



A34 Developing a crop rotation plan



Crop rotation is about growing related annual vegetable crops in different areas every year. This suppresses soil borne pests and diseases and avoids declining plant health and vigour by nutrient imbalance. This activity summarises how to plan your own rotation based on principles introduced in S3.2. Rotations are intended to guide your planting, but not commit you for years to come. A good rotation is flexible.

Resources

- List of annual vegetable crops. See A7
- Pen and paper

Activity

- 1 Make a list of all the vegetables you want to grow over a season.
- 2 Group crops into their botanical 'families'. There is a list of the major crops in A7.
- 3 Divide up your growing area into equal sized areas. The minimum is four areas, but you could have many more. It helps to draw a plan.
- 4 Put each family in a different area. Some families may need to share. Slot in crops that don't belong to usual families where you can, but still in a different space each year.
- 5 Decide the order of beds, ie which family will follow another.
 - Alternate plots needing extra feed, eg follow hungry families like potato, cucumber, or cabbage with less hungry families like carrot, or pea/bean.
 - Alternate crops that suppress weeds, eg follow large, leafy potatoes with thin onions.
 - Follow pea/bean family that fix their own nitrogen with crops that benefit from extra nitrogen, eg potato, cucumber or cabbage families.
 - Follow hungrier crops with those with lower nitrogen requirements, eg onion, carrot, beet family.
- 6 Make your own month by month, or half termly, plan for each bed so you can see when crops are using a space and which are coming next. See A35 for example.

Top tips



Tricks of the trade

- Write your selected crops on pieces of sticky paper (or use pictures) so you can play around with different combinations until your rotation fits in your space.
- Keep detailed records of what actually happens, not just what you planned. Use this information when planning the next year.
- It works well to plan a rotation for the whole growing area. In this way, crop rotation is maintained, while every pupil gets the opportunity to grow different things during their time at the school.

Health & Safety

Be careful when handling soil and compost, washing hands afterwards.

See also *Health and Safety Guidelines (Section SG1.2)*

Further information

A7 Crop and family games

S3.2 Planning crop rotation

A35 Creating a term time harvest plan