



HOW TO START PLANNING A GARDEN

So you want to start a garden but don't know where to start. These are some of our tips and tricks to get it started.

To start, observe your yard over the course of a day. Look at the areas you're considering for your garden, and jot down whether or not they are in the sun every three hours: at 9 am, noon, 3 pm, and 6 pm. This will help you decipher whether to plant shade, part-shade, or full sun plants in various areas of your yard.

It's also important to understand the hardiness zone where you live. The U.S. encompasses nine hardiness zones, each based on the local climate. The hardiness zone dictates the type of plants that are best suited and ill-suited to the area. Check a [hardiness zone map](#) to determine where you live.

We also recommend going to [almanac.com](#) to find when is the best time to plant certain crops based on your zip code. This is a very useful tool as it has a list of the most common vegetable grown by most gardeners.



Acknowledge the season of life you are in.

If you're new to gardening, or if you have limited time to devote to your garden, commit to a size that won't overwhelm you, and concentrate on a selection of vegetables you like to eat that are also easy to grow.

If you have been gardening for some time you also need to acknowledge the season of life that you are in. We all have different responsibilities in life. Some of us have newborns, multiple children, jobs, and other responsibilities that take time. Gardening takes time. It takes time to plan, plant, harvest and preserve. This is not meant to discourage you from gardening, but rather, we want you to be aware of the time it takes to grow your own food. Sometimes you need to garden less and maybe shut down part of your garden so that you can focus on what your family requires of you or what your health requires of you at that season of life.

Granted most of us are trying to grow our own food so that we can avoid store bought food but if you need to lessen the amount of gardening that you do in any one year because of life responsibilities there is no shame in saying I'm going to take some time off so that I can focus on the needs that my family and I have.

Eat what you grow and grow what you eat.



Quite honestly you wouldn't be interested in growing a veggie garden if you were not eating from it. So, it's important to eat what you grow. Every year we make a list of what my family eats the most. Every year, well...every season with toddlers, is going to be different.

Whether you will plant from seeds or transplants, it's important to know the spacing and sunlight requirements for your plants. Allowing enough room to provide adequate airflow will allow your plants to grow to their maximum potential. If you follow the square foot gardening method, this can easily be achieved, or just simply follow the instructions that are on the seed package.

So how do you know what you should plant for this gardening season? Simply put, jot down what you buy from the grocery store. If you're keeping a list of what you buy from the grocery store specifically from the vegetable section then you're gonna get a pretty good idea of what your family consumes on a regular basis.

Also you can simply ask your family what they would like to eat from the garden. This is also a good way to include your family in your gardening plans. The more helpers you have in a garden the easier it will be and the more engaged your family will be in wanting to produce their own food.

Raised beds vs Inground plantings.



Here on our property, we do a mixture. So we see the benefits and limitations to each method of gardening. We still have raised beds on our 3200 sq. ft. garden because when we started gardening it was in a small townhouse backyard, in downtown Phoenix, AZ USA. Now that we live in a larger property, we plant in ground as well.

	Pros	Cons
Raised Beds	Good for small spaces, fewer weeds and pests, better draining soil	More watering, it takes time and money to design, build, and maintain
Inground	Lower watering needs, less time and money to plan and maintain, no construction needed, longer growing season	Takes a physical toll, more weeds and pests, soil can become contaminated and not well draining



Plant rotation.

If you had a garden last year, consider rotating your crops this year, moving the location of each plant family to increase soil fertility and crop yield. When you practice plant rotation you will see that some plants add nutrients to your soil and some if not all will take nutrients out of your soil. It is important to know what plants do what. For example, anything that is in the legume family will give back nitrogen to your soil. This is important for plants to develop leaves, so you want nitrogen in your soil.

Having good plant rotation practices also helps to lower the bug pressure that you will find in any garden. Bugs, just like everyone else, are creatures of habit. So, if they know your garden and they realize that you are going to be growing a certain crop in a certain area you will find the same bugs will return year after year to attack those plants.

Rotating your crops lessens bug pressure, causing confusion for the bugs trying to find your plants. This same theory also works with diseases. As plants that have diseases lose their leaves, those diseases get into the soil and can be transplanted into the soil and return year after year. However, by practicing good rotation in your garden you will see the lessening of pest and diseases as the years go on.



Seed saving.

For those who are interested in saving seeds from their garden, we have list of resources that can help you with saving seeds.

First, check our [Youtube Video](#) on how to save seeds.

Next, we recommend [The Farmer's Almanac](#).

Conclusion

It's our hope that this article will help guide you in the right direction to start gardening this year. As the years are going by, it's becoming more evident that growing your own food should be a basic need and a basic right in everyone's life. Our food sovereignty is under attack and it's best to try to grow your own. We are not the sole and only resource for growing a garden. But we certainly hope that this article helps you to take back to some, if not all of your food sovereignty rights.