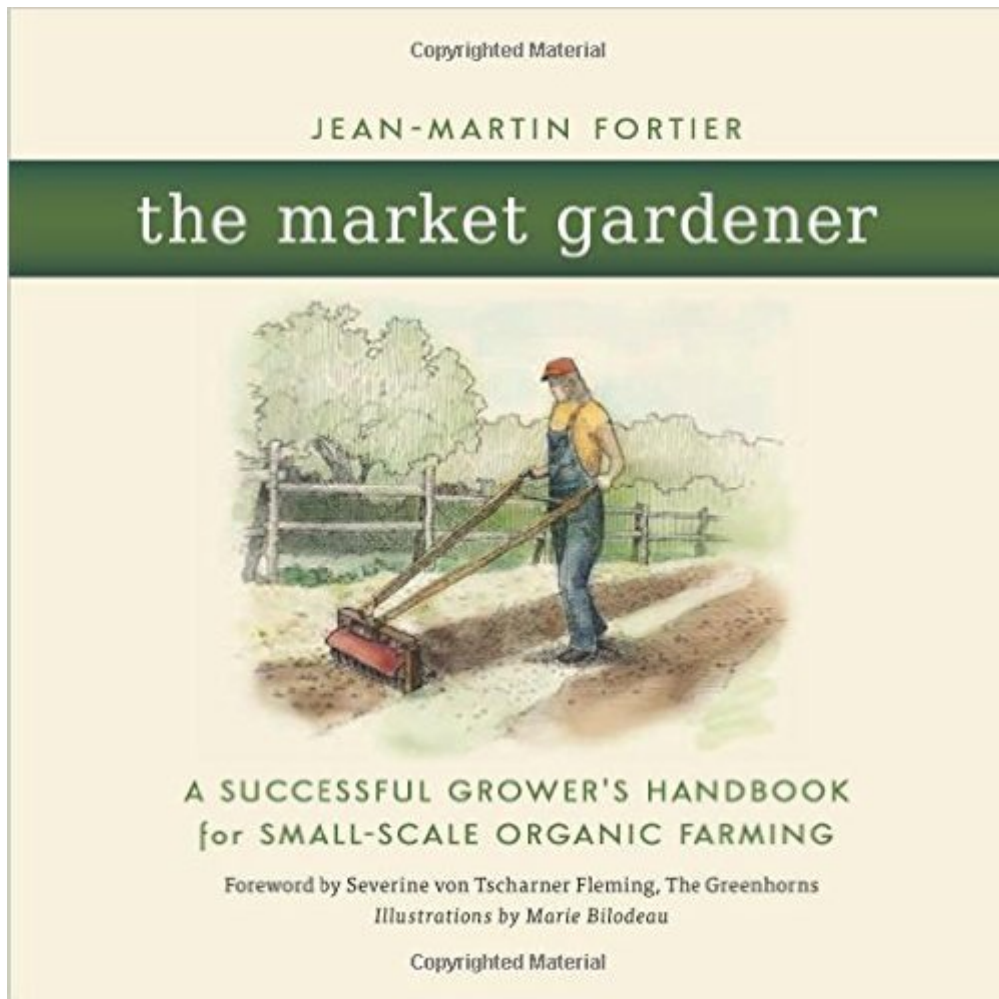


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# The Market Gardener: A Successful Grower's Handbook For Small-scale Organic Farming



## Synopsis

Les Jardins de la Grelinette is a micro-farm located in eastern Quebec, just north of the American border. Growing on just 1.5 acres, owners Jean-Martin and Maude-Hélène feed more than two hundred families through their thriving CSA and seasonal market stands and supply their signature mesclun salad mix to dozens of local establishments. The secret of their success is the low-tech, high-yield production methods they've developed by focusing on growing better rather than growing bigger, making their operation more lucrative and viable in the process. The Market Gardener is a compendium of la Grelinette's proven horticultural techniques and innovative growing methods. This complete guide is packed with practical information on: Setting-up a micro-farm by designing biologically intensive cropping systems, all with negligible capital outlay Farming without a tractor and minimizing fossil fuel inputs through the use of the best hand tools, appropriate machinery, and minimum tillage practices Growing mixed vegetables systematically with attention to weed and pest management, crop yields, harvest periods, and pricing approaches Inspired by the French intensive tradition of maraîchage and by iconic American vegetable grower Eliot Coleman, author and farmer Jean-Martin shows by example how to start a market garden and make it both very productive and profitable. Making a living wage farming without big capital outlay or acreages may be closer than you think. Jean-Martin Fortier is a passionate advocate of strong local food systems and founder of Les Jardins de la Grelinette, an internationally recognized model for successful biointensive micro-farming.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I stumbled across *The Market Gardener* while searching for ways to (organically) maximize the yield I could get from my tiny back yard vegetable garden. Even though I knew the book was geared toward someone planning to sell their produce as opposed to a home gardener like myself, I decided to buy the book based on reviews and what I saw in the book via "Look Inside" feature. (I bought it from a different store only because I had a gift card that needed to be used.) This book does not disappoint. Keep in mind- this isn't a guide on how to do permaculture or sustainable agriculture. It's about maximizing revenue and profit on an organic micro-farm. So he may not provide information on everything you would expect from an organic grower. For example, I was surprised to read that they buy their compost instead of making it themselves, the way every other organic/sustainable gardener seems to do (or at least claim they do). The impression I get from other books and articles is that you can totally sustain your garden forever and ever off the compost you make yourself, and that may be true, but Jean-Martin states that the time and space they would need to create and maintain compost piles is better utilized by growing more produce- plus the organic compost they buy is predictable in terms of quality and composition, which are both important. It made sense to me when I read it. However, he never suggests that it cannot or should not be done on your own- just that it makes more sense for their farm, all things considered, to buy compost instead of make it. Jean-Martin's writing style is also refreshing compared to many organic growers. Too often they come across as if their way is the only right way, no matter the circumstances, but I found no such attitude in *The Market Gardener*. Jean-Martin discusses the various topics in a matter-of-fact way, explaining not only how they do things on their farm but why. He will explain various things they have tried, why they may or may not have worked on the farm, and give the pros and cons to each method, including the method they use, and the impression I was left with was "Here is what works best for us and why. Your situation may be different, so I will give you all the information I have and the reasoning I use, and trust you to choose what you think will work best for your situation." The practical advice throughout the book is stellar. There are no photographs, but honestly the book doesn't need them. *The Market Gardener* is about substance, not fluff. The pages are packed with useful charts, tables, and relevant drawings. Whether they're about crop rotation, crop planning, planting, insect management, financial aspects or anything else, the tables and charts are easy to read, practical, useful, AND (for me, anyway), easily adaptable. I spent a lot of time before I bought the book building spreadsheets that would provide me with a good "at a glance" for things I wanted to know, so I was happy to see information presented

in a similar fashion. This book contains, hands down, THE MOST useful information on crop rotation (and how to implement it) than any other resource I have found to date. Before buying this book I had spent literally weeks on the web, trying to figure out the best way (or at least a practical way) to implement crop rotation and not finding anything beyond very generalized advice to "rotate by crop families" or "follow heavy feeders with light feeders" or "don't plant the same things in the same beds every year". Trying to find out if plants needed a two, three, four, or more year rotation was difficult and there was a lot of conflicting information on what plants were heavy vs. light feeders (or in between), how long rotations should be, and so on. I also couldn't find any information on how far move plants for the next season in order to avoid diseases that may be present in the soil. One foot? Five? Ten? A whole field? I never could find that info. This book presented me with a wealth of actual, practical, applicable information on crop rotation, the whys, and how they do it. With all the information on how to run a successful small market-garden, I honestly did not expect a section of the book to be devoted to different vegetables and how to grow them, but the first appendix is devoted to just that. It isn't as comprehensive as some vegetable-growing books and guides, and the varieties he prefers are (obviously) more cold-tolerant than the kinds I would choose for the heat of Texas, but the information he DOES provide is great. He gives the common name, the plant family and fertilization needs (good to know for crop rotation), intensive spacing requirements, days in the garden (which may or may not be days to maturity depending on if he direct seeds that plant or not, but it's easy to tell which are which) and some other various bits of information and notes on the plant in question. The rest of the appendices are also jewels and contain, in a condensed format, information that was otherwise scattered throughout the book, such as the different tools they use and how to source them, or other books to reference. All in all, I can't recommend the book highly enough.

Every topic has generations of development. It starts out with the pioneers and concepts then as people start practicing it starts to develop into personal art. Where Elliot Coleman started, and did a great job of launching thousands of small farms that are well enough organized that a couple of acres can give a family and some employees a good income and fill in the gaps left in our industrialized food system, this book brings down to earth in the most succinct way possible every part of operating a market garden. Fortier is the next generation, one of the acolytes that took his master's work and greatly expanded on it. I have a library of such books but none of them are as readable or as information rich in a short chapter as Fortier's book. While most of these books sit in

my library as reference material I actually could not put this book down because from cover to cover material was covered in as few words as possible while giving a rich detailed cover of topic after topic, walking you through the entire operation and then following with very good resources on where to find the materials used and mentioned in the book. It might be possible to improve on this book but it is hard to imagine how. It would be nice to see this book folded into a larger picture as part of a larger permaculture site that includes perennial fruits and herbs but I find no fault with the author for sticking to his topic and area of expertise. No matter what your accomplishments in the area of vegetable or market gardening, this book can give you some ideas for how to do some things better. If you have a permaculture site but want to grow your own food, this is probably the only book you will ever need on how to make growing vegetables a viable operation with the least amount of work and investment.

I have read many gardening and farming books, and this one is my new favorite. Jean-Martin has done a great job of explaining his innovative techniques in a simple and easy to read way. The book rewards multiple readings because it is packed with jewels of information - especially the charts and tables (seeding, transplanting, crop rotation, insect solutions, etc). After reading the book I was lucky to be able to attend a full-day workshop with the author. The experience at the workshop brought home that the advice and methods in *The Market Gardener* are the distillation of years of thoughtful and intelligent practice. As a new farmer, starting my market garden this year, I am immensely grateful for the generosity JM has shown in sharing his tips and tricks - I am confident that he has saved me many costly mistakes and inefficiencies. I would say that this book is the new must-read for any aspiring market gardener! My copy is already loaded with bookmarks and dog-eared pages.

With so many techniques out there from no-till, mulch no-weed (Ruth Stout-Gardening Without Work), to all-season (Eliot Coleman), here is the market-garden. Jean-Martin is a garden guru from Quebec who has inspired me that my wife and I can achieve profitable results with our small yard, as in, we could support ourselves by simply being better not bigger farmers! I have a gaggle of friends all psyched to live off the land, but truly taking that step out of the city to the country is a big deal. If you are looking to make that move, this book will give you a big boost!

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