

Plant Your Own Garden

Growing your own garden can provide more than provide tasty produce – gardening can improve health, save money and even boost mood!

Top 5 Benefits of Growing Your Own Food:

1. **Improve your family's health** – eating more fresh fruits and vegetables is one of the best things you can do to keep your family healthy. Growing your own keeps them accessible and fresh (when vitamins are at their highest level).
2. **Save money on groceries** – growing your own is cheaper than buying at the grocery store and if you learn to dry, can and freeze your produce, it can last even beyond the growing season.
3. **Reduce your environmental impact** – growing your own produce reduces the use of fossil fuels and resulting pollution that comes from the transport of fresh produce from all over the world.
4. **Get outdoor exercise** – planting, weeding, watering and harvesting add functional activity to your day. Gardening is also a great way to relax, de-stress, center your mind and get fresh air and sunshine.
5. **Enjoy better-tasting food** – comparing the flavour of a homegrown tomato with the taste of a store-bought one is like night and day. If it tastes better, you and your family will be more likely to eat the fresh, healthy produce that you know your bodies need.



Planning, Preparing and Planting Your Vegetable Garden

Step 1: Planning:

To have that lush garden full of produce come summertime, you've got to make sure your seeds have the best possible growing environment. Taking some time to plan will make all the difference. The two most important factors to consider are space and the types of fruit, vegetables and herbs you want to plant. Tomatoes, green peppers, potatoes and onions can be grown in a pretty small space. Others, such as peas, beans, squash, melons and pumpkins, need several feet to spread out and grow properly. Read the back of your seeds packet to learn how much planting space is needed.

Step 2: Preparation:

Loosen the soil with a garden rake, hoe or shovel and add some kind of organic matter (composted manure works great) to the existing ground. Ideally, you want to loosen the soil to 12-18 inches deep. You may need to add water to make the soil easier to dig in. Once the ground is ready, spread roughly 4-6 inches of organic matter onto top of loosened soil. Let it sit on top for a few days and then work it into the rest of the soil.

Step 3: Planting:

Remember that different plants require different depths in the soil but generally, you should plant seeds at a depth that is twice their diameter. Following this rule, you'll find that the smallest seeds will be planted just beneath the surface. Plant the seeds 4-5" apart and a row of seeds should be planted 2-4 feet from the next to avoid overcrowding. To extend your harvest, seeds such as lettuce, peas, carrots and radishes can be planted every 2-3 weeks to ensure you have enough to get you through the entire summer, even into early fall!

Tips on What to Plant & When

May & June:

Finally, warm temperatures are here to stay and you don't have to worry about frost. Warm soil will allow for fast germination and growing plants. Many vegetables will grow and produce even more quickly from seed planted in early summer when the soil is well warmed up and teeming with life.

- Beans
- Beets
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Herbs
- Melons
- Peppers
- Peas
- Summer Squash
- Tomatoes



July & August:

There are still some great crops that can be planted that will keep your garden pumping out vegetables well into the fall. August is also an ideal time to plant seeds for a second gardening season that can be as productive as your major early spring plantings!

- Beans
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Kale
- Lettuce
- Peas
- Radish
- Spinach



Sources: www.sparkpeople.com, www.ufseeds.com, www.prevention.com