



# Learn Grow and Thrive

*with*

*Cath Manuel*

## 4 Weeks to Fresh Food Lesson 1.

### ~ Planning ~

~ Please print your Lesson Notes and read through prior to each Lesson.

~ Spaces are available through the Lesson Notes to take extra notes during the Lesson.

### ***Enjoy!!***

#### Planning...

Starting an organic garden is really exciting and once we've made a decision to start growing, most of us are ready with all the tools and equipment we think we need. Many people start adding soil and plants to gardens without actually planning where the garden should be located and what to grow.

Planning your garden is one of the most important things you can do for your garden. Good planning saves you time and money in the long term.

#### ***To make a start on the planning process, complete the following questions;***

- How many people in your household?
- What are your aims/needs for your property? (container growing, growing herbs, a kitchen garden, chooks, animals, orchard, self-sufficiency, etc.)
  
- How many hours each week could you spend on your garden/property? (2-4hrs, 4-6hrs, 6-8hrs, 10hrs or more.)
  
- The land area for food production is balcony, courtyard, small yard, large yard, acreage.

- Do you know your soil type? Sandy, Clayey or Loam. If not, we'll cover the simple steps to discovering your soil type in next lessons.
  - What is the slope of the land? (flat/low, gentle slope, steep, very steep, vertical.)
  - What is the current water supply to property? (Town, tank, bore or dam)
  - Do you have any views to keep or screen out?
  - Do you need to screen out noise?
  - List any problems that you have identified.
- 
- List all features that you would like to include in your garden – This is called your 'Dream List'. E.g. sheds, tanks, gazebo, playground, sand pit, grass areas, paving, herb spiral, fences, pathways, chook house, pool, pond, dam, solar power, compost, worm farm, garden beds, fruit trees, flowers, etc
- 
- List any existing fruit trees you have growing – either in ground or container
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- Complete a 'Shopping List' of the fresh foods you regularly use. This is an important consideration when planning and creating your garden. Note all vegetables, fruits, herbs and trees on your Shopping List.  
\*This list will be used in Lesson 1 and Lesson 3

***The answers to these will help with your garden planning. It's important to know all these things before starting your garden.***

Extra Notes...

~ **Now's the time to consider other aspects of your sustainable property** ~

Consider these when planning a new garden and sustainable systems;

**Sector Analysis** is considering elements or wild energies (things we can't control) that have an impact on the site.

Some wild energies are;

Sun, wind, slope, animals, humans (especially kids), water, fire, seasons, pollutants (eg in air or noise or unattractive views)

Also consider any easements, neighbouring land or natural waterflow.

***What are some wild energies that could have an effect on your garden? List them here...***

**Zones** are used to record the areas on your land according to the most or least used.

Start at Zone 0 which would be your home, dwelling, shed. The centre of activity.

**Zone 1** – the areas most visited regularly and many times daily. Eg, the kitchen garden, compost, chooks, clothes line, shed. These are your high yield areas.

**Zone 2** – an area visited once each day. Eg fruit trees, relaxing/ meditating space, kids' playground.

**Zone 3** – other animals that require larger space, but visited each day, larger fruit trees that you visit each week.

**Zone 4** – long term projects like farm forestry or food forest

**Zone 5** – wildlife corridor, natural bushland or forest, conservation areas or local parklands. Not necessarily on your property.

***Identify the Zones within your property/garden and record any notes here...***

**Zone 0** –

**Zone 1** –

Zone 2 –

Zone 3 –

Zones 4 & 5 -

### ~ Sun Angles ~

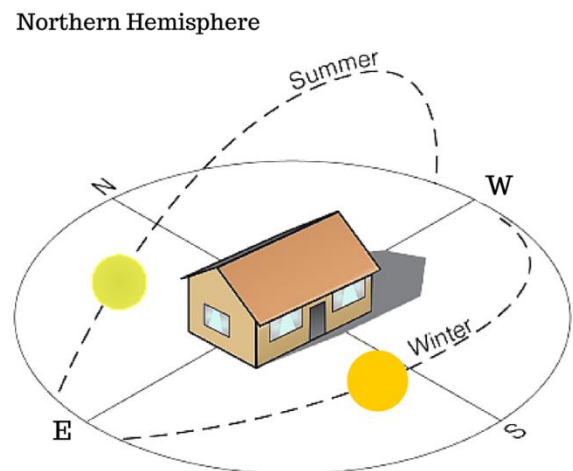
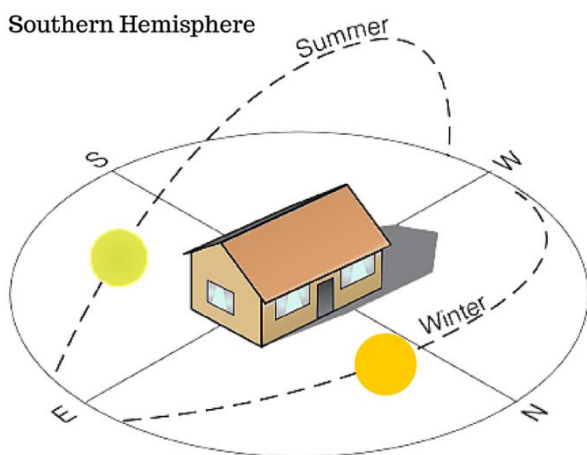
It's important to know where North is situated if you are located in the Southern Hemisphere and in the Northern Hemisphere get to know where South is located.

*Let me explain why...*

A garden that faces north/south (depending on your location) receives plenty of sun throughout the year, as the sun changes direction throughout the season's, even with Winter sun being at a low angle in the sky.

As the sun's angle or orientation changes throughout the year, the sunshine in your garden will change and create shady areas within the garden.

*Here are the examples –*



It's important to know the angles of the sun during summer and winter to help you determine which part of your garden receives the most sun. Most vegetables, herbs and fruit trees grow best with 5 hours or more of full sun each day.

You'll need to record the orientation of your property onto your plan.

***Follow this method...***

Use a compass or smart phone app to determine the orientation of the garden to the sun's path or the aspect of your garden. Record the aspect of your garden on your image or vision board using the following steps....

- Physically stand at a notable feature on your property, eg house, fence, driveway, while holding the compass flat on your hand.
- align the compass with North/South.
- transfer this marker to your plan/ map by placing the compass on the page and ruling along the North/South line and then the East/West line.

This method may vary with different compasses and smart phone apps.

By recording North, South, East and West onto your plan you can then determine the summer and winter sun angles. This is an important part of planning your garden in the correct location relating to the sun path/angles.

Your garden is best placed to receive winter sun throughout the day. The shady side of a building or tree will not receive as much winter sun, therefore not a good location for vegetable gardens.

Take time to understand the orientation of your property and watch the sun as it moves through the sky during the day, week and months. Can you notice a change in sun and shady parts of your garden??

## ~ Recording Your Garden Elements and Features ~

Consider how all the features on your Dream List will work together in harmony within your garden.

For example: place the compost near garden and house for easy access, water taps near your home and garden, shade trees on western side of house.

Also consider each feature that has more than one use, and include this first. E.g. deciduous trees provide shade in Spring and Summer and also allow sunshine throughout the garden in Autumn and Winter.

A trellis of Beans uses vertical space to grow a crop, which reduces the need for wide garden beds. Useful in small garden spaces!! This trellis also provides shade for smaller, delicate plants during the warm months. Place trellises on the Western side of gardens, to protect plants from hot afternoon sun.

***What other ideas do you have for maximising garden features??***

***Make a list here...***

## ~ Creative Planning ~

One creative method for planning your garden is to use a **vision board**.

A vision board is a tool used to help clarify, and focus on a specific dream or goal.

Vision Boards can be used for ideas for anything ranging from business ideas and goals, fashion ideas or planning interior designing.



I use vision boards to help plan and design gardens, plus other things in life!

## ***How to create your own inspiring board...***

Start with a large piece of cardboard and draw the current areas of your garden, including any existing features like boundaries, trees, buildings, playground, paths, etc.

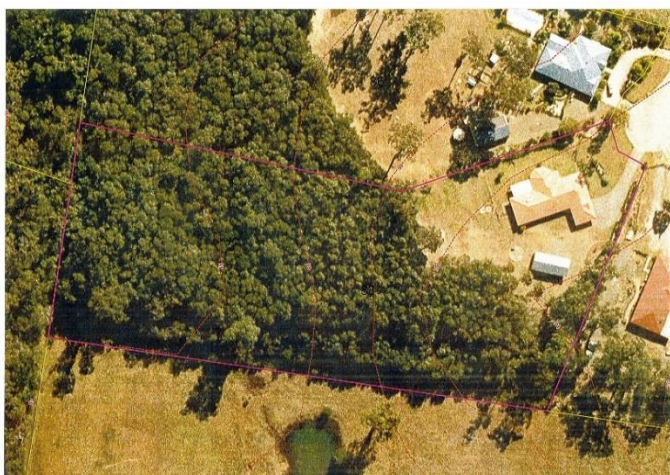
Look through magazines and old books and collect ideas for your garden, keeping in mind your Dream List and Shopping List. Cut out colourful, bright images of your dream garden features and all the other elements from your list. This is a great activity for all the family!!

Consider and record any wild energies that may have an impact on your garden, the Zones for each area and also record the sun orientation on your board.

Place all the cut out images in the areas where you might like them on the cardboard plan. Move things around until they're all in the right place, functional and look good. Start gluing the pictures onto your vision board and then add any comments you'd like to include, eg chook shed here, plan for next season, fruit tree growing full size, etc. Make this a fun activity.

Also try **Pinterest**. for ideas and inspirations online! For extra ideas on planning gardens and resources visit Cath's Pinterest page here - <http://pinterest.com/cathmanuel/>

**TIP** - view an aerial image or map of your property to help with the planning process.



Try your local Council website (search for Mapping), or search Google Maps or Google Earth for your properties aerial image.

Create a Vision Board for your garden, firstly marking your boundary and existing garden features. Then add all the features on your Dream List.

Search through magazine, online and other creative places to find perfect images for your board.

Add inspiring garden or nature quotes and anything else that inspires you.

*\*If possible – take a photo of your board and share in our Facebook Group for everyone to see!!*

### ***Some other considerations when planning your garden:***

- ✓ Dream BIG!! Include everything that your household would like to have and mark it on your plan.
- ✓ Start small.....work in a way that you can manage. Remembering how many hours can be dedicated to your plans.
- ✓ Set realistic goals
- ✓ Always consider the environment and make sustainable choices. Reduce the use of chemicals and synthetic/ non-organic fertilisers.
- ✓ Monitor your soil and manage it well.
- ✓ Learn as much as you can, which includes making mistakes as we all learn from our mistakes...
- ✓ Enjoy yourself, this must be FUN not a chore...
- ✓ When in doubt ask a friend (yes ME.)

### **~ Having Delightful Dirt - What is soil and why is it so important? ~**

Healthy soil is one of the most important elements in creating a new garden or maintaining an existing garden. It's the main foundation or basis of producing nutrient rich foods, which are then highly beneficial to our well-being.

Healthy soil is called Humus. [def: A dark-brown or black organic substance made up of decayed plant or animal matter. Humus provides nutrients for plants and increases the ability of soil to retain water OR The dark organic material in soils, produced by the decomposition of vegetable or animal matter and essential to the fertility of the earth.] Compost is de-composing matter, fully decomposed is humus.

Soil is a combination of mineral and organic particles produced by the combined action of wind, waste and organic matter. It contains living organisms, mineral particles, air, water and organic materials. Healthy soil is loaded with earthworms, microbes and beneficial bacteria and fungi.





The main reason soil is so important is that it provides nutrients, water, oxygen and anchorage to plants.

Our soil contains living organisms (micro-organisms or microbes) and we must nurture and feed them as we would ourselves. We will then have an abundant crop of nutrient rich foods that provide us with the nutrients our bodies need. Feeding the organisms in the soil is as simple as adding organic matter and the organisms then provide food for the plants.

### ~ What is Organic Matter?? ~

Organic matter is anything that contains carbon compounds that were formed by living organisms. It covers a wide range of things like lawn clippings, leaves, stems, branches, moss, algae any parts of animals, manure, droppings, sewage sludge, sawdust, insects, earthworms and organisms.

3 main components of organic matter in soils:

- ✪ dead forms of organic material - Carbon
- ✪ living parts of plants - Nitrogen
- ✪ living micro-organisms

The largest component is the dead matter. Living plant parts and the micro-organisms make up the remainder. This is the matter we call humus, which originates from dead organic material.

Adding organic matter can also increase the activity of earthworms, which then improves the way the soil holds together. If organic matter is retained in the soil, the number of organisms in the soil increases. This is because the organisms use the organic matter as a source of energy (food) and so they grow and multiply.

## ~ Soil Types ~

There are three basic soil particles. **Sand, Silt, Clay**. Also there's sandy loam and clayey loam.

**Sand** has large particles, good drainage, poor water holding, high leaching, good root development, good aeration, high erosion and low compaction

**Clay** has small particles, is dense, hold nutrients well, bad drainage, poor aeration, low leaching, hard or restricted root development, can have lower erosion and high compaction.

**Loam** is a balance of sand, clay and silt and is the best growing medium for most plants.

An important part of soil improvement is first knowing what soil type you have. The easiest method to do this is to test the soil with your hands.

Collect a handful of moist soil and roll it between your thumb, forefinger and middle finger, as if trying to shape it into a little ball.

With a clay soil, you will be able to roll it into a small ball.

With a sandy soil, you won't be able to roll it into any shape

With a loamy soil, you will see a ball forming, but will usually fall apart.

The silky clay particle will bind the soil together, whereas the sand, having larger particles, will not retain its shape.

***Following the above method, determine what soil type you have.***

***Make a note here -***

Once you know your soil type you can make plans for the types of gardens to create and determine ways to improve the soil, if necessary.

Heavy Clay soil requires organic matter to break up the clay to create a clayey loam, which is great for growing in. Gardens built on clay soil are best to be raised gardens to create a thick depth of healthy soil.

Sandy soil also requires organic matter to create 'bulk' loam or humus to retain moisture and nutrients and help to stabilise plants.

To create healthy soil, being clay or sand, plenty of organic matter added, in the form of compost, rotted animal manures, mulches, brown leaves, green garden clippings, etc. will continue to assist with having a healthy soil year round.

***You can see by starting with a good plan and building healthy soil you are giving your garden the best start it needs to provide fresh healthy food throughout the seasons.***

I hope you enjoyed this Lesson. You're now ready to start *Planning* your thriving garden.

Please post any questions you have in the [4 Weeks to Fresh Food Facebook Group](#) or share fabulous photos of your garden plan!

### **Next Lesson – ‘Creating’**

*Thank you for joining me,  
Cath xxx*

**Cath Manuel**

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