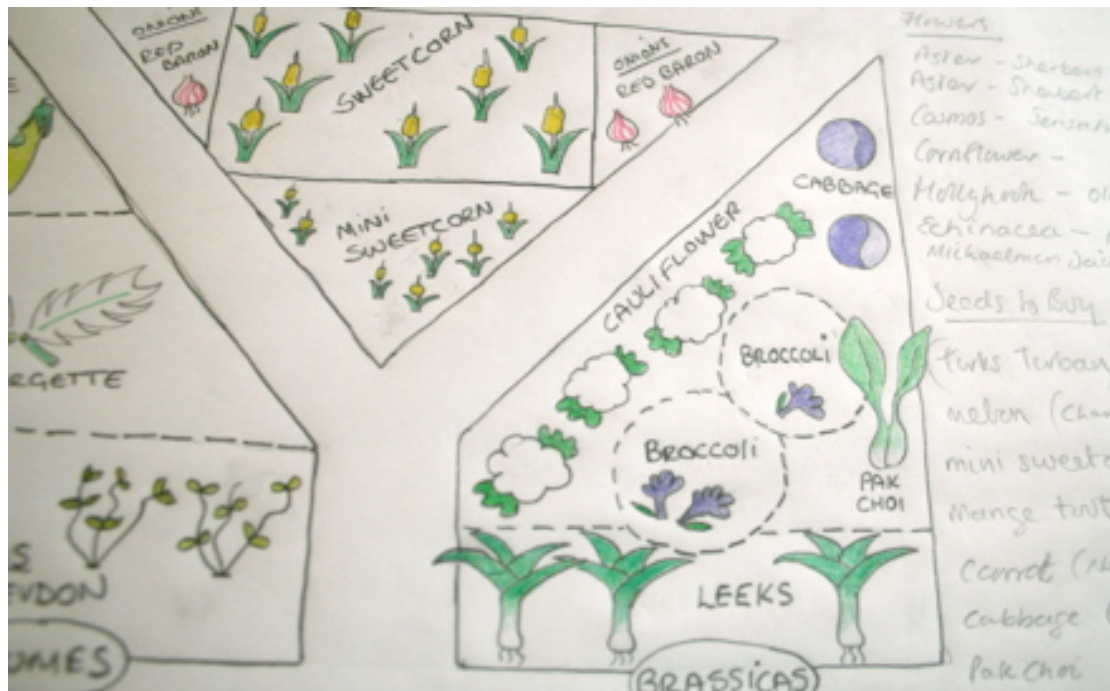


# The Alternative Kitchen Garden

## Episode 53 transcript



Hello, and welcome to episode 53 of The Alternative Kitchen Garden. I'm Emma, and since spring is rapidly approaching here in the UK, we're going to be talking about garden planning today – a subject that a few of you have asked about. Now garden planning isn't one of my strong points, so I'm going to hand the reins of today's programme over to a garden expert and that's Gillian from the My Tiny Plot blog, and if you haven't read her blog, go and have a look 'coz it's an absolute corker. I'll put a link to that in the show notes, but in the meantime here's Gillian with some advice on garden planning.

Hi there, my name is Gillian Carson and I write a blog called <http://www.mytinyplot.co.uk>. I've been asked today to talk to you about how to create a plan for your vegetable garden. I started vegetable gardening about 3 years ago. At first I had a local allotment, which I cleared and we planted in about 10 weeks. Then when I moved to a bigger house, I gave up my allotment and moved my kitchen garden back home and redesigned it.

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So let's get started on how to plan a kitchen garden effectively. Some people will tell you to make a plan and then start to work on the crop rotation. For me, they're really the same thing. I always start with what I want to grow, and where I want to grow it, and then try to plan around that. I find this is a much easier way to get to a final plan that I'm happy with. Of course, this is not the only way to do it. If you have a particular pattern or design in mind then you could start with that and fill it in as you go. There's really no hard and fast rules when it comes to garden planning. The only thing you need to remember is that is important that you actually create a plan, because come this time next year you will have completely forgotten what you planted where.

So here I'm going to tell you how I created my garden plans each year for the garden at My Tiny Plot. Firstly I split the main area in at least 4 evenly sized areas, or beds. To these 4 areas I'll normally add an area for herbs and a separate area for fruit and cutting flowers. Do some quick sketches of this and tweak it as you go, until you're happy with the final thing. You might find that you do 3 or 4 sketches before you get to the final plan.

Then make a huge list of everything you want to grow. Make sure that you limit your list to only things that you want to eat. This sounds obvious, but believe me you'll get sucked into growing things just because they look nice or the name sounds cool, or the seed packet has a nice design. It happened to me, and it will probably happen to you.

Once you have your huge list, start to group your vegetables into types. Put all the legumes in one group – this includes beans, peas, courgettes, squash, etc. Then you group the brassicas together – this includes cauliflowers, broccoli, cabbage and kale. And then group the potatoes together, if you're have different varieties of potato, and also add to this group the tomatoes. And finally group the roots together, which includes carrots, parsnips, beetroot, etc.

You'll notice that there'll be some conspicuous leftovers, such as salad crops, onions and sweetcorn. Don't worry, you can squeeze them in later. Next, start to drop your grouped veg into the main beds on your plan. A good tip is to use post-it notes to do this, so that you can rearrange them if necessary. There is a special order that your groups should rotate in, so listen carefully.

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Working in a clockwise rotation, drop in the first group which are the brassicas. Then to the right of this drop in the legumes. Next to that, in a clockwise rotation, drop in the roots and then in last bed drop in the potatoes. It might be helpful to add little arrows in between each bed, to show the clockwise rotation of your vegetables. Fruits and herbs will go into their own respective beds.

Once you have your vegetables assigned to a bed, the next task is to arrange them within the bed. For this you need to bear in mind what direction the sun comes from on your plot, so make sure to look at it carefully. Record where the sun comes up and where the sun goes down, and you should have a pretty good idea of where the sun comes from. You might want to draw this on the plan, to remind you.

Once you have this information, you can use it to ensure that you don't put tall plants in front of small plants, where they will cast a shadow. For example, planting tall broccoli in front of a small salad crop will cause you problems. As a rule of thumb, try to orientate your rows from north to south to avoid this.

Also, be aware of how much room a crop will take up within each bed. Things like squash and potatoes take up a lot of room, whereas spring onions and radish take up hardly any room at all. This is the kind of thing you only really know once you've grown a selection of vegetables over the course of the year.

Once you have the crop rotation in place, it's time to get creative. Your beds can be any shape you want them to be. Remember that it's your garden, and if you want to make them diamond shaped, then go ahead – no one's to stop you. Obviously squared beds are much easier to plant than odd-shaped beds, however this isn't really a reason to go with square beds. When I first designed my allotment I designed it in a triangular and diamond shaped design, which seemed to amuse the slightly more traditional neighbours on the plot. However, once it was in full bloom, they congratulated me for brightening up the place. So my advice would be to design the plot how you want it to look, not how you think it ought to look.

Try to visualise your plot in the middle of summer, when all the plants are in full swing. I know this isn't easy when it's your first

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year, but try to look at the photos and seed catalogues to get a real feel for how large plants grow. The typical beginner's error is to plant everything too close together, so double check the recommended spacing for plants when creating the plan.

Lastly, remember that your plan's just a starting point. Very few gardeners stick to their plan rigidly, so it's OK to change the plan as you go. It's common for one crop to fail and so you'll have to replace it with another. Or some seeds will simply not germinate, or die of a disease, or you may decide not to grow something. In this case, you will need to change your plan accordingly. Just make sure that you keep a record of what you actually grow. This will help you plan your garden in the future and keep your crops in the correct rotation for next year.

So those are my tips on how to create a good garden plan. I hope you've enjoyed them and feel ready to tackle your first plan.

So there we are, that was Gillian from My Tiny Plot with her advice on garden planning. So you've got absolutely no excuse now to get down to it and plan your garden for this year. Spring is rapidly approaching and time is running out, so have a go at that if you haven't already.

If you need a little bit more inspiration to get you in the mood for gardening, here's one of those great gardening stories from Greenprints magazine.

*("The Undaunted Gopher", a story about a gardener who comes face-to-face with his biggest enemy.)*

That's just about it for the show this week. I need to remind listeners in the UK that Monty Don's Around the World in 80 Gardens continues this evening, that's Sunday, BBC 2, 9 pm and this week he's going to India (including the Taj Mahal) so that should be well worth watching. And if you can't watch it tonight then it's repeated on Tuesday, that's Tuesday 12th, at 7 pm, also on BBC 2. And if you're outside the UK, of course, don't forget that you can watch it on the BBC iPlayer after the show has aired. So I will be putting a link to that in the show notes for you.

Don't forget that you can send me an email if you've got a comment on this show, or any of the others, or hints and tips from your garden that you'd like to share. The email address is

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akgpodcast@gmail.com, or you can leave a comment on the show homepage, which is <http://coopette.com/akg>. And if you're on Facebook you can come and join in the fun in the Facebook group and I'll put a link to that in the show notes as well.

Have a great week in your garden, goodbye!

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