

# CROP ROTATION IN THE VEGIE PATCH



Rotating where you plant vegies from one season to another is important for 2 main reasons:

1. It cycles nutrients from season to season in the soil, so one crop helps the following; and
2. It stops the build up of plant diseases in the soil that would otherwise harm plants if they were planted in the same place in consecutive years.

There are many suggested ways to rotate crops and they can be confusing, as it depends on how many vegie beds you have and the types of plants you have been growing. The following method is one that is easy to follow. It is based on the nutrient needs of the plants and groups them into 4 basic categories.

## Group 1: HEAVY FEEDERS

Includes:

Solanaceae: potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants, capsicum, chilli

Cucurbits: zucchini, pumpkins, cucumbers, squash

Brassicas: Asian greens, broccoli, cabbages, cauliflower, rocket, mustard greens

Others: sweetcorn, lettuce, spinach,

## Group 2: LIGHT FEEDERS

Includes:

Alliums: onions, leeks, garlic, spring onions, shallots

Root vegies: beetroot, carrots, radishes, Jerusalem artichokes

## Group 3: GREEN MANURES

Green manures act like adding manure to your soil, only better! They are a seed mix of legumes, to add nitrogen to the soil; and bulky grassy species, such as oats and rye. When these are allowed to grow and then slashed and lightly dug into the soil, they break down to nourish the soil and add valuable organic matter to enrich the soil before the next crop.

## Group 4: LEGUMES

Any of the peas and beans family, including snow peas, peas and broadbeans grown over winter; and beans over summer.

## The order of rotation is as follows:

After harvesting the **HEAVY FEEDERS**, next season plant **LIGHT FEEDERS** in the bed. A top-up with some compost is a good idea but don't overdo the manures, otherwise the root vegies won't develop properly, putting on leafy growth at the expense of the root development.

After a crop of **LIGHT FEEDERS**, follow it with a **GREEN MANURE** crop. Leave this to grow until it is about knee-high, or just before it starts to flower and then slash it down and leave it to break down on the surface or lightly till it through the soil.

After the **GREEN MANURE**, plant out some **LEGUMES**. (After harvesting the legumes, resist the temptation to pull out the entire plant. Instead, cut the plants to the ground and allow the roots to break down in the soil as they have stored nitrogen and attract valuable soil micro-flora).

After the **LEGUMES**, you can now plant the **HEAVY FEEDERS** once again. You will need to enrich the soil significantly but the legumes will have also helped the soil and have left a pH that helps with the heavy feeders. If possible, don't plant the heavy feeders from the same family as was previously planted here, at least for 3-4 years..

It does take some planning to carry all of this out but, by keeping a planting plan diary, you will remember what was planted where over the years. **At the very least, avoid planting the heavy feeders, especially any in the SOLANACEAE and the BRASSICA families in the same beds in consecutive years.**