

FREE GUIDE · HOME & GARDEN

Grow Your Own Vegetables

a Beginner's Guide



A plain-English guide to starting a small vegetable garden in a yard, on a balcony, or in containers: the right spot, good soil, 10 easy vegetables, watering, and a season plan.

10

easiest vegetables to grow

6–8

hours of sun most need

4

step season plan

START HERE

Start small, in the right spot

The biggest beginner mistake is starting too big. A few containers or one small bed is plenty for your first season, and success with a small garden is more fun than struggling with a large one.

Option	What it is	Best for
Containers	Pots, buckets, or grow bags with drainage holes	Balconies, patios, renters
Raised bed	A bottomless box filled with good soil	Poor soil, easy weeding, less bending
In-ground bed	Planting straight into improved garden soil	Larger yards and bigger harvests

Choosing the spot

- ☐ 6–8 hours of direct sun for most vegetables
- ☐ Close to a water source
- ☐ Sheltered from strong wind
- ☐ Somewhere you'll see it every day

Only a little sun?

- ☐ Leafy greens like lettuce and spinach
- ☐ Herbs like mint, parsley, and coriander
- ☐ Radishes and spring onions
- ☐ Avoid tomatoes and peppers in shade

My garden spot

Where is it, how many hours of sun does it get, and which option will I use?

Watch the sun: spend one day noting when sunlight reaches your spot and when it leaves. It's the single most useful thing to know before you plant.

Good soil grows good food

Healthy soil is the secret of every good garden. It should be loose, drain well, and be rich in organic matter like compost.

The simple soil recipe

1. **Containers:** use a good-quality potting mix, never plain garden soil, which packs down
2. **Raised beds:** fill with a mix of topsoil and compost, roughly half and half
3. **In the ground:** dig in a few centimeters (1–2 inches) of compost before planting
4. **Every season:** top up with fresh compost to feed the soil

Starter supplies

- ☐ Containers with drainage holes, or bed materials
- ☐ Potting mix or compost
- ☐ Seeds or young plants (seedlings)
- ☐ A watering can or hose with a gentle spray
- ☐ A hand trowel and gloves
- ☐ Mulch, such as straw or dry leaves

Seeds or seedlings?

- ☐ **Seeds** are cheaper: best for radish, beans, peas, lettuce, spinach
- ☐ **Seedlings** give a head start: best for tomatoes, peppers, chilies
- ☐ Buy from a local nursery for varieties that suit your climate

Container sizes that work

- ☐ Herbs and lettuce: 15–20 cm (6–8 in) deep
- ☐ Spinach and radish: 15–20 cm deep
- ☐ Peppers and chilies: about 20–30 L (5–8 gal)
- ☐ Tomatoes: at least 20–40 L (5–10 gal)

Start a simple compost pile

- ☐ Mix "greens" (vegetable scraps, coffee grounds, grass) with "browns" (dry leaves, cardboard, straw)
- ☐ Keep it about as damp as a wrung-out sponge, and turn it every week or two
- ☐ Avoid meat, dairy, oily food, and pet waste

10 easy vegetables for beginners

Start with 3–5 of these. Choose the ones your family actually likes to eat. Days to harvest are approximate and vary with variety and climate.

Vegetable	Start from	Days to harvest	Beginner tip
Radish	Seed	About 25–30	Fastest crop; sow a few every 2 weeks
Lettuce	Seed	About 30–60	Pick outer leaves and it keeps growing
Spinach	Seed	About 40–50	Prefers cooler weather
Herbs (basil, coriander)	Seed or plant	About 30–60	Pinch tips often for bushier plants
Bush beans	Seed	About 50–60	No support needed; pick often
Zucchini	Seed	About 45–60	Very productive; one or two plants is plenty
Peas	Seed	About 60–70	Give them something to climb
Tomatoes	Seedling	About 60–85	Need full sun, a stake or cage, and steady water
Chilies & peppers	Seedling	About 60–90	Love heat; great in containers
Potatoes	Seed potato	About 70–120	Grow well in deep bags or buckets

Plant what you eat: a few herbs and salad greens you use every day are often more useful than a big crop of something you rarely cook.

Plants per container (a rough guide)

- ☐ 1 tomato plant per large pot
- ☐ 4–6 lettuce plants per wide pot
- ☐ 1–2 pepper or chili plants per medium pot
- ☐ A row of radishes about 5 cm (2 in) apart

Planting, watering & care

Most garden problems come from too much or too little water. Check your plants daily for the first few weeks; it only takes a minute.

Planting

GETTING STARTED

Follow the seed packet for depth and spacing. Water gently after planting, and keep the soil moist until seeds sprout.

Watering

THE FINGER TEST

Push a finger into the soil. If it's dry at your first knuckle, water deeply at the base of the plant, ideally in the morning.

Mulching

SAVE WATER

Spread straw, dry leaves, or wood chips around plants to keep moisture in and weeds down.

Feeding

NUTRITION

Add compost each season. Container plants benefit from a gentle liquid feed every 2–3 weeks.

Natural pest control

- ☐ Check leaves, including the undersides, often
- ☐ Pick off caterpillars and snails by hand
- ☐ Spray aphids off with a jet of water
- ☐ Grow flowers like marigolds to attract helpful insects
- ☐ Keep plants spaced for good airflow

Common problems

- ☐ **Yellow leaves:** often too much water
- ☐ **Wilting at midday:** may just be heat; check the soil
- ☐ **Leggy seedlings:** need more light
- ☐ **Few fruits:** may need more sun or feeding

YOUR PLAN

Your first-season plan

Check your local planting calendar for the best times in your area, then follow these four steps.

Step	What to do	Done
1. Plan	Choose your spot and 3–5 vegetables; sketch where each will go	☐
2. Prepare	Get containers or build your bed; fill with good soil and compost	☐
3. Plant	Sow seeds and plant seedlings at the right time for your climate	☐
4. Care & harvest	Water, mulch, check for pests, and pick crops when ready	☐

Harvest tips

- ☐ Pick in the cool of the morning
- ☐ Harvest often; many plants produce more
- ☐ Pick beans and zucchini while small and tender
- ☐ Let tomatoes color fully on the plant

Keep notes

- ☐ What you planted and when
- ☐ What grew well and what didn't
- ☐ When you harvested
- ☐ What to try next season

My first 3–5 vegetables

Thinking about self-reliance? Growing food is one part of a resilient household. See how ready your home is with the [free readiness assessment](#) →

Be patient with yourself: every gardener loses some plants. Each season teaches you something, and your second garden is almost always better than your first.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Growing food is a step toward resilience

A home garden gives you fresh food and a little more self-reliance. If you'd like to see how ready your household is for a longer disruption, including food, water, power, and heat, try this free assessment.

FREE 4-6 MINUTE ASSESSMENT

The 7-Day Household Readiness Assessment

Your readiness score

One overall score for how your household would cope with 7 days of disruption.

8 key areas

See how you're doing across eight essential areas of readiness.

Your weak links

The gaps most likely to matter in a multi-day disruption.

What to fix first

Practical priorities, with no doomsday thinking and no gear obsession.

It's free, and no email is needed to start.

[Take the free readiness assessment →](#)

Disclosure: the assessment is run by The Resilient Home, and this is an affiliate link. The assessment is free; if you later buy their optional plan, MyInfoLabs.com may earn a commission at no extra cost to you.

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Happy growing,

Uday Chandra

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