

How to Start a Vegetable Garden: Basic Steps Summary

1. Select your site. Your garden should be on level ground in a spot that gets at least 6 hours of full sun a day (preferably more), with easy access to water.
2. Fence as needed to protect from animals.
3. Dig your plot or prepare raised beds for planting. Raised beds are deep mounds of soil surrounded by an enclosure or built up as an open bed with sloped sides. Add organic matter, such as compost, manure, chopped leaves, etc. to make your garden soil deep, crumbly, and well-drained.
4. Choose your crops. Grow vegetables that you like to eat that are difficult to find or expensive in stores, and (at least to begin with) are easy to grow. Some of the easiest vegetables are bush bean, tomato, cucumber, pepper, lettuce, summer squash, and leafy greens (Swiss chard, kale, mustard, etc.).
5. Buy seeds or healthy transplants. Consult our website or the Grow It Eat It planting chart to determine which vegetables are seeded directly in garden soil and which are grown from transplants. Place taller crops on the north and west sides of your garden so they will not shade shorter plants. Group plants by what season they grow in and how long they take to come to maturity.
6. Take care of your garden. Water when the soil is dry just below the surface. Avoid frequent, shallow watering, and water in the morning when possible. Fertilize as necessary (this varies with the plant). Covering the soil with straw, leaves, or compost will help control weeds, keep the soil moist, and add soil nutrients. Support your plants with stakes or trellises if necessary.
7. Examine your plants for insect damage and disease. Look for solutions on our web site.
8. Harvest and enjoy! Check the crop profile sheets or seed packets to determine the best time to harvest. Many vegetables taste their best when they are smaller, and frequent harvesting will increase production.

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