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Introduction

In today's busy world, knowing about gardening and how to grow your own veggies is becoming more and more important.

Supermarket foods often contain pesticides and herbicides. These are the chemicals that kill insects and weeds. They are toxic and should not be in our food chain.



This book shows you how to grow your own vitamin-rich food so that you and your family can become more independent from the shops.

Just think, if gardening became a part of every school curriculum we would soon have a healthier world!



So let's get started...

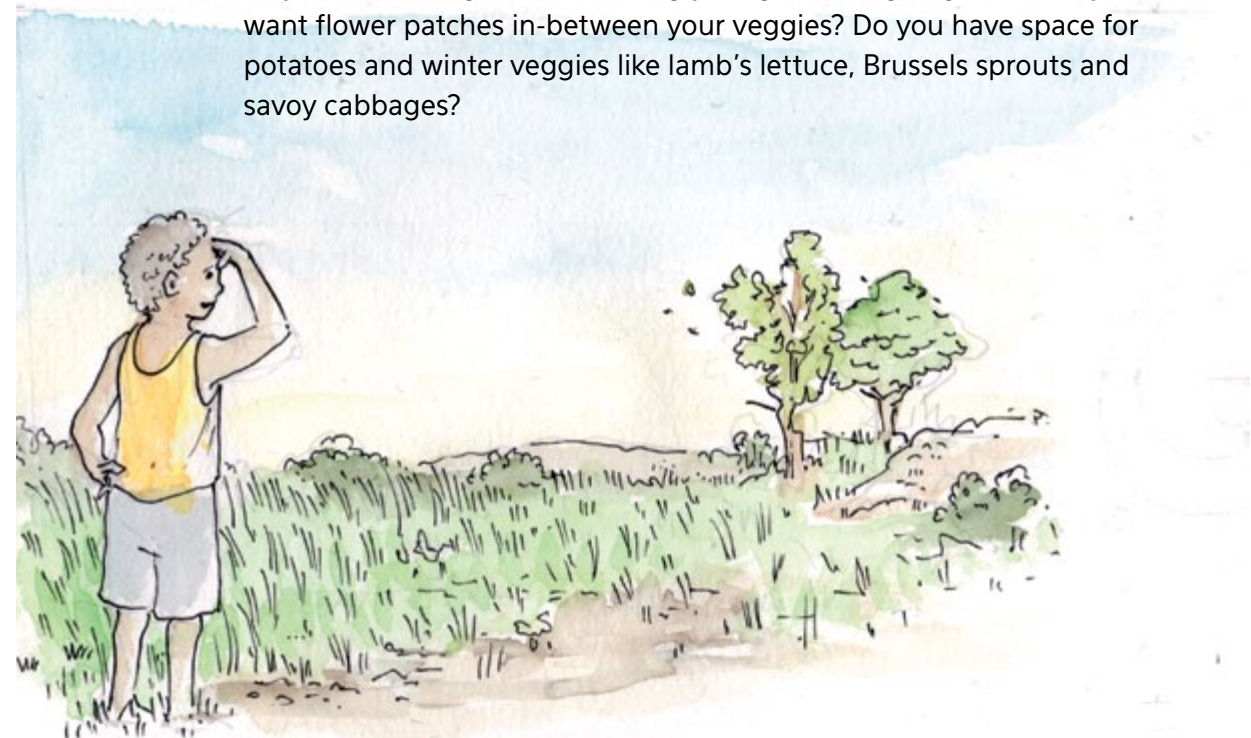
This book will show you step by step how to become a successful organic gardener. It's best if you also connect with other school gardens around the world. There's a forum at www.movement-of-life.org where you can register and upload pictures or videos of your best veggie patches. Each year there is an award for the best garden design. So log on and study the instructions!



Essential things for a healthy garden

We want our plants to grow perfectly, so we need to choose the right gardening place. Things like location, wind and sunlight affect its success.

So you need to figure out how big your garden is going to be. Do you want flower patches in-between your veggies? Do you have space for potatoes and winter veggies like lamb's lettuce, Brussels sprouts and savoy cabbages?



A question of space



Four adults need around 150 square meters to grow enough food to sustain themselves for an entire year. If you don't have that much space, no worries. I will show you how to make full use of every inch. Fast growing salads and herbs are perfect for small spaces.

Natural fertilizer doesn't work overnight and needs to be biologically activated in your garden. Having a regular supply of good compost will help. I will show you later what 'good compost' means. It is all about the right ingredients and how to chop, shred, grind, moisturize and cover.

The quality of your soil is important.



When you put it in your hands, is it sticky? Can you make a little ball without it falling apart?

If yes, then the moisture level is good.

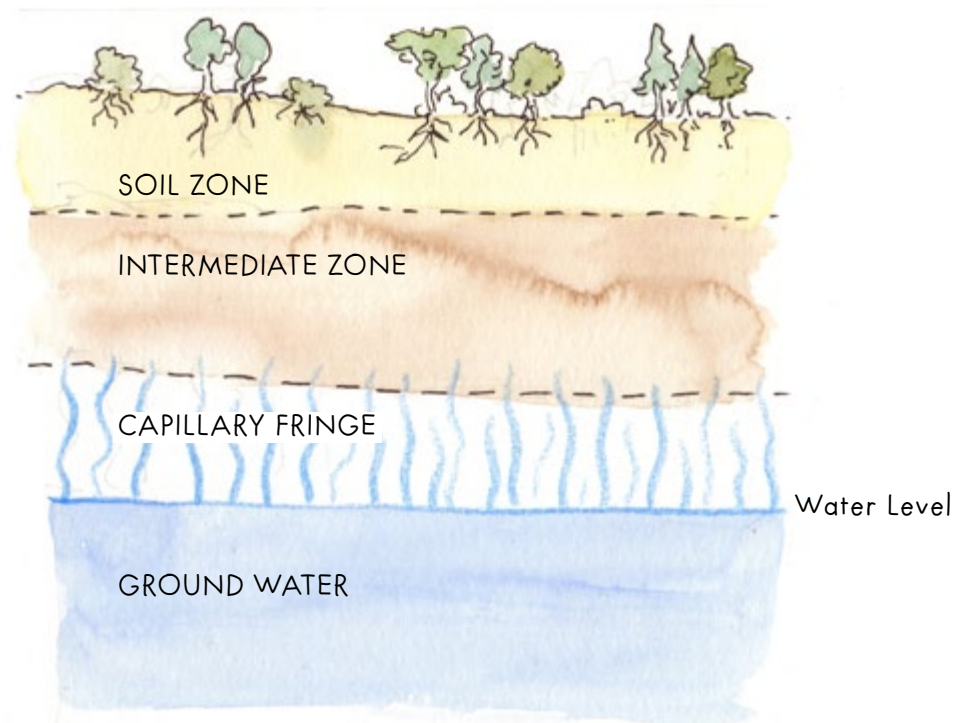


If it's too sandy, and the soil won't stay moist and certain plants don't grow, then we need to add more compost or choose plants that have less demand for water.



We also need to find out about the base water level in your garden. Best idea is to ask your neighbors or the previous owners of the land. A good position for your garden is a place without too much evaporation where the soil can keep moist.

Don't loosen your soil during the winter. Wait until after the winter frosts have ended before you start cultivating your garden.



Soil capillaries are small gaps in the soil that make the base water rise to the top. By regular loosening of the top layer the capillaries are destroyed and more water gets sucked up from the base. The more base water you use, the less additional water you will need.

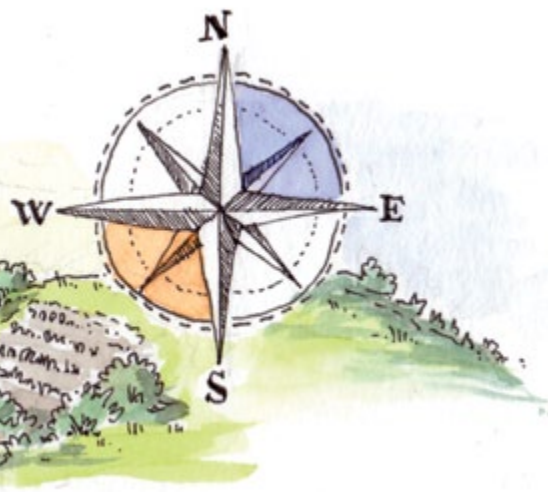
The right position



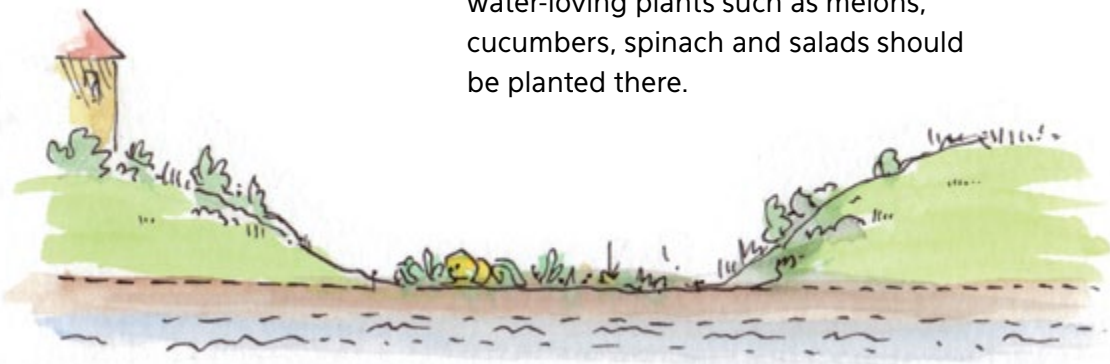
If your garden, or parts of it, are on slopes, your patches need to be transverse to the slope to avoid erosion.

Sun damage is more likely on slopes, so only sun-loving plants such as grapes, butternut, beans and tomatoes should be planted in those areas. A southwest facing slope is much more dry and hot than one facing east. The coolest and moistest place is a northeast facing slope.

It's best to secure your garden with a hedge, as this helps prevent too much wind.



If your garden is in a valley then the moisture level will be high, so only water-loving plants such as melons, cucumbers, spinach and salads should be planted there.



A good cover of compost and regular loosening of the soil will help natural drainage. It's best to check over a period of a few days so you can learn how much sunlight each part of your garden gets and how well protected it is against wind and (too much) rain.

After having gathered this knowledge you can make better decisions about what to plant, and where.

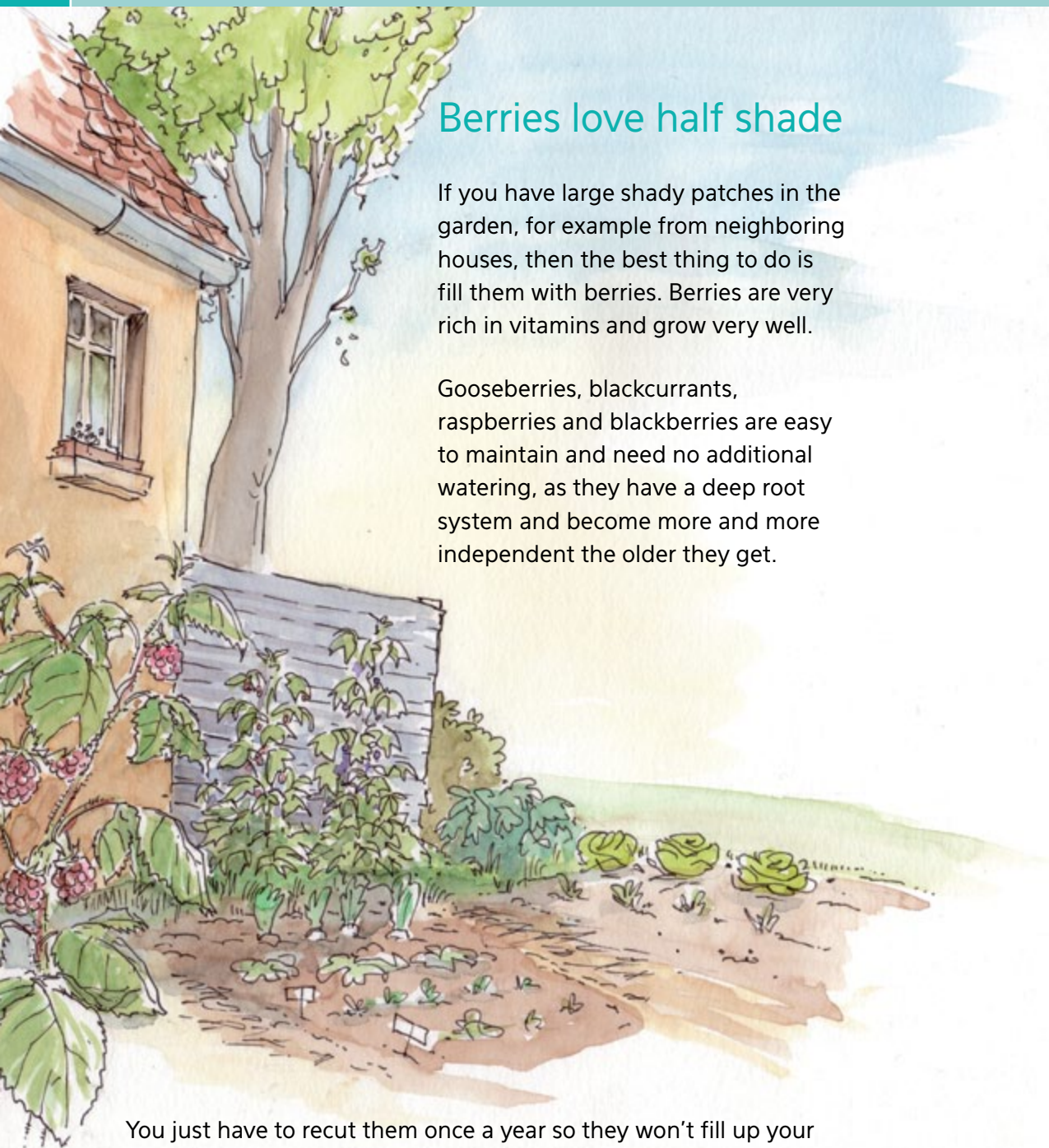
Sun, wind and shade

A sunny and calm space is the best position for your garden. Light and warmth encourage growth and fertilization. Put warmth-loving plants like green peppers, zucchini, aubergines and chilies in the sunniest patch.

A breeze of wind is perfect, it protects against plant diseases and pests, but a stormy environment will result in poor growth as the plants become too cool.

It's best if you can have a few trees in your garden for shady and half-sunny patches. Surrounding the garden with hedges also helps. Research has shown that hedge gardens have 20 percent faster growth and that their harvest is one third higher than unprotected ones.





Berries love half shade

If you have large shady patches in the garden, for example from neighboring houses, then the best thing to do is fill them with berries. Berries are very rich in vitamins and grow very well.

Gooseberries, blackcurrants, raspberries and blackberries are easy to maintain and need no additional watering, as they have a deep root system and become more and more independent the older they get.

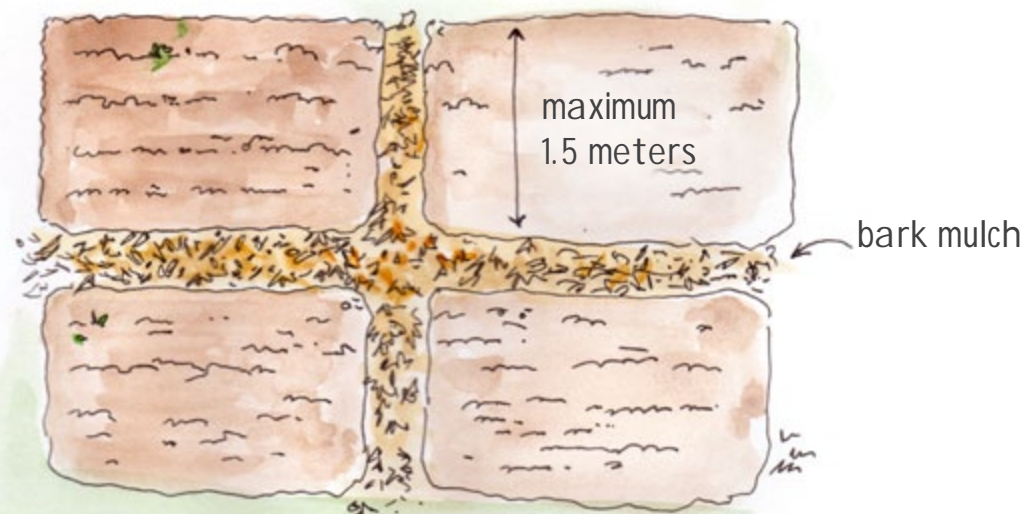
You just have to recut them once a year so they won't fill up your entire space. In autumn all leaves and greenery are welcome under their bushes, they protect their roots and provide moisture.

Patches

Your veggie patch can be as long as you want but should not be wider than 1.5 meters. This will ensure it can be reached easily from both sides. It is important to determine pathways, so make sure you only walk on those as this will avoid compacting the soil.

Between the patches it is best to establish a framework made from bark mulch. This works great in preventing weeds growing. You need at least four patches to start with, to ensure a proper crop rotation.

4 patches to start with



Vegetables with a short cultivation time like radishes, herbs or lettuce are best to start with. Those with a long cultivation time, such as leeks, celeries and Brussels sprouts, should only then be planted if the garden has enough space. Or if you have enough patience.

If you have younger siblings, encourage them to help you look after the patches and give them their own little space where they can plant a few carrots and cress, and of course some flowers.

Careful Planning – sketches of patches

The best approach is to start planning your patches by the beginning of each year. At the end of this book you will find a seed catalogue containing planting times, temperatures, and details of where in the patch each veggie needs to be planted.

Some need to be planted in a shady place, and some in a more sunny place, for example. You will also learn which veggies prefer which types of soil.



Instructions on how to draw sketches of your garden can also be found at the end of the book.

Don't forget to store the plans for each year as they will be important for the years to come. I will explain later how you can avoid mistakes in crop rotation.