

How to Plant in Lamorinda's Microclimates

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Bobbie Preston with the Moraga Gardens Farm maps. Photo Sophie Braccini

The Moraga Gardens Farm, during its spring plant sale, is refining its neighborhood map to illustrate what vegetables grow best in which locations.

"I noticed that the tomatoes I plant in my garden do not grow the same way as the ones that are planted in the Gardens Farm," says Bobbie Preston. "I live in the Camino Pablo/Larch neighborhood of Moraga where the fog lingers longer, while the farm is close to the intersection of Moraga Road and Moraga Way and gets more sun." Preston is part of the team that sells the seedlings grown for sale on site.

As the team noticed these yield differences, its members decided to create a Lamorinda map indicating what varieties do best where, one street at a time. "Right now we have information that comes from our members who work at the Farms and also grow at home," says Preston. "What we're doing this year is collecting informa-

tion from people who buy our plants all over Lamorinda, telling us what works best and what doesn't grow as well where they live." The information collected will remain anonymous, with locations marked by the closest cross streets.

"It seems Champion tomatoes are doing very well almost everywhere," notes Preston. "On the other hand, the Cherokee purple are not producing much in my garden, they do not get enough sun. It does well at the Farm where there is less morning fog, but here we can't get it to develop its color and flavor." Preston also experimented with tomatoes planted in containers. "We wanted to see what types would do well in pots so we could advise people," she says. "The pots tend to dry out. Ceramic pots and plastic containers get really hot in the sun and the roots get too hot; wood is probably the best." She and other Farm members have noticed that cherry tomatoes tend to do very well in containers. "Artichokes are also very sensitive to weather micro-conditions, but as opposed to tomatoes that need a lot of sun, they enjoy more foggy summers," she adds.

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This artichoke plant in a Moraga garden didn't grow in the first spot it was planted and had to be moved to a different location where it is now doing very well.