

## DOWN EAST *how to*

Mix in some compost, which is tremendous for the soil, or dehydrated cow manure. Occasionally I use lime and 5-10-10 fertilizer; but not often and not very much. Get everything smoothed out. Plant your seeds or seedlings. You can plant them in rows, or blocks, or in different designs. Have fun with it. I cover the seeds with a little fine screened loam or peat moss. If they're really tiny, like lettuce seeds, I just take a block of wood and press them down without covering them.

One trick is to cover the seedbeds with burlap before watering. That way, if it downpours the day after you put your garden in, you're not out there panicking. When I see seedlings pop up, I take it off.

### **What is your favorite time in the garden?**

Six o'clock in the morning. It's not real hot, the birds are very active. Everybody's rushing off to work, and I'm in my garden. It's pretty hard to beat. And then in the evening when I'm watering, I can slow down and notice things. But mornings are definitely the best.

*With raised bed gardening there's less weeding because you're using up more of the space for vegetables.*

### **How do you deal with pests?**

Woodchucks come up in the middle of my pumpkin patch and pig out on everything. I trap and release them. My neighbors and I call the place where we release them 'woodchuck alley.' Sometimes I catch so many that I get tired of bringing them down there, but you've got to keep at it. They multiply.

Otherwise, I don't really have many pests. As I told you, the marigolds seem to have gotten rid of the tomato hornworms. Other than that, good soil conditions and plenty of sun make plants strong. That deters disease and harmful insects. And having flowers and vegetables planted

## TONY DIPIETRO RECOMMENDS

For reading material, Tony DiPietro endorses *Square Foot Gardening* by Mel Bartholomew, calling it: "A must read for people with only a little room and people leading busy lives." He's also a fan of *Organic Gardening* magazine. And he recommends that gardeners take advantage of the many Maine Cooperative Extension publications available at <http://extensionpubs.umext.maine.edu>

together attracts beneficial insects and birds, which feed on the bad bugs.

### **You sound like an organic gardener.**

I'm not certified as organic, but I'm pretty much chemical free.

### **How about weeds?**

Just remember to keep things small. You know that you're not going to be out there in July and August weeding like you were at the beginning of the season. But don't panic. My first disappointment vegetable gardening was when I went out and there were so many weeds that I couldn't find the seedlings. Now I run a string where I've put the seeds in and leave it up until they're big enough to find. Otherwise, I use a scuffle hoe and try to keep up with them. The other thing about raised bed gardening is that there's less weeding because you're using up more of the space for the vegetables. I also scatter grass clippings on the beds; they suppress the weeds and feed the plants with a little nitrogen as they break down.

### **You mentioned sun being important for a vegetable garden. What about people who have a shady yard?**

If you have no sun, you're a perfect candidate for growing vegetables in containers, so you can move the garden to the sun. It's amazingly easy to do. Lots of varieties are available for containers. You can use pots that other plants came in — just make sure