

GARDEN OPSEC



War. Famine. Food and water shortages. Supply breakdowns. The list goes on and on as the mainstream news and social media serve the masses a steady diet of fear and impending doom. However, every dark cloud has a silver lining or two as well. After the Covid lockdowns, there seem to be at least two good things that came out of those crazy times.

First, most sane, and situationally aware people began to realize how fragile the just-in-time food delivery system was. Second, people took matters into their own hands and started planning/planting their own victory gardens. Many new and seasoned homesteaders, preppers, and survivalists alike saw the writing on the wall during these dark days, and they either began growing their own crops or beefed up their current garden.

THE CHALLENGES:

One of the most satisfying feelings about prepping is picking your own freshly grown fruits and vegetables. To get to that point, we all had to go through the education process. Everything from questioning whether you would plant in containers and raised beds to using grow bags for some

crops and planting directly in the ground for others was part of the learning curve. There were other issues to consider as well such as how many rain barrels would be needed if the grid went down and how to maximize that collected rainwater through a drip irrigation system. You may have even calculated, or at least considered, how high you wanted the chicken wire fence to go to keep the four-legged creatures out.



There was planning for the logistical placement of the crops in your field, yard, sunroom, or even your balcony to ensure your plants receive the right amount of sunlight. Let us not forget the actual harvesting. You need to decide if you will pick your crops and can them for long-term storage or just freeze everything and vacuum-seal it for a rainy day. In other words, gardening is not as easy as just throwing seeds into the dirt. There is a tremendous amount of planning that goes into reaping what you have sown.

Then there are the bugs...

GARDEN OPSEC & ENTOMOLOGY:

Entomology is the study of insects. Most hardcore preppers might be thinking right now, "I've got way too much to do than studying up on bugs as a tertiary prepping skill." And that is where you might just regret that decision. At the end of the day when you drift off to sleep knowing you have a tight OPSEC (Operations Security) plan for your home, there is a war being waged while

you slumber. If you are thinking about planting or are already growing your own garden, an army of voracious insects can quickly ravage it if you have not planned properly. These six + legged miniature demon seeds can wreak havoc on even the best laid out garden plan if you do not include a proper attack strategy. This attack strategy is Garden OPSEC. This is learning how to build your own miniature private army of ruthless and hungry combatants! If you can slowly learn this tertiary prepper skill, you will become more of an asset to your prepper group, tribe, or family, and you will not have to share your bumper crop with a tiny and destructive enemy.

SCENARIO:

After watching the news all year of potential water and food shortages, you decide it would be best to double the size of your garden as a preventative measure for next year. Fall is coming, and things are not looking great economically or politically. You take the initiative and formulate a solid plan for spring planting next year by using some online software. After assessing the PH levels of your soil, you decide to grow four new crops. You have the space, and you purchase all the heirloom seeds necessary to turn your dream into a reality. But there is one tiny thing you failed to prepare for and that is the flying, crawling, hopping, buzzing army of insects that want to devour that food just as much as you. Once you plant those crops, all bets are off because be rest assured, you will have some uninvited guests come to dine indefinitely if you do not plan accordingly.

NEXT STEPS:



The scenario above is quite common with gardeners who are just starting out and even seasoned veterans. But there is hope! Here are some suggestions to help you stay ahead of the curve.

1. Begin to research online the diverse types of insects that will feast on your current crops / future crop expansions.
2. Books such as, "[The Vegetable Garden Pest Handbook](#)" by Susan Mulvihill and "[Rodale's Color Handbook of Garden Insects](#)" by Anna Carr are fantastic resources to study and have on hand, especially if there is ever an EMP, TEOTWAWKI, or grid down situation.
3. Make a spreadsheet such as the example below of your current planting preparations incorporating beneficial insects and plants.

TOMATO – ZONE 7B	
Quick Reference Grow Guide	
PLANTING TIMELINE Feb–Mar → Start seeds indoors After last frost → Transplant Apr–Jun → Direct sow (optional)	SETUP Location: Full sun (South-facing) Companion Plants: • Dill • Marigolds
COMMON PESTS Tomato hornworm • Cutworm • Stink bug • Whitefly • Leafhopper Blister beetle • Spider mites • Leafminer • Lygus bug Slugs • Snails	
BENEFICIAL INSECTS Ladybug • Lacewing • Hoverfly Parasitic wasp • Assassin bug Damsel bug • Minute pirate bug • Tachinid fly Spiders • Rove beetle	NATURAL CONTROLS • Cover hoops • Beneficial nemotades • Diatomaceous earth • Horticultural oils • Sticky traps

- Start building your army! **Arbico-organics** sells a myriad of beneficial insects and pest control supplies that can meet most budgets.
- Figure out your Alternate and Contingency plan (P.**A.C.E.** plan in essence). If the grid is down and you must plant crops but cannot purchase any beneficial insects or pest control, you are going to have to do things the old-fashioned way and entice beneficial insects into your garden by building “bug hotels.” You can also try to map out the best plants that will invite these predacious warriors to assist you even if it is a WROL out there. (Ex. Fern–leaf yarrow attracts lacewings, hoverflies, and ladybugs.)
- Deepen your attack strategy with natural controls such as nematodes, diatomaceous earth, sprays, and cover hoops.
- Figure out a way to “relocate” wasps and hornets without killing them. A garden hose will aggravate them if they are setting up shop under your porch roof, but they will get the hint and move on to somewhere else. You do not want to kill them! As painful as they can be, they are also one of the best exterminators you can have on your property.
- Try not to kill any spiders. (Did I just write that???) If you see spiders in your garden, it means there is food for them to eat. Garden spiders (yellow and black) are the best in a garden and one egg sac can have over 1,000 baby spiderlings ready to hatch in the spring.
- Try to avoid harmful chemicals and sprays as they can kill off beneficial insects as well.
- For the sake of your sanity, factor in a percentage of crops lost due to insect damage. For example, if you plan on planting “X” amount of corn, have a mental number in your head or on the spreadsheet above as to what you could potentially lose due to the corn earworm. (You will lose most tips, but the corn is still good and edible, but it will be a compounded loss nonetheless.)



CONCLUSION:

In all seriousness, Garden OPSEC is a Tertiary Prepper Skill you will want to incorporate into your prepper plan immediately. Given the ongoing food shortages and the approach of fall, it is important to plan for spring while products remain readily available. That can all easily and rapidly change by late fall and/or winter so try to get ahead of the curve now if you can.

Stay strong, keep learning new tertiary prepper skills, and have fun building your bug army!

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