



Spencer Horticultural Solutions

Homegrown Horticulture

TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Why Does Spacing Matter?

In order to get properly shaped, healthy, and productive vegetables, you have to start with the plants spaced properly. This means that you have plants that are far enough apart in the row to grow without being crowded, but also close enough to maximize the use of the space. You also want to make sure that the rows are far enough apart to allow you to weed and work between them comfortably, and allow some air movement, while also not wasting space that might be limited.

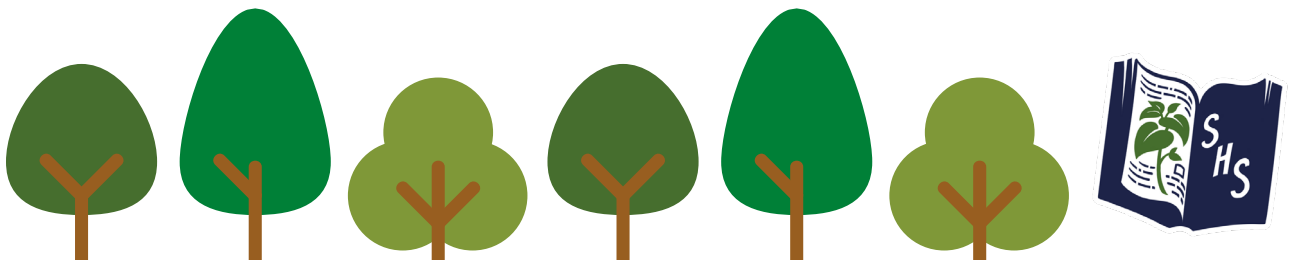
Sometimes you have to seed more heavily, with plants coming up closer together than ideal, and then thin to a final spacing. If you don't thin out the plants, you will find that plants aren't as productive as they could be, simply because they are fighting for the limited resources (including space, water, light, nutrients, etc.) that might be available. Some plants will adjust, but others will always be a bit spindly and weak.

Root crops will twine together and be odd-shaped and probably smaller, but it depends a bit on how close they are. Things like potatoes will have more, smaller potatoes when they are planted closer together. Those that are planted further apart will have fewer potatoes, with more large/oversized spuds. Leafy greens will be really tightly packed and crowded. I think that you'll find that you have more thin, floppy leaves and more rot and breakdown. Things like Cole crops (broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, etc.) will be spindly and will either have smaller heads (broccoli) or they won't amount to much.

Some seeds are really hard to get at the correct spacing right off the hop, as they are tiny and maybe a bit irregularly shaped. If you have to, plant a few in each spot, or do the best that you can. For plants that are going to be a lot larger, remove the weaker seedlings and leave the one that looks the best in place. Alternatively, you can take the smaller ones and move them to an empty spot when they are a bit bigger.

I do the best that I can with things like lettuce and carrots, and then live with my failings. For the leafy stuff, I'll just start to pick the entire plant at once, instead of leaves here and there. This gradually thins things out.

Do the best that you can. In the end, things might be smaller, but you can always try again next year.



www.spencer-hort-solutions.ca