gardening, soil is the key. It is very important to build good organic structure in the soil by regularly adding plenty of compost and organic matter, as opposed to planting into normal soil and adding lots of side dressings of fertiliser.

Soil preparation

- 1 To enrich and prepare your soil, firstly remove any dead or old plants and weeds. Evenly apply a generous layer of **Daltons Organic Compost** or **Daltons Organic Sheep Pellets** and mix in well with existing soil – working it in to a depth of approximately one spade deep. Plus add **Daltons Organic Bio-Fungicide Granules** to the root zone for a living barrier against disease. To ensure the soil is well aerated, do this one to two weeks before planting.
- 2 If you have a water logged (heavy/clay) or overly wet soils, add extra amounts of **Daltons Organic Clay Breaker** or **Daltons Organic Compost** to help with drainage. This will open up the clay soils, and bind together the sandy soils.
- 3 For raised planters or gardens, fill up the site with a combination of **Daltons Organic Compost** and **Daltons Organic Potting Mix** or **Daltons Organic Vegetable Mix** (depending on the garden type).

Planting

- 1 To maintain an organic regime in your garden, ensure you plant organically raised seedlings or sow organic seeds. These seeds are not genetically modified in any way and are deemed to produce crops that have a higher nutritional value, which is healthier for you. Using organic seeds also means you can collect the seeds from fruit and vegetable crops at the end of the season and save them for planting next year. If you are sowing seeds indoors before planting out, use **Daltons Organic Seed Mix** in your seed trays as it has the right balance to help ensure the best seed strike and healthy seedlings.

- 2 When sowing seeds or planting new seedlings, mix **Daltons Organic Bio-Fungicide Powder** with water and apply as a preventative drench to soil around plants, or by sprayer or watering onto the soil prior to planting seeds. It breaks down slowly to give long term defense. You can also use it as foliar (leaf) spray to help protect against leaf diseases once the plant has matured.
- 3 For mature plants you can add **Daltons Organic Bio-Fungicide Granules**, these root zoning planting granules give ongoing protection to mature plants past seedling stage.

Companion planting and pest control

Organic gardeners believe that by planting certain plants together they can enhance or inhibit their neighbours' growth. The benefits of companion planting also bring about balance in the garden through organic control of pests and attracting beneficial insects. Some examples of companion planting for pest control are:

Onion and leeks will help protect carrots from carrot rust fly by camouflaging their smell.

Borage, dill, foxglove, flowering parsley and rosemary bring bees into the garden.

Pyrethrum daisy with its pungent odour can protect against a range of insects in the veggie garden.

Marigold attracts hoverfly which in turn eats aphids, scale and mealy bug and thrips. It also assists with pollination.

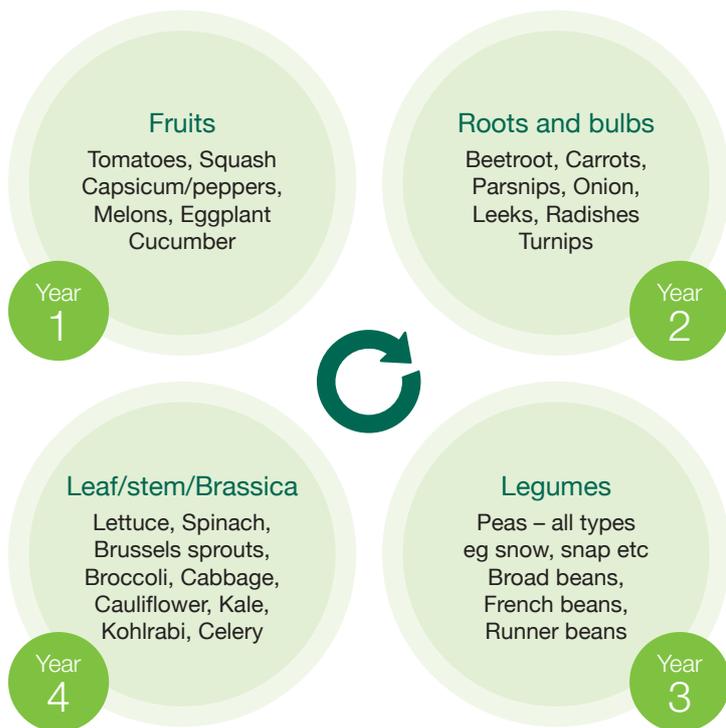
Organic disease management

The most effective garden disease management begins with a combination of practices that minimise disease establishment. Practices such as garden hygiene and crop rotation, alongside organic prevention programs are your best tools to avoid disease outbreak. **Daltons Organic Bio-Fungicide Granules** and **Powder** are the perfect natural protectant for your organic garden – they interact with a plant's growing roots to provide a living barrier that protects against plant pathogens and boosts the plant's own immune system.

Crop Rotation

Crop rotation is an integral practice of organic gardening. Different plants give and take different nutrients to and from the soil. By rotating where crops are planted, you can manage the soil nutrient balance. The benefit of crop rotation is that as one plant depletes the soil of certain nutrients, the next plant will replenish the soil as it grows. Several soil diseases can also be controlled well this way. By starving the disease of host plant material, it will often die out completely.

An example of vegetable garden rotation could be:



If you have a large garden, don't forget to use wide row spacing to allow for maximum air movement between plants. In smaller gardens there is always the issue of space for crop rotation. If you have a smaller sized garden, in place of crop rotation, renew your soil in spring by digging in plenty of organic compost such as **Daltons Organic Compost**, or add some organic sheet pellets.

Garden hygiene, weed and plant debris control

Ongoing good garden maintenance and hygiene is essential in any garden to help keep pests and diseases away. Always remove any leaves, dead or diseased weeds or plants from the ground and remove from property – do not put them in the compost bin as they can harbor overwintering fungal diseases and pests that can re-infect your plants come spring.

Weeds can be a source of disease infection in two common ways. The first is that they actually harbor the diseases already and therefore provide themselves as an easy source of infection. The second is that they take over the garden and reduce airflow and light levels around your plants, creating a perfect micro climate for disease to form. Best practice is to always remove weeds on first sight – the sooner the better.

Daltons products to try



Organic pest management

Effective garden pest management can be achieved with good planning and understanding of basic garden pest life-cycles. These and other techniques contribute to a balanced management of common garden pests using safe, sustainable and effective practices.

This most important part of pest management is monitoring your garden. It is a relatively simple task that involves walking through your garden weekly looking for problems. Check the stems of plants and under leaves. Traps can be used as a useful tool for catching and identifying pests. Some traps use pheromone baits which release a chemical that attracts the pest insect. These are good for keeping track of caterpillars such as leaf roller and codling moth.

For eradicating slugs and snails there are organic products available, or you can try other methods at home such as Beer Traps or the Barrier Method. Make a beer trap by digging a small hole in the soil and make it just big enough for a saucer or jar to fit snugly with the lip of the jar level with the ground. Fill the jar with ½ cup of beer, slugs and snails are then attracted to the sweet liquid and fall into the trap and drown. Dig one hole for each jar. For the Barrier Method, place a barrier of Daltons Bark, Crushed Shell or No.2 Propagation Sand around your vegetable garden or plants you want to protect. Alternatively head out at night with a flashlight and gather slugs by hand, kill and throw them in the compost bin as they are a great compost activator.

Beneficial Insects

Planting a diverse range of plants will bring in the beneficial insects, which will help to keep out the ones we don't want in the garden.

- Bees pollinate plants
- Ladybirds eat aphids, scale insects, thrips, mealybugs, mites
- Hoverflies eat aphids, scale insects and small caterpillars
- Praying Mantis eat aphids
- Lacewing eat aphids
- Damsel Bug eats aphids and cabbage caterpillars

Gardening terms explained

Barrier method pest control – Placing a barrier of crushed bark or shell around your vegetable garden or plants to deter slugs and snails.

Companion planting – Planting certain plants together to enhance growth. It is also used as an organic form of pest control.

Crop rotation – Growing crops of vegetables in different spots each year in the garden to manage soil nutrient balance and disease control.

Free draining soil – Soil that is light and well broken up. Water can penetrate the soil and drain without pooling.

Mulching – A top layer of organic matter so the soil and plant are protected.

Waterlogged soil – Typically heavy/clay based soil where water builds up and is unable to drain away freely.

Professional tips with Xanthe White

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