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Crop Rotation - Fact Sheet

Crop rotation

Crop rotation is a practice designed to minimise pests and diseases, reduce chemical use, aid in building and maintaining healthy soil, and manage nutrient requirements - all which will maximise yield. The principles of crop rotation have been successfully used for thousands of years in agriculture and are still used today. The simplicity of crop rotation allows the practice to be used in your own home with great success.

Crop rotation is just that - rotating crops, so that no bed or plot sees the same crop in successive seasons. Crop rotation has a number of benefits including:

- Reduces the build-up of pests and diseases in the soil by removing their preferred host and therefore breaking the pest or disease's lifecycle, reducing and even removing your requirement for chemical spraying.
- Manages soil pH and nutrient levels, to help your vegetables get the most out of your soil. Use of composts, manures, lime and fertilisers at the right times will benefit successive crops.
- Building soil. Using organic matter, your own compost and growing green manure crops to add nitrogen keeps your soil healthy and working – good soil is the key to producing great crops.



Crop rotation can be quite a science or quite simple.....

The easiest approach is to break the vegetables into 4 groups and avoid growing plants from the same group in the same spot. The 4 groups are:

1. Legumes –peas, beans, broad beans
2. Brassicas and leaf vegetables – Cauliflower, Kale, Broccoli, Brussel sprouts, Chinese greens, cabbage, Lettuce, spinach, silverbeet
3. Alliums – onions, shallots, spring onions, chives, garlic
4. Others – everything else eg. Potatoes, tomatoes, cucurbits, capsicums

Example of a Simple Rotation Plan

Some crop rotation plans work on a 6 or 7 year plan. For most home gardeners a 4 growing season rotation plan would be adequate. Most gardeners would probably produce 2 crops a year – a spring/summer crop and an autumn/winter crop.

An example of crop groups in a four season rotation would be as follows.

	Bed 1	Bed 2	Bed 3	Bed 4
Season 1	Legumes	Alliums	Other vegetables	Brassicas and leaf vegies
Season 2	Brassicas and leaf vegies	Legumes	Alliums	Other vegetables
Season 3	Other vegetables	Brassicas and leaf vegies	Legumes	Alliums
Season 4	Alliums	Other vegetables	Brassicas and leaf vegies	Legumes

There are many methods to crop rotation some are simple like the one just shown but others can get quite complicated, some even include a 'fallow year', which is a year where nothing is grown in that particular bed.

There are many things you may want to incorporate into your rotation schedule although the general and most basic rule of thumb is the longer you can leave between the same crops grown in the same spot the better.