The Living Root Garden Journal

The most complete, useful, nerdiest garden journal we could build: planting, soil, compost, worms, weather, pests, harvest, preserving, expenses, and the year in review — with room for real numbers.

Year: _____ Gardener: _____

Zone: _____ First frost: _____ Last frost: _____

Print this journal, put it in a binder, and print extra copies of any log page. One journal per year. Real numbers beat good intentions.

How to Use This Journal

This journal has two kinds of pages: planner pages (map, monthly calendar, succession plan — fill them in once, at the start of the season) and log pages (weekly notes, harvest, pests, weather — fill them in as you go). Print extra copies of any log page; that is what they are for. A journal with twelve weekly entries beats a journal with fifty blank pages.

Write real numbers. Measure heights. Count fruit. Weigh harvests. Record the actual pH, the actual rainfall, the actual temperature. When you estimate, write 'about' next to it — your future self will know the difference, and next year's plan will be built on data instead of vibes.

Write Latin names when you know them. Common names lie — two different plants share half of them. The Latin name is the one that means the same thing in every book, every nursery, and every seed catalog.

Florida notes appear where Florida is genuinely different — fall as the prime growing season, sandy soil, summer cover crops, rare frosts. Everywhere else, this journal travels: the tables work in any zone, and the monthly calendar has a blank column for your own dates.

Safety, stated once: never touch a wild snake; never handle frogs or toads; never pour leachate (the liquid pooled in a worm bin) on plants — leachate is not worm tea; never drink untreated roof or barrel water; never eat a wild mushroom on a guess.

My Garden at a Glance

Fill this in once, at the start of the year. It turns the rest of the journal from notes into a system.

Bed / area	Size	Sun (hrs)	Soil notes

Soil type (sand / loam / clay / muck):

Water source (hose / rain barrels / well / other):

Compost system:

Worm system:

This year's goals (3 max — gardens punish ambition, reward focus):

Garden Map

Sketch your beds to scale-ish. Mark north, water spigots, compost, and the shady corner that always disappoints you. Redraw it when you change something — the map is a living document.

North: _____ Water: _____ Compost: _____ Scale: 1 square = _____

Bed-by-Bed Planting Plan

One row per bed. Fill it in before the season starts, then correct it as reality intervenes — the corrections are the most valuable part.

Bed	Crop	Variety	Latin name	Sow / transplant	Spacing

Monthly Planner — The Florida Year

Florida's calendar runs backwards from the seed packets: fall is the prime season, summer is for heat lovers and cover crops. Use the 'My dates' column for your own zone and yard — north Florida and south Florida are different planets.

Month	Sow	Transplant	Harvest	Tasks	My dates
Jan	Lettuce, peas, brassicas	Onions, brassicas	Citrus, greens	Soil test, plan beds	
Feb	Tomatoes, peppers (indoors, N FL)	Cool-season crops	Greens, roots	Prep beds, mulch	
Mar	Beans, squash, cucumbers	Tomatoes, peppers	Greens winding down	Watch late frost (N FL)	
Apr	Okra, sweet potatoes, peas	Eggplant, peppers	Strawberries, beans	Mulch heavily, scout pests	
May	Okra, tropicals	Sweet potatoes	Tomatoes, squash, beans	Water deeply, shade tender crops	
Jun	Cover crops, okra	—	Okra, peppers, eggplant	Secure structures (storm season)	
Jul	Cover crops	—	Okra, tropicals	Rest beds, plan fall	
Aug	Fall tomatoes, peppers (indoors)	—	Okra, tropicals	Amend beds, prep fall	
Sep	Fall greens, beans	Fall tomatoes	Okra, sweet potatoes	Fall planting: Florida's second spring	
Oct	Greens, carrots, brassicas	Broccoli, cabbage	Sweet potatoes, beans	Mulch, plant softneck garlic	
Nov	Peas, lettuce, roots	Onions, brassicas	Fall crops, citrus begins	Best growing months start	
Dec	Cool-season crops	Onions	Citrus, greens, broccoli	Protect from rare frost	

Planting Log

One row per planting. The Latin name column is not pretension — it is how you tell two 'oregano' plants apart next year. Print extra copies.

Crop	Variety	Latin name	Days to maturity	Sown	Transplanted	Bed	Spacing	Source	Result

Planting Log (continued)

Crop	Variety	Latin name	Days to maturity	Sown	Transplanted	Bed	Spacing	Source	Result

Seed Starting Log

Germination rate is the number that tells you whether a seed packet is worth buying again. Count it: sprouted divided by sown, times one hundred.

Variety	Sown	Medium	First sprout	Germination %	Potted up	Notes

Weekly Garden Log

One row per week. Weather, what you saw, what you did, and what lived in the soil — worms, fungi, mites, springtails. The soil-life column is the nerd column, and it is the one that will teach you the most over a year. Print extra copies.

Week of	Weather	Observed (blooms, pests, wildlife)	Did (tasks)	Soil life seen

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Week of	Weather	Observed (blooms, pests, wildlife)	Did (tasks)	Soil life seen

Daily Garden Notes

One line a day. The weekly log holds the story; this page holds the days — what you did, what you noticed, what the weather did. A month of one-liners beats a perfect weekly entry you never wrote. Print extra copies.

Date	Weather	Did	Noticed

Habit Tracker

Some garden jobs only work as habits: watering seedlings, scouting for pests, turning compost, harvesting before it bolts. Write your habits down the left, check the days you did them across the top. A row of checks is a habit; a gap is a diagnosis.

Habit	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Watered seedlings / pots																															
Scouted for pests																															
Harvested something																															
Turned / fed compost																															
Weeded one bed																															
Observed soil life																															
Watered deeply (not sprinkled)																															

Month: _____ One habit kept all month beats five habits kept for a week. Print extra copies.

Harvest Log

Weigh it when you can. 'A lot of tomatoes' is a story; '14 pounds of tomatoes' is data — and it is the number that answers whether the garden paid for itself.

Date	Crop	Variety	Amount (count / lbs)	Quality	Used for

Harvest Log (continued)

Date	Crop	Variety	Amount (count / lbs)	Quality	Used for

Soil & Amendments Log

Every amendment, every bed, every rate. If a bed suddenly performs, this page tells you why — and lets you repeat it.

Date	Bed	Amendment	Amount / rate	Notes

Soil Test Results

One form per test. Copy the numbers exactly as the lab reports them — do not round away differences that could change your plan. CEC (cation exchange capacity) is your soil's nutrient pantry: sandy Florida soils run low, which is why small, frequent feedings beat one big dump.

Date:		Lab:	
pH:		Organic matter %:	
CEC (meq/100g):		Soluble salts (EC):	
Nitrogen (N):		Phosphorus (P):	
Potassium (K):		Calcium (Ca):	
Magnesium (Mg):		Sulfur (S):	
Iron (Fe):		Manganese (Mn):	
Zinc (Zn):		Copper (Cu):	
Boron (B):			

Base saturation — Ca %: _____ Mg %: _____ K %: _____

What I changed because of this test:

Retest date:

Compost & Worm Log

Active hot compost runs about 130–150°F in the center. Worm bins run cooler and slower, and that is fine — different crews, same destination. Reminder that saves every beginner: pooled liquid in a worm bin means it is too wet — add dry bedding. That liquid is leachate, not worm tea, and it never goes on plants.

Date	Bin / pile	Added (greens / browns)	Temp °F	Turned?	Harvest date	Castings amount	Lot code

Pest & Disease Log

Work the IPM ladder: cultural controls first (resistant varieties, spacing, water), then mechanical (hand-picking, barriers), then biological (predators, Bt), and spray last — almost never. Record the result honestly: an action that did not work is data, not failure.

Date	Plant	Symptom	Suspect	ID confirmed?	Action taken	Result

Pest & Disease Log (continued)

Date	Plant	Symptom	Suspect	ID confi rmed?	Action taken	Result

Weather & Rain Log

Rainfall is the number that makes the rest of the journal make sense — a bad month for tomatoes reads differently once you see it rained 11 inches. A simple bottle rain gauge and a notebook beat a weather app, because the gauge measures your yard, not the nearest town.

Month	Rain (inches)	High temp	Low temp	Frost? (Y/N)	Notes

First frost this year:

Last frost this year:

Wettest storm (date + inches):

Roof math reminder: 1 inch of rain on 1,000 sq ft of roof is about 620 gallons — see the rainwater guide for the full setup.

Bloom & Wildlife Log

First blooms, first fruit, first pollinators, first frogs. Phenology — the timing of living things — is how you learn your yard's real calendar, which beats any printed one.

Date	Species	First bloom / sighting	Flowers visited	Notes

Seed Inventory

A seed packet with no date is a gamble. Inventory once a year, test germination on anything older than two years, and buy less than you think you need — seeds multiply in drawers.

Variety	Latin name	Year	Source	Qty	Germination test %	Notes

Preserving Log

Freezing, drying, canning, fermenting — the harvest does not end at the picking. Note the method and the result honestly: a ferment that failed is a lesson, not a waste, if you wrote down why.

Date	Crop	Method	Quantity	Result / taste

Expenses & Harvest Value

Did the garden pay for itself? Add up what you spent, add up what you harvested at grocery-store prices, and find out. Most gardens win on herbs and tomatoes and lose on corn — the numbers tell you where to plant next year.

Date	Item	Cost

Total spent: _____

Crop	Pounds harvested	Store price / lb	Value

Total harvest value: _____ Garden profit (or loss): _____

Succession Plan

One bed, several crops, one year. Plan the handoff before the first crop is done — the bed that sits empty is the bed that grows weeds.

Bed	Crop 1 (dates)	Crop 2 (dates)	Crop 3 (dates)	Notes

Castings Application Log

If you use worm castings, log the lot code when you have one — it is how you trace a result back to a batch. No lot code? No problem: write the source instead. Typical rates gardeners use: a quarter-inch top-dress around plants, or 5–10% mixed into a new bed's soil. Your notes will tell you what worked in your soil.

Date	Lot code / source	Bed / crop	Rate	Notes

Year in Review

Fill this in when the year ends, while it is still fresh. Next year's plan starts here.

Biggest win:

Biggest fail (and why):

What I will change next year:

Must-grow again:

Never again:

Best new variety:

Soil lesson:

Pest lesson:

One thing I learned about my yard:

Garden Legacy

If someone else took over this garden tomorrow, what would they need to know? Write it down now, while you know it — the perennials, the quirks, the water, the soil history. This is the page that turns a garden into something you can hand over.

Perennials planted (and where):

This garden feeds (people / animals / pollinators):

Water: where it comes from, what breaks:

Soil history (what was added, what worked):

Quirks only you know (the shady corner, the wet spot, the thief):

Varieties worth saving seed from:

If I handed this garden over, I would tell them:

Keep growing.

When a page fills up, print another. When a year ends, start a new journal and read the old one's Year in Review first — that is the whole system.

Living Root Garden — livingrootgarden.com
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