

Bluestem Breezes
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Rotating the Garden

Well, the gardening season is beginning to wind down. Avid gardeners are in dismay. Others are rejoicing. I suppose I fall somewhere in between this year. I want to continue eating fresh produce from the garden, but I seem to be losing a little ambition to work in the garden.

I suppose that since I used the word “work” instead of “play”, we shouldn’t be surprised that my enthusiasm is waning.

Let me give you a quick example and let me know if this is also your state of mind. Person C has offered valiant efforts this summer in the garden. He picked beans, cucumbers, and tomatoes with me. He was great at digging potatoes with me, too. And, he loved sampling strawberries.

Take note: I’m giving you the high points of our time in the garden. Nevermind the fact that he and the puppy bulldozed a number of bean seedlings, wacked everything in sight with the largest of cucumbers, and dumped many a bucket I filled with produce. Regardless, I still loved [nearly all] of our time together!

Ok, back to my example. Person C takes great delight in squeezing cherry tomatoes until they pop. One month ago, I cringed and reminded him sternly to be nice to the tomatoes. And, he shouldn’t touch a green tomato. Now, fast forward to this week. We leave the garden and he has tomato seeds and juice soaking through his jeans pockets, it’s running down his arm, and the only thing I care about is that thankfully this time, I didn’t get pinged with the tomato juice!

Don’t worry, I’m treasuring our time together gardening. I really am!

Now, before we write the garden season off, there is another important task to consider! Read on for advice from K-State Specialist Ward Upham:

Rotating vegetable crops is a standard way of helping prevent disease from being carried over from one year to the next. Rotation means that crops are moved to different areas of the garden each year. Planting the same crop, or a related crop, in the same area each year can lead to a build-up of disease. Also, different crops vary in the depth and density of the root system as well as extract different levels of nutrients. As a rule, cool-season crops such as cabbage, peas, lettuce and onions have relatively sparse, shallow root systems and warm-season crops such as tomatoes, peppers and melons have deeper, better developed root systems. Therefore, it can be helpful to rotate warm-season and cool-season crops.

As mentioned earlier, it is also a good idea to avoid planting closely related crops in the same area as diseases may be shared among them. For example, tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and eggplant are closely related. Also, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and brussels sprouts share

many characteristics in common. Therefore, do not plant cabbage where broccoli was the previous year or tomatoes where the peppers were.

So, why is this important to bring this up in the fall? Now is the time to make a sketch of your garden so that the layout is not forgotten when it is time to plant next year.

For more information visit the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; kamayer@ksu.edu; 765-3821). For Bluestem Breezes archives, check out wabaunsee.ksu.edu.

Don't forget that Ranch and Range Tour is Saturday!! I'm looking forward to seeing you at the pasture!