



How to...



FUN FACT
Tomatoes, eggplants, and cucumbers aren't vegetables. They—and other crops with seeds inside them—are fruits.

Grow a vegetable garden

You can enjoy foods you plant yourself with these simple steps.

The warm-weather months are a great time to try gardening. There are many benefits to growing your own fruits and vegetables, including having fresh produce to eat all summer long. Growing your own food also benefits the environment by helping to keep some of the trucks that transport fruits and vegetables off the road. Here is how you can get started.

Choose a space for your garden

With an adult's help, decide where you want to plant. If you have space in a yard, select a spot where the sun shines directly for several hours a day. It should also be an area that drains well. (A good sign is when there are no puddles a few hours after a big rain.) You could also plant a garden in containers. Choose pots made of wood or terra-cotta with drainage holes, then place them in a sunny spot.

Prep the soil

Plants grow best in healthy soil, so take steps to prepare yours for planting. If you're planting in the ground, first loosen the soil, about a foot deep, with your hands or a shovel. Add compost (a mixture of saved food scraps), which will provide nutrients for your plants. Mix it in well. If you're using containers, talk to a nursery about

potting soil or a soil-less mix—both are made for container gardening. Add the mix to each container and fill up to about one to two inches below the rim.

Decide what to plant

Now you're ready to plant seeds according to the packet directions. You can choose what to grow based on what your family likes to eat. One idea is to plant a "salad garden." Ask a garden center about seeds for varieties of lettuce, spinach, and arugula that thrive in heat. Then add other plants that are easy to grow, like carrots, cherry tomatoes, and snap peas.

Water the right amount

How often you water your garden will partly depend on the soil conditions where you live.

For example, sandy soil may need watering twice a week, while heavier, clay-based soil may need a dousing just once a week. Container gardens may dry out faster. If the soil feels dry, plan to water at least once a day.

Harvest your garden

Seed packets typically include information about how much time it will take for the produce to be ready to harvest (pick and eat). Lettuce, for example, takes six to 10 weeks to grow. Some vegetable plants—like zucchini and beans—are known for yielding a big bounty, so plan to share any extras with friends and neighbors!

Easy kitchen herbs

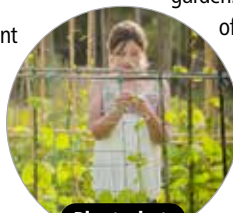


Herbs—like basil, parsley, and thyme—are simple to grow indoors. Follow these tips.

Select a container. Find a small container, add a potting mix, and plant seeds. Herbs with similar watering needs (read seed packet instructions) can be planted in the same container.

Pick a sunny space. Ask an adult to help you choose an ideal location, like a kitchen windowsill, that gets direct sunlight for several hours a day.

Add water. Herbs may need as little as one inch of water per week (refer to the seed packet for instructions). Most herbs are perennials, so if you take proper care, they will bloom every year!



Plant what you love.