



GROWING YOUR OWN

WITH THE HOME VEGE PLOT MAKING A COMEBACK, IT'S TIME TO TAKE TO YOUR OWN BACKYARD AND JOIN THE CRUSADE IN GROWING YOUR OWN FRUIT AND VEGES

CURRENTLY THERE IS A STRONG RESURGENCE BACK towards growing your own food. Domestic vegetable growing is flourishing worldwide and the humble vege garden is once again a popular place to grow your own fresh green vegetables, fruits and herbs. Once you've tasted a homegrown tomato, or discovered the delights of having fresh herbs outside your front door, you'll never look back. There really is no better time than now to start growing your very own seasonally fresh food. Whether you're a green-fingered newbie or hands-on gardener, growing your own delicious vegetables does not need to be a daunting task.



A backyard vege garden has traditionally been a large area where long rows of crops are planted. But that's all changing with the concept of square foot gardening. With organic methods, a strong focus on compost and closely planted raised beds, square foot gardening utilises a small space to produce a high yield. To find out more visit www.squarefootgardening.com

Seasonal planting

- ▶ Cool season vegetables are sown from February to September and harvested from May to December. These include broad beans, broccoli, brussel sprouts, cauliflower, onions, shallots, peas, spinach, turnips and swedes.
- ▶ Warm season vegetables are sown from October to February and harvested from December to May. These include beans, capsicums, courgettes, cucumbers, egg plants, marrows, melons, potatoes, pumpkins, squash, sweet corn, kumara and tomatoes. These vegetables are frost tender.
- ▶ Intermediate vegetables are less affected by temperature. Beetroot, cabbage, carrots, celery, leeks, lettuce, parsnips, radish and silver beet will grow year round in mild climates like Auckland and Northland.

PLANNING YOUR PLOT

If you are a novice then start out small. Even in the smallest suburban backyard you can find space for a well planted vegetable garden and a couple of fruit trees. There is a wide selection of dwarf citrus trees, available in garden centres, that suit the smaller garden grown in a sunny aspect. These are trees that have been grafted onto 'Flying dragon' rootstock also allowing you to have larger citrus such as tangelos and grapefruit growing happily in smaller spaces. They also do well in large tubs, kept near the house to be enjoyed.

An existing piece of lawn or a tired, unused area of the garden can be quickly transformed into a vegetable garden to grow a multitude of edible delights. Vegetables require 6 hours of sunlight a day and it is essential that the soil is rich and healthy as well as free draining for best results.

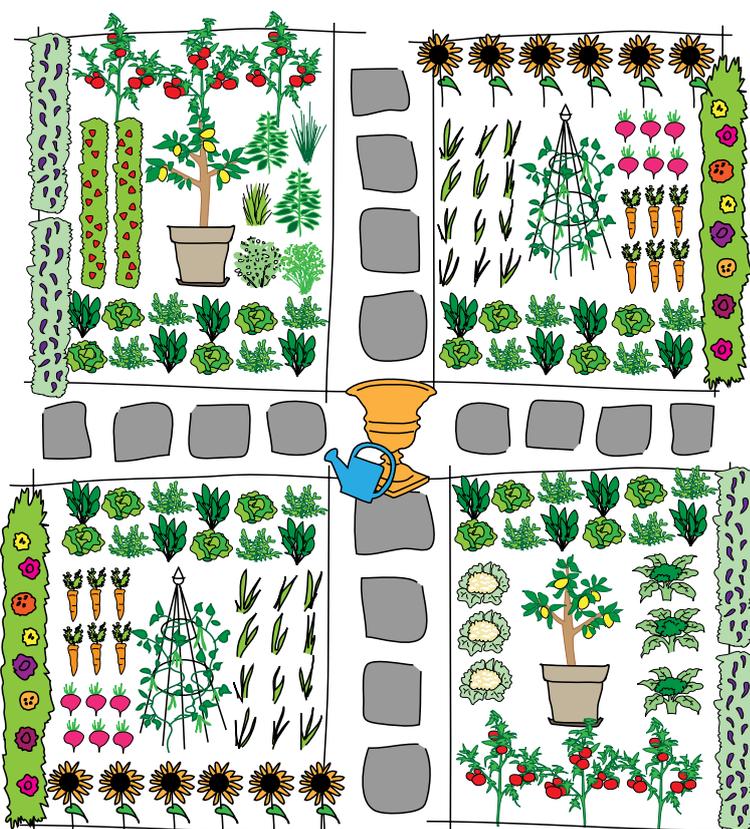
The simplest vegetable garden to create is to build a series of small raised plots using railway sleepers or timber. Line the beds with newspaper then fill with pea straw and mushroom compost. If you want to save your back from bending over, raise them to around 450mm high off the ground.

Grow vegetables you like to eat either raised by seed or with punnets planted directly into the garden. Grow kitchen herbs than you can add to cooking like parsley, thyme, oregano mint and basil. A few simple vegetables such as spinach, broccoli, salad greens, beans, onions, celery, courgettes, tomatos and rhubarb will produce some healthy helpings to the dinner table.

When you get some success and feel more adventurous try some more exotic varieties such as chilli, coriander and lemon grass for Asian style cooking. You will not only be amazed at the improvement in flavour but also you will also be in control of the quality of food you provide for you and your family.



A disused area of your backyard can be easily transformed into a productive vegetable garden. Especially with raised beds, like those seen here built by Patch from Scratch. Using simple, organic gardening methods such as crop rotation and companion planting, Patch from Scratch provide an all-inclusive service to create an organic vegetable patch in your backyard. Visit www.patchfromscratch.co.nz



Think before you dig.

Planning your kitchen garden before you start will make the process easier.

EDIBLE AS ORNAMENTAL

A vegetable garden does not need to be purely practical and functional, it can be aesthetically pleasing also. An example of this is a potager garden. It is a French method of growing ornamental vegetables and kitchen herbs. Flowers both edible and non-edible and herbs are gorgeous planting companions with the vegetables.

The gardens are usually laid out in a geometric pattern with pathways in between to access each plot, sometimes with a low clipped hedge to surround. Plants are carefully chosen for colour and form as well as for eating. The goal is to make the function of providing food aesthetically pleasing. A grand example of this is the Château de Villandry in France. A smaller version of this famous garden can be adapted to any home garden. Find a level area of your garden, use bricks or old railway sleepers to create formal beds in a simple geometric layout and add a hint of French whimsy by placing a metal obelisk, statue or feature pot within the garden.

GET GROWING

Container gardening is also a great idea if you live in an apartment or have limited space. Salad greens and herbs can be sown directly into stylish pots, planter boxes and even buckets and placed on the balcony for easy picking. Fruit trees such as lemon and limes can be grown in pots, but they do dry out quickly so make sure the pot is on the larger side to accommodate extra watering and feeding during the hot summer months.

If you have absolutely no space at all to spare then think about getting together with friends and rent a small plot of land locally. In the UK, allotments are a very popular way for people to grow their own produce. Basically plots of land are rented to grow vegetables on. Allotments are so popular at the moment that the waiting lists are now stretching out as far as three years.



Edible Flowers

Carnation, chamomile, daisies, dandelions, jasmine, pansies, pot marigold, nasturtium, roses, sunflowers and chrysanthemum

10 tips for success in your veg patch

1. Only grow vegetables that you like
2. Start small and expand the veg patch as you go
3. Mulch to keep weeds to a minimum
4. Plan your crop rotation before you start planting
5. Set up a composting system
6. Use organic seeds and seedlings, they have the highest nutrition
7. If you go away a lot at weekends, set up an irrigation system from the outset
8. Feed plants with organic fertilizer
9. Water as early as possible in the day
10. Veges need six plus hours of sunshine to grow so plan your garden in a sunny spot

Tips from www.patchfromscratch.co.nz



Allotment Garden in Edinburgh

Information about community gardens can easily be found via the internet. Contact your local council to find out about community gardens in your area.



Opawa Community Garden

REAP THE REWARDS

Growing your own food is immensely satisfying and creates a great sense of achievement. A vegetable garden at home is a great way to spend time outside with the family and with the added convenience of having fresh healthy produce available right at your doorstep. You can watch your food bill go down as the garden flourishes and grows around you.



Sandra Batley of flourish is a multi award-winning landscape designer based in Auckland, with a passion for people, plants and design. Visit Sandra at www.flourishgardens.co.nz