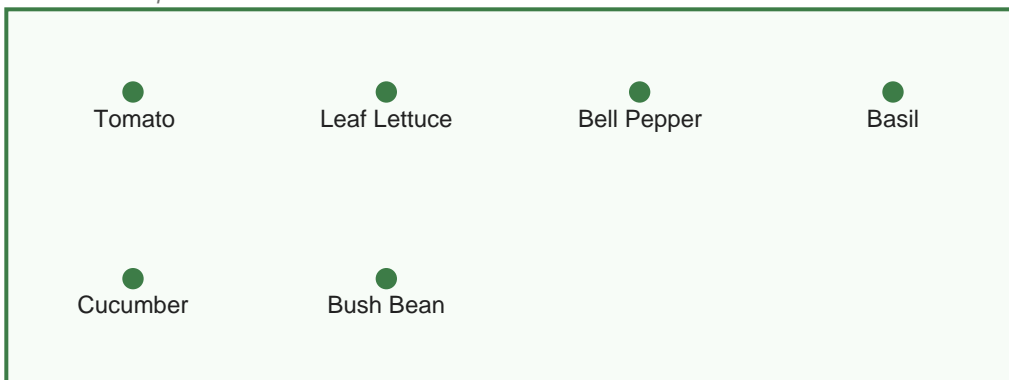


Your Zone 6b raised-bed garden plan

A 4'x8' Boston-area bed, six crops, full sun — planted in May and producing through October.

A 4-foot by 8-foot raised bed — 32 square feet of working soil — in full sun on Boston's zone 6b schedule. With six crops chosen, the bed divides naturally into a sun-loving back row (tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers on a trellis) and a cooler front edge (leaf lettuce, basil, bush beans) that can rotate as the season warms. Last frost falls in early May; first fall frost in late October — about a 24-week growing window. The plan below treats early May as the pivot date that everything else is timed against.

Recommended placement



Crop spacing reference

Spacing, timing, and notes for each of the 6 crops in your plan. Zone 6b.

Tomato 24" transplant start 6w indoors 60–90 days

Start two seedlings indoors in mid-March so they're stocky 6-8 inch transplants by mid-May. Set them along the back of the bed 24 inches apart and stake or cage from day one — staking after the plant flops is a losing battle. Expect first ripe fruit by late July; harvest runs through September.



24" apart

Leaf Lettuce 6" either start 4w indoors 30–50 days succession 2w

Direct-sow a small block at the cool front edge of the bed in early April, four weeks before last frost. Re-sow every two weeks through May. Once the bed warms into mid-June, lettuce bolts — pull it then and replant in mid-August for a fall crop that runs into October.



6" apart

Bell Pepper 18" transplant start 8w indoors 60–90 days

Peppers like a longer indoor head start than tomatoes — sow in early March. Wait to transplant until late May, when overnight temperatures stay above 50°F; cool nights stunt them for the rest of the season. Two plants 18 inches apart will yield through September.



18" apart

Basil 12" transplant start 6w indoors 60–90 days

Tuck three basil plants between the tomatoes — the airflow helps both, and they share the same heat preferences. Start indoors in late March or buy transplants in mid-May. Pinch flowering tips weekly to keep leaves coming until the first frost in late October.



12" apart

Cucumber 12" either start 3w indoors 50–70 days succession 4w

Train cucumbers up a trellis on the back wall to save floor space. Direct-sow two seeds per spot in mid-May, one week after last frost; thin to one strong plant. Re-sow a second round in early July for a steady supply through September.



12" apart

Bush Bean 6" direct-sow 50–65 days succession 3w

Direct-sow a row of bush beans along the front edge in mid-May, one week after last frost. Sow another short row every three weeks through mid-July to keep the harvest steady. Beans don't transplant well — always direct-sow.

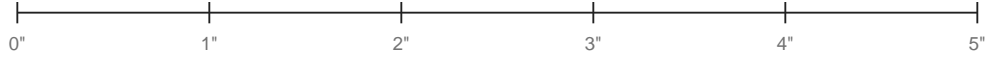


6" apart

Spacing template — print at 100%

These dots are at real-life inches when this page is printed without 'Fit to page' or 'Shrink to fit'. Verify the inch ruler below — if the gaps don't measure exactly one inch, re-print with scaling disabled. Once verified, lay this page on your bed or row to mark plant locations.

Verify scale:



Tomato

●
24" between plants — wider than the page; measure on the bed.

Leaf Lettuce

●
6" between plants — wider than the page; measure on the bed.

Bell Pepper

●
18" between plants — wider than the page; measure on the bed.

Basil

●
12" between plants — wider than the page; measure on the bed.

Cucumber

●
12" between plants — wider than the page; measure on the bed.

Bush Bean

●
6" between plants — wider than the page; measure on the bed.

Tip: cut along a spacing row to use as a physical template against your bed or row.

Month-by-month calendar

Last frost: May. First frost: October. Skip months with nothing to do.

March

- Order seeds and check transplant dates against your last-frost target of early May.
- Start tomato seedlings indoors mid-month under a south window or grow light.
- Start pepper seedlings indoors early in the month — they need the longest head start.

April

- Direct-sow leaf lettuce in the front of the bed at the start of the month.
- Start basil indoors in the last week of the month.
- Top-dress the bed with two inches of finished compost and rake smooth.

May

- First week: harden off tomato and pepper seedlings — a few hours outside each day, increasing.
- After last frost (early May): transplant tomatoes 24 inches apart along the back. Stake them.
- Mid-May: direct-sow cucumbers at the trellis and bush beans along the front.
- Late May: transplant peppers and basil once nights stay above 50°F.
- Re-sow leaf lettuce one more time before the bed warms.

June

- Mulch the bed with 1-2 inches of straw or shredded leaves to hold soil moisture.
- Train cucumbers up the trellis; tie tomato leaders to stakes weekly.
- Pull bolting lettuce and let the space rest for a fall replant.
- Begin bush bean harvest at the end of the month.

July

- Pinch basil flowering tips and harvest weekly.
- First ripe tomatoes appear late month — harvest at full color.
- Re-sow cucumbers for a second wave.
- Sow another short row of bush beans by mid-month.

August

- Peak harvest — tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, beans all producing.
- Mid-month: direct-sow leaf lettuce again for a fall crop.
- Watch for tomato hornworms; remove by hand.
- Side-dress tomatoes and peppers with a thin compost layer.

September

- Continue picking tomatoes and peppers; pull bean plants once they slow.
- Lettuce from the August sowing is ready for first cuts.
- Pinch basil aggressively — the plants try to flower as nights cool.
- Cucumber vines wind down; pull when production stops.

October

- Harvest remaining peppers and green tomatoes before first frost (late month).
- Pull tomato cages, stake them, and clean for next year.
- Top-dress the empty bed with two inches of compost and cover with shredded leaves.
- Lettuce keeps producing under a row cover into November.

November

- Final lettuce harvest before hard freeze.
- Pull row cover, store for next year, and let the bed rest under its leaf mulch.

Care notes

Watering

A raised bed dries faster than in-ground soil. Plan on a deep soak twice a week during the growing season, more often during a heat wave. The goal is one inch of water per week — a finger pushed two inches into the soil should still feel cool and slightly damp. Water at the base of plants in the morning so leaves dry before evening; wet foliage overnight invites disease. Mulch holds moisture and cuts watering frequency by about a third.

Fertilizing

Start the season with a 2-inch top-dress of finished compost worked into the surface. That feeds light feeders (lettuce, basil, beans) for the whole season. Heavy feeders — tomatoes and peppers — appreciate a side-dress of compost or a balanced slow-release organic fertilizer at transplant and again when fruit set begins in early July. Avoid high-nitrogen feeds on tomatoes once they flower; you'll get lush leaves and fewer fruits. Beans fix their own nitrogen and need nothing extra.

Succession planting

Succession is what turns a small bed into a long-yielding plot. Re-sow leaf lettuce every two weeks from early April through late May, then again starting mid-August through September for a fall harvest that runs into October under a row cover. Re-sow bush beans every three weeks from mid-May through mid-July; the late sowings produce right up to first frost. Cucumbers benefit from a second sowing in early July to replace the spring vines as they fade in late August. Tomatoes, peppers, and basil are single-planting crops in this zone — one round set in late May produces through October.

Pests

Boston-area beds see three reliable visitors. Tomato hornworms appear in July; check undersides of leaves weekly and pick off by hand. Cucumber beetles cluster on young vines — a lightweight row cover until flowering keeps them off. Slugs love wet lettuce — an evening pass with a flashlight after rain is the most effective control, plus keeping mulch a few inches away from the base of plants. Companion planting helps the bed stay balanced: basil among the tomatoes, beans away from the onions and chives. Skip chemical sprays in a small bed — they hit the pollinators you want, too.

Six crops in 32 square feet is plenty for a second-year gardener. Print this plan, hang it near the back door, and check off each month as it arrives — the bed will pay you back through October. If something underperforms, write a note in the margin: that's how next year's plan gets sharper.

How to use this plan

- Print this plan and bring it to the garden.
- Update it with what worked at the end of the season.
- Re-run the planner next spring with what you learned.

Refund within 7 days from your order page.

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