



How to...

GARDEN HELPERS

Earthworms are called "nature's plows." By breaking up soil, they help water reach plants.



Plan your spring garden

Get ready for the planting season with these easy tips.

Spring is nearly here, making now a good time to start planning a vegetable or flower garden. There is some fun and creative work to do before you'll be ready to put your first plants in the ground. Here's how to get started.

Sketch it out

Whether you and your family want to plant a new garden this spring or adjust one you already have, you can start by sketching out a plan for it. First, head outside with a tape measure and measure your existing garden or the area where you'd like to plant a new one. Use these measurements to draw an outline of the garden on graph paper. Add plants that are already there, such as shrubs, trees, and perennials (plants that bloom every year). Next, pencil in what you'd like to plant this year. Maybe you want to add flowers in colors you love or some of your favorite vegetables. You can also check your local library for books about plants that grow well in your area. Or bring your drawing to a garden center and ask for help.

Consider a theme

If you're feeling undecided about what you want in your garden, you can use a theme to guide you. For example, some people plant butterfly or pollinator bee gardens that include flowers that these insects like to

be around. If you want to plant vegetables, you could do a "pizza garden" that includes ingredients like tomatoes, basil, and oregano. You can use the theme for your whole garden or just a section.

Prep the space

It's important to wait to plant your garden until the last frost has occurred in your area. Depending on where you live, this can vary from now until late May. You can ask the staff at the garden center for advice or check the website almanac.com. Even if it's not time to plant, you can start working on the soil as long as it isn't too wet from snow melt or winter rains. Begin by clearing out any debris, like sticks, leaves, dead plants, and weeds, that may have ended up in the garden since last year. You can also start raking the soil so it's nice and loose for your plants when you're ready to put them into the ground.

Start your plants

If you want to grow some of your plants from seeds, plant the seeds inside in small containers and place them on a sunny windowsill. Once they sprout and the ground is warm enough for you to plant outside, you can transplant them into your garden. Another option is to buy small plants at a garden center to plant directly into the ground. You'll soon be able to enjoy all the flowers or vegetables that you grew yourself!



Pick what you plant.

4 easy plants you can grow

These plants are perfect for beginners because they're simple to care for.

Cherry tomatoes

Since cherry tomatoes are small, they grow and ripen relatively fast. This plant also does just as well in a container on a stoop or deck as it does in a full garden.



Sunflowers

Options for these flowers range from small types that do well in



pots to giant varieties that grow 14 feet high. These large yellow flowers thrive in many different environments and tend to grow quickly.

Lamb's ear

This hardy, silvery-green plant gets its name from its soft fuzzy leaves, which resemble a lamb's ear. Lamb's ear works well as a border in a garden or in a pot with more colorful flowers.



Marigolds

These cheerful, fast-growing flowers thrive in sunny spots with almost any type of soil. They can withstand hot temperatures and will bloom for most of the summer.

