

Summary of Suggestions & Comments from 2022 Gardener Survey

- The EVCG Board encourages gardeners to provide feedback and ask questions during the Orientation, clean-up days at the beginning and ending of gardening season, at educational programs and other Garden events, by email to evcg@evcg.org, and on the whiteboard or bulletin board at the Garden shed. This annual survey is an opportunity to comment at the end of each gardening season, anonymously unless the respondent opts to include contact information.
- The 2022 survey was conducted online using Google Forms, opened for responses on January 4, 2022. All gardeners received an email with a link to the survey. A total of 21 responses were received, all during January.
- **Thank you to the responding gardeners for taking the time to complete the survey.**

Below are the survey questions, with gardener responses.

1. What worked well for you in your garden? List specific crops/varieties, approaches or techniques, if applicable. 20 responses
2. What did not work well for you in your garden? List specific crops/varieties, approaches or techniques, if applicable. 17 responses
3. List your crops that were NOT damaged by rodents, if any: 18 responses
4. List your crops that WERE damaged or destroyed by rodents, if any: 15 responses

Questions 1 – 4: Responses are in the table of crops at the end of this report.

5. **Did you discover any useful ways to keep rodents out of your plot?** 13 responses
 - NO rodent damage on any crop due to combination of 2 ft deer netting around plot and hail cloth - created low cost protective barrier.
 - We installed chicken wire around the perimeter of the garden and fastened it to the wooden frame. It really seemed to help keep the critters from waltzing into the garden.
 - Hail cloth fastened down to the ground and chicken wire on short ends.
 - Varmint/ gopher recipe from shed helped...inserted into depth of plot.
 - Egg shells, hot pepper and garlic spices.
 - I was one of the two trappers of ground squirrels and the two of us trapped well over one hundred ground squirrels over the summer and provided input on how to improve the outside exterminator services for 2023.
 - Chicken wire for rabbits etc. - not sure about the underground rodents.
 - When to plant, what to plant.
 - Did not have rodent problems, elevated plot.
 - We fastened chicken wire to the wood surrounding our garden plot. It kept the rodents from walking into the garden. [2 gardeners said this.] I think that lining the garden with some sort of wire mesh would help keep the rodents from digging under the garden and entering from below.
 - I had some cloches, but honestly rodents were not a problem.
 - Ultrasonic rodent device helped.
 - Mulched heavily initially to discourage easy access to seeds, planted fragrant plants as a border wall and deterrent and avoided kale which has been decimated in years past.

- In addition to having a tall plot, it may have helped with the rodents that our plants grew really close together, creating a jungle that could have daunted the sneakiest invader.
- Built a chicken wire fence.
- I think the trapping was the key to good control- the team did an excellent job.

6. What suggestions do you have for educational program topics? 9 responses

- Growing successful cut flowers. Planting tips to maximize yields. Minimizing rodent damage.
- Maybe permaculture...thinking like an ecosystem.
- Beginner produce and techniques. How much to water to supplement drip irrigation. How to make the whole process easier so that plots aren't ignored.
- Owls
- Growing tomatoes. **[program April 13, 2023]**
- Knowing as much as you can about what you are growing, and ways to improve soil.
- I would like to know if composting can be successful in such a dry climate.
- Just basic gardening help. I have never grown anything before so I was stressed being a newbie.
- As a novice gardener I would love some info about things like soil composition, succession planting, plants that work well alongside each other, how to do starter crops.

7. What suggestions, if any, do you have for improving your experience as a gardener? 10 responses

- Garden events to get to know more gardeners. Continue aggressive trapping so fewer rodents running around and less risk of rodent damage.
- More opportunities for interaction with other gardeners, fun, light events...bring more of the community into this beautiful space--especially during peak season.
- More reliable drip system.
- Previous recommendations have been made regarding the ground squirrel exterminator service, which needs to start earlier than it did last year and have a more significant impact early so that most of the squirrels do not even emerge.
- I loved this year.
- Knowing as much as you can about what you are growing. And ways to improve soil.
- Vegetables did not establish well, my soil is too hard.
- Don't give up. I saw several abandoned plots that were doing really well with no one to take care of them. I did have a screen cover to try to keep hail out when it was cold.
- Rodent control. Drip system run more frequently in hot/dry weather.
- Start simple and if you're new, buy some prestarted plants to intermix alongside your seeds. This will give you a leg up on those rodents who are after the juicy baby plants and have some early growth to get moving fast! Stick to cold hardy plants and just stop growing tomatoes. Prep your soil in April if you can and Mulch! It makes everything better and easier. I only put an 1" down and it made a wonderful difference. Make sure to seed early and be prepared to reseed every 2 weeks until July.

8. Any other comments you wish to make: 10 responses

- Gratitude for this beautiful space and opportunity to be with other gardeners.
- I'm ready to plant...but it's Colorado...gotta wait. [survey response in January]
- My garden plot was exceptional this year after I put of the chicken wire. I (knock on wood) did not have mold or infestation - Yay. Friends would go by my plot and harvest and bring vegetables to me

as I was unable to leave the house [mid-July – mid-October.] They sent pictures of my bountiful garden and it was so beautiful. I loved having school children have a garden education and use leftover vegetables for salad.

- Techniques that worked well included periodic harvesting to extend harvest period (particularly for flowers and herbs), good plant spacing for room to grow, planting taller growing plants on north side of plot.
- I love the garden!
- I will not be returning this year. Tired of the rodent issues.
- We put a fence around our plot this year and had no rodent problems.
- Great water year and great amendments: mixed in 1-2" of compost in autumn and covered my bed with mulch to overwinter. This dramatically improved the soil's quality and seed germination.
- It was another great year in the Garden. Sorry I didn't help out with any volunteer activities.
- We love the sand box! My son was 7-9 months over the summer, and it was always a creative challenge to garden with him. He loved to play in the sandbox!

9. **If you had a tall plot in 2022, how did that work for you? Positive and negative comments are both helpful to our future planning.** 7 responses

- I did not have one, but from my observation the tall plots do better. Maybe garden should move toward making all the plots tall. Individuals could pay for it and then when they leave the garden they would go up for grabs.
- Tall plot for the first time last year and it was a great help for my back! Additionally, while I know a couple of tall plots had issues with ground squirrels, most of the tall plots did not have such issues.
- Having elevated plot helps keep rodents out. Can't think of anything negative except need to space and measure better between plants.
- Despite some statements to the contrary, tall plots do make a difference in terms of the mammal damage. Our tall plot saved me a lot of backache also.
- It worked very well with little bending and no critters.
- Excellent tall plot height. Really helped with physical issues I had.
- Great!!! I had two outpatient surgeries in Sept and November.

10. If you want a response to any of your comments or suggestions, please provide your name and email. If you do not want a response, please leave this blank. 1 response with email address; Board has replied.

Responses to questions 1-4:

2022 Gardener Survey - Crops with both successful and unsuccessful reports**	
Successful Crops Listed by Gardeners	Unsuccessful Crops Listed by Gardeners
Basil	Basil – low yield, sensitive to extreme sun & cold
Carrots	Carrots - some exotics didn't do well; others slow
Flowers: dahlia, delphinium, marigold, zinnia; native and apt such as prairie coneflower, echinacea, Black-eyed Susan, Lewis' flax, blue columbine, yarrow, beebalm, cut-leaf evening primrose; crocus	Flowers: Lily – unspecified variety did not produce many flowers.
Peas – Snap peas, snow peas	Peas - Sweet peas bloomed very late. Rodents ate the seeds of unspecified variety.

Successful Crops Listed by Gardeners – cont'd.	Unsuccessful Crops Listed by Gardeners – cont'd.
Radishes	Radishes
Squash – unspecified type; zucchini	Squash – Butternut did nothing [season is too short for winter varieties] Summer squash did poorly from seed, starts did better. Sebring hybrid summer squash did poorly. Zucchini had powdery mildew.
Tomatoes – good year for cherry tomatoes; 1) setting out plants after June 6 brought earlier ripening; 2) use starts that already have blooms; 3) planted too early but recovered after early freeze	Tomatoes – unspecified type/variety: very low yield
Crops with only successful reports	Crops with only problem reports
Garlic – German, hard neck, elephant Herbs [best to grow most from starts]: cilantro, lemon oregano, parsley, sage, basil, rosemary, eucalyptus, mint [PLEASE NOTE: MINT IS INVASIVE – plant in a container and be prepared to pull out runners ruthlessly!]	Arugula – 2 nd crop planted too late Beans; Contender bush green beans
Kale	Beets
Lettuce and other unspecified greens	Cauliflower – stringy loose heads, inedible
Mustard greens	Celery – season too short for good harvest
Onions – Candy onions; scallions	Cucumber – did poorly from seed [warm-weather crop not suited for EP]; bush cucumber
Peppers – unspecified type/variety	Eggplant [warm-weather crop not suited for EP]
Potato – Norland Red	Leeks - inconsistent
Pumpkin – unspecified variety	Shallots - inconsistent
Spinach	
Strawberries	
Turnip	

**See evcg.org/Resources under Specific Crops for “Plants That Can Be Grown in Estes Park”, and under Weeds, Diseases & Pests for info about common ones in the Community Garden.