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Growing Vegetables in Containers – The compact solution

By Judy Williams

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Container vegetable gardens are a great alternative for those that don't have access to backyards. There can be a range of reasons to grow your vegetables in containers...easy access to the kitchen, safer environments for children and the handicapped or just lack of a yard to use for gardening.

Vegetable gardens in containers can also be extremely attractive and serve the dual purpose of style and function around your patio.

The no dig vegetable garden can be just as successful in containers provided similar guidelines are followed.

Drainage is vital so ensure your containers have appropriate drainage holes to allow water to escape. If they don't, the plants will literally 'drown' and will be susceptible to diseases. They also need a sunny space. The advantage with vegetables grown in containers is that you can move the containers around to follow the sun if no one spot in your patio or garden is suitable.

Vegetables grown in containers will need some additional attention. Their root system is restricted to the pot so make sure you keep them well watered. Containers are far more likely to dry out in hot conditions which will kill your plants or have them 'fruit' poorly.

It is also very important that a mulch is put on top of the container. This will slow evaporation and keep the surface temperature of the soil cooler. Plants like tomatoes have small, fibrous roots which will dry and die in hot soil.

Container vegetables may need some additional fertilising due to the extra watering. Nutrients will be washed away quicker in a container than in the ground. A diluted water soluble fertiliser is the best option to use regularly with vegetables.

There have been many varieties of vegetables that have been bred to grow in containers. They are generally referred to a 'dwarf' varieties for obvious reasons. A list of suggested varieties and container

sizes may help with your selection. Check with your seed supplier on the varieties they recommend.

Having said that, there are many vegetable varieties that will do very well in containers. Tomatoes, lettuce, beets, carrots, cabbage, peas, beans, capsicums and peppers are all good choices. Cucumbers, cauliflower and broccoli will also do well as will virtually all herbs.

Crops like potatoes, corn, pumpkins and vine fruits generally need more room than a container can provide. But the size of your containers and the varieties available to you will dictate what you grow. As with most gardening, trial and error is your best education.

Judy Williams (www.no-dig-vegetablegarden.com) is an avid organic gardener. No Dig Vegetable Gardens represents a clean, green way to grow your own food. The site covers all aspects of growing, cooking and preserving your harvest.

Grow Your Own Produce For Fresh Cooking

By Lee Dobbins

There's nothing like cooking with fresh produce and what better way to have them readily available than to grow your own kitchen garden! A kitchen garden not only gives you good fresh produce but it also adds a bit of interest to your yard. It can be as simple as just a few herbs or you can go all out and grow vegetables too.

Fruit, vegetables and herbs are very rewarding to grow and there's an extra special flavor to produce you've grown yourself. Plus you know that no pesticides or chemicals have been used when you grow it yourself.

While cooking with fresh foods you've grown yourself might sound great, be warned, a kitchen garden is going to be very labor-intensive. If you don't like gardening or working outside, you might be better off getting your produce at the grocery store. The only way you're going to get a good healthy crop of fruit, vegetables and herbs is by lavishing tender loving care and attention on them.

If you do decide that a kitchen garden is for you, start growing early and you may produce a bountiful crop weeks ahead of the normal time. This will give you a good harvest during a time when those fruits and vegetables are particularly expensive in the store.

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You can make your kitchen garden as functional and attractive as possible with careful planning. If space is at a premium you can choose some of the more decorative vegetables and herbs and plant them in your flower beds.

Make sure you pick a sunny site in your garden as most herbs and vegetables need the sun to do well. If you are growing fruit trees, you should ensure that they do not cast a shadow over the vegetables and herbs.

When planting your herbs, remember that they will stay green almost all year so make sure you plan for how they will contrast with the existing plants. Tall herbs can be planted at the back of a traditional flower garden and low-growing herbs make excellent flower garden borders.

If you don't have a lot of garden space, you can plant herbs in containers and they will do well. You can also plant many vegetables in containers. Peas, potatoes and tomatoes are just a few that will do well.

Some vegetables are even attractive enough to be planted amongst the flowers – but remember that you are going to have gaps once the vegetables are harvested.

Many people think you need acres of land to have fruit trees, but there is a large range of fruit that you can grow even if you have a small yard. Small apple trees can even grow in pots on the patio and strawberries do well in containers. There's even varieties of cordon-trained apples and pears that can be grown against a garden fence.

If you want to enjoy the flavor of fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs in your gourmet cooking, there really is no reason at all why you can't have the joy of growing and harvesting food for your own kitchen table in your own kitchen garden, no matter how small the plot.

Lee Dobbins writes for

where you can learn more about gourmet eating.



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