COMMON GARDENING TERMS

AERATION
Any method of loosening soil or compost to allow air to circulate.

ANNUALS
A plant that blooms, produces seed, and dies in one year.

BIENNIALS
Varieties, both flowers and vegetables, that complete their life cycle in two years, usually just showing only leaf growth the first year, and flowers the next.

BOLTING
The condition of premature flowering in edible crops, often making the plant unpalatable.

BURPLESS CUCUMBERS
Cucumbers that do not produce, or produce very little of a chemical called cucurbitacin, which produces a slight bitter flavor mainly concentrated in the skin and causes minor indigestion in some people.

COMPANION PLANTING
Planting different plants together that benefit one another. For example, sowing a plant that attracts pollinators next to a plant that requires pollination.

COMPOST
Organic matter often made from decomposed/broken down plant material. Compost can be used to replenish soil nutrients and introduce soil biology to a growing area or simply to reduce landfill waste.

COVER CROP
Fast growing plants, usually grains, legumes, or grasses that are utilized for one or more of their soil-enhancing qualities. These crops are usually worked into the soil or removed before they produce seed.

CROP
A plant that is cultivated for harvest, like cutting flowers or vegetables.

CROP ROTATION
The planting of a specific crop in a site different from the previous year.

CULTIVAR
A species that was selected or bred by humans for a particular feature. Cultivars carry a specific name in addition to the scientific name and/or common name, e.g. 'Brandywine'

DAYS TO EMERGE
Number of days, on average, that it will take a seedling to emerge from the soil or medium in favorable conditions.

DAYS TO HARVEST
Number of days from sowing (or transplant) to harvest.

DEADHEADING
Cutting spent flowers off a plant, encouraging the plant to bloom again; extending the bloom period.

DETERMINATE
Describes tomatoes that stop growing when fruit begins forming from the topmost flower bud, making them more compact at around 3'–4'. Most of the crop ripens within a couple weeks time, making these a great choice for canning.

DIRECT SOW
Sow seeds directly in their permanent growing space.

DISEASE RESISTANCE
Exhibiting less susceptibility or an immunity against specific diseases as compared to other varieties.

DISEASE TOLERANCE
Better ability to thrive with the stress of infection as compared to other varieties.

DROUGHT TOLERANT
Ability to survive or thrive in low water conditions. Also known as "water-wise."

FERTILIZER
An organic or synthetic material added to the soil or the plant, that is important for its nutrient value.

FRUIT
A seed capsule that emerges from a flower, such as a tomato or melon.

FULL SUN
Six or more hours of sunlight.

GERMINATION
The moment when a seed begins to grow.

GMO
Stands for Genetically Modified Organism. Commonly means genetically engineered, indicating that the variety was manipulated at the gene level in a laboratory.

HEAVY SOIL
A soil that contains a high proportion of clay and is poorly drained.

HEIRLOOM
Open-pollinated varieties over 50 years old to be heirloom.

HYBRID
Modern F1 (filial 1) type hybrid. Two specific parent varieties are bred to achieve a first generation hybrid offspring. F1 hybrids are not open-pollinated. Traditionally, "hybrid" indicates any variety that had been made by cross-pollinating, even if that was completed by hand or an insect.

INDETERMINATE

Describes tomato varieties that continue to grow and produce tomatoes all season until first frost: therefore, you can find tomatoes at all stages on the plant at one time. Also called "pole" tomatoes because supports are helpful in guiding plants that can easily reach 6' or more.

LATIN NAME/SCIENTIFIC NAME

The two or more part name that is unique to a specific species. Scientific names are consistent in any language, whereas a species may have several common names that may even vary by region.

MEDIUM

For horticultural purposes, a medium is the material plants grow in.

MULCH

Any organic material, such as wood chips, grass clippings, compost, straw, or leaves that is spread over the soil surface (around plants) to hold in moisture and help control weeds.

N-P-K

An abbreviation for the three main nutrients that have been identified as absolutely necessary for plants are nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). These three are also known as “macronutrients,” and are the source of the three numbers commonly found on fertilizer labels.

OPEN POLLINATED

Varieties that produce seeds that are "true", growing into nearly identical plants as the plant they were harvested from (if they are not cross pollinated). Unless a Botanical Interest variety is identified as a hybrid, it is open pollinated.

ORGANIC

Refers to something derived from living organisms and is made up of carbon-based compounds. It is also a general term used for a type of gardening using no chemical or synthetic fertilizers or pesticides.

ORGANIC SEED
Describes seeds grown on certified organic property, following strict USDA guidelines regarding soil quality, pest and weed control, and the use of additives like fertilizers

PART SUN/PART SHADE
3 to 6 hours of sunlight.

PERENNIALS
Varieties that live for two or more years.

POLLINATION
The fertilization of a flower by wind, insect, birds, etc. where the male pollen reaches the female stigma, resulting in a seed, sometimes surrounded by an edible fruit like a pepper.

POLLINATOR
An organism that transfers pollen.

ROW COVERS
Fabric that is used to either exclude pests or raise temperatures of the area beneath it. Row covers may or may not have hoops under it to create a "low tunnel".

SCARIFICATION
The process of breaking through a hard outer covering of a seed to allow moisture to penetrate.

SELF-SOW
To drop viable seeds to the ground. In some varieties, often annuals, if seeds are allowed to drop, those seeds will germinate, perpetuating the variety. The subsequent seedlings are often referred to as "volunteers".

STRATIFICATION
The process of subjecting seed to a moist and cold treatment to break dormancy, which occurs naturally when seed is sown outdoors in the fall and experiences a winter period.

SUCCESSIVE SOWING
Sowing at least once more after the initial sowing, which extends the harvest. Three ways to successive sow: 1. Staggering sowings of the same crop 2. Sowing two varieties of the same crop with different maturing dates 3. Replacing one finished crop with a different crop.

THINNING
The act of reducing extra seedlings so that remaining plants are spaced properly.

TRANSPLANTING
Transferring a plant to a different growing space.

UNTREATED SEED
Seed that does not have a chemical treatment such as fungicide applied to it.

USDA HARDINESS ZONE
The historical, average, lowest winter temperature in specific geographic US areas. Perennials are rated using the USDA zone system, indicating the coldest temperature and USDA zone in which they can survive.

VARIETY
A species that has naturally formed a unique characteristic, for example from cabbage (*Brassica oleracea*) came kale (*Brassica oleracea* var. *viridis*) and kohlrabi (*Brassica oleracea* var. *gongylodes*) which both adapted unique, characteristics that differ from cabbage and so the variety ("var.") name was added to the species name.

VOLUNTEER
A plant that emerges from being self-sown or sown by an animal rather than by the gardener