The Ins and Outs of Building Your Garden

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Fencing**
The height and type of fencing depends on the wildlife you’re trying to keep away.

**Rabbits**
Gardens close to school buildings located in the middle of large areas of open lawn will probably not experience deer pressure but will likely receive rabbit visits often. In this case, 3ft. chicken wire supported by steel T-posts is probably enough to keep them out and is also the least expensive fencing. Keep in mind that in many cases plastic fence netting options can be chewed through by rabbits, so it might make sense to invest in a higher-cost option up front.

**Deer**
Smaller gardens where deer may be a problem will require slightly taller fencing. Various 4 or 5ft. options are available at farm supply stores, usually in 100ft. rolls. Well-anchored 4x4 corner posts should be used to stretch the fence against, and T-posts should be placed in between for added support. These heights should be adequate in small gardens because deer do not like to jump into small, confined spaces. Deer, however, can jump up to 8ft. Therefore, in larger gardens, it is advisable to use the tallest T-posts you can find and stretch some visible wire across the tops above the fence. This visual barrier is usually enough to discourage deer from jumping over and only in extreme cases would an 8ft. or higher fencing option be necessary. Gates should be as high as the chosen fence and remain closed at all times.

**Trellising**
Nearly all tomatoes (especially heirloom small cherry varieties) require tying up. In addition, the trellising of vining plants (such as winter squash, gourds, pole beans, or morning glories) adds visual interest to the garden as well as beautiful “garden rooms” which kids adore.

**Straight Trellises**
- Use cattle or hog panels as trellises, secured to metal T-posts pounded firmly into the ground.
- It is important to be sure that the trellises are not placed broadside to the wind. If there is a strong, prevailing wind from one direction, orient the trellises for least resistance. In our region, strong winds often come from the west, so in that case it would be best to orient trellises east/west.
- If strong winds are not an issue, orient trellises north/south to obtain optimal sunlight. This allows the sun to shine nicely up the aisles.
- Plant transplants about 2ft. apart on one side of the panels.
- As plants grow, tie one end of a long piece of binder twine to one end of the trellis and then, looping around 2-3 plants at a time and through the wire of the panel, pull the plants snug (but not too tight!) to the wire. Repeat for every 2-3 ft. of growth.
- Once a week, check trellises and pull any shoots back through the wire to keep the plants all on the side you are tying up. This is a little task, but without it you will wind up having to tie both sides which adds a lot of unnecessary work.
Trellising, continued

Arches

- Using 16ft cattle panels, form an arch by having one person on each end of the panel walk towards the middle as a third person lifts the center up. Pound one or two T-posts in front of each end and tie the panel securely to it.
- Plant along the outside of each side to help train the plants up the wire as they grow. Tie plants to the panels the same way you would on a straight trellis.
- Some fun plants to grow on arches include: morning glories, runner beans, cucumbers, mini watermelons, gourds, and small winter squash such as butternut.

Bean Teepees

Materials:

- Use 6-10ft poles. Young tree saplings are best; willow is perhaps the easiest to find. The number will depend on the diameter of the teepee you plan to build.
- For twine, sisal bailing or binder twine is best because it can be composted along with the vines when cut down in the fall, but if plastic is all that is available at local farm supply stores, it works fine.

Procedure:

1) Tie a string to a stake, pound the stake into the middle of your intended base circle, and have someone walk the circle, holding the string tight and inscribing a circle in the dirt with their hand at the same time.
2) Take 3 poles at even thirds around the circle. Have one person stand in the middle on a chair or bucket and lean the poles to the center. Have others outside check to be sure the teepee is evenly centered, then have the person in the center tie the poles securely together with twine.
3) Choose one of these three legs as one side of the door opening, and place the next pole far enough around the circle for the door (about 3 to 3 1/2 ft.). Place the rest of the poles at about 2-foot intervals around the circle, leaning them against the tie at the top.
4) Once poles are evenly spaced, dig a little hole a few inches deep for each with a trowel or shovel and place each pole firmly in the ground.
5) The person in the center can now tie all the poles securely together, wrapping the twine around a few times tightly so that the poles will not slide or shift.
6) Take one band of twine and run it around the whole teepee, just high enough for an adult to reach, being sure to wrap it once around each pole and pull tight. Remember to leave the door gap open! Tie ends securely. Repeat with a second band of twine at the base (nearly at ground level).
7) Between each pole, tie two vertical strings. Tie the string to the top twine, pull down, cut about 3 inches longer than the distance to the bottom twine, wrap it under the bottom twine and pull taught. Pinch this union tightly with one hand so the string remains taught, then loop the twine around itself and pull tight to form a simple half knot. Tie another half knot to secure the string. Be sure that the twine is as tight as possible, as it will stretch and go slack when moist.
8) Dig a little trench around the base of the teepee (just under the circle of twine), plant bean seeds, and cover.