

Crop Planning - Succession Planting & Diversification Choices
Wednesday, September 8 • 5 - 7pm
Cerridwen Farm, Green Mountain College • Poultney

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This is an outline of a lecture, given by Kenneth Mulder, on Succession Planting and Diversification Choices. This workshop was part of the Beginning Farmer Summer Workshop Series, co-sponsored by the Rutland Area Farm and Food Link and Vermont Northeast Organic Farming Association.

Lecture is accompanied by handout including excerpts from Liz Henderson's CSA Handbook, Elliot Coleman's New Organic Grower, Fedco Seed Catalogue and GMC generated documents.

Primary Goals of Crop Planning

1. Increased Efficiency
2. Reduced Stress

Objectives of Crop Planning

1. Answer the following questions:
 - a. what am I planting?
 - b. when am I planting it?
 - c. how much of it am I planting?
 - d. where am I planting it?
 - e. what's my overall farm/field layout look like?
2. Identify and Schedule Time Management Activities
 - a. soil prep
 - b. cultivation
 - c. trellising
 - d. irrigation system set up

Steps to Crop Planning

Step 1: Determine demand and sale plan

[Handout: New Organic Grower (Elliot Coleman) "Major Crop Overview" page 6]

[Handout: Liz Henderson CSA Crop Planning Chart, page 1]

- Tailor to your clientele
 - Basic Crops
 - Market Specialities
 - Special Requests

- Determine how much of each crop you will grow for each of your markets
 - For CSA, figure number of shares and amount needed for each share
 - Keep GOOD records, track your sales!!
 - Identify contract markets (selling to institution? wholesale buyers? etc) and amount they will purchase from you.
 - Identify farmers markets you will participate in, market dates, and expected sales for each item, each week. [If this is your first year, ask established farmers if they would be willing to help you determine potential sales. Past years sales will always be your best guide]
 - ***All Demand Numbers should be linked to a date range for the market***

Step 2: Determine Planting Dates

[Handout: “Fedco Vegetable Planting Guide & Hardiness Chart”, page 9]

- Identify Harvest Window for each crop
 - this is essential so you can determine how often you need to plant each crop
- Identify Succession Planting for each crop
 - Determine how often:
 - every X weeks (harvest window) to ensure consistent supply of crop
 - Determine when you will plant:
 - Take your first harvest date (based on your market demand, Step 1)
 - Subtract days to maturity + germination time

Step 3: Determine How Much You will Plant of each Crop

[Handout: Liz Henderson CSA Crop Planning Chart, page 1]

- What’s the required yield / planting?
 - Based on identified markets (step 1)
 - Your own records are the best guide in determining yield/row foot
 - Figure out the number of row feet you need to plant for each succession planting (step 2)
 - Determine “fudge factor” here to ensure you grow enough for identified markets

Step 4: Determine Seeds/Plants Required

[Handout: Fedco Vegetable Planting Guide, page 9]

- Identify plant spacing and seeds needed / 100 row feet
- Order needed seeds + some extra (seeds are one of the most inexpensive supplies)

Step 5: Figure out Planting Layout and Locations

[Handout: The New Organic Grower (Elliot Coleman), page 4]

- Decide if you are planting in rows or beds
- Focus on Ecological Efficiency
 - Maximize Diversity (for pest control and nutrient use)

- ▶ species diversity
 - ▶ genetic diversity
 - ▶ open pollination
 - ▶ spatial diversity & intercropping
 - ▶ temporal diversity & rotations
- Constant Plant Growth
- ▶ diversity of active roots in the bed or row
 - ▶ succession plantings in beds
 - ▶ intercropping with cover crops