

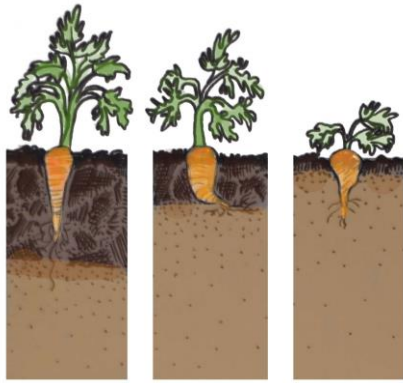


The DIRT Society Introduction to Crop Records

The success of any operation is dependent upon the quality of records kept. Even if you choose to plant a small garden, a thorough log of activities and yields will serve as a valuable foundation with which you can develop and improve.

What sort of records should I keep? Every grower should keep a log that details some key data. Consider recording the inputs, outputs and general observations. If changes or modifications are made, make note of those, too. Each entry should be dated and, if your operation or plotted area is expansive, you should indicate the location as well.

What is meant by “inputs and outputs”? *Inputs* are anything that goes in to the operation, such as seeds, organic materials, natural fertilizers, transplants, cages, trellises, mulch, etc. *Outputs* are what you remove: harvested food, seeds and compost, generally. Quantities noted will vary. You may add “2 packets” of seed and “10 cubic feet” of compost, while removing “6 kilos of eggplant” or “3 heads of cabbage.” Continue to use the same measurements for each input and output, or you may confuse yourself when you calculate the seasons’ totals.



What observations should I record? The short answer is: Anything you find important. The more notes you take, the better equipped you will be to troubleshoot, amend and improve. Record erratic weather patterns, diseases spotted, flavor preferences, expenses, predictions, storage methods, etc. Another very important addition to any log book is a record of wildlife around your operation.

Why should I take notes on wildlife? This portion of your log is critical for two reasons. Firstly, your success as a grower is hugely affected by ecological relationships. If molds, pests, pollinators, fungi, decomposers or predators are either present or absent; you’ll want to know what the effects are on your operation. Secondly, you are a part of a larger ecological system that ties food-growing operations, residences and businesses with foreign and native biological populations. If shifts occur that signify imbalance or disruption, not only should you be aware of the effects on you, but you should report them to authorities so that these populations can be evaluated.

How should I organize this log book? The DIRT Society has created three separate templates that you are free to use or draw from. The Monthly Operation Log is ideal for small farms or gardens. The Weekly Operation Log allows for more recorded data, and is better suited to larger operations. Alternately, you may prefer to keep records by plant type or variety. If so, The Crop-Specific Log is tailored to that end. To begin, simply print or duplicate this format and store in a notebook or folder. As you develop your records, you can adapt the templates to suit your needs.

By taking a few moments to record your activity in the garden or on the farm, you will greatly increase your likelihood of future growing success. The key is to be thorough, observant and organized; providing yourself with the best and most accurate information going forward.