



GROW YOUR OWN CAMPAIGN





WHAT'S INSIDE

Page 3.....Welcome Letter
Page 4-5.....The Upsides of Growing your Own Garden
Page 6-9.....Pros and Cons of Different Gardening Methods
Page 10-13.....How to Start a Garden
Page 14-15.....Garden Maintenance
Page 16.....How to Engage with Your Community in the Garden
Page 17-19.....Decreasing Food Waste
Page 20-22.....Handouts & Flyers

DEAR PARTNERS,

Do you know where your food comes from? Not the grocery store or food bank, but where it *really* comes from?

Food surrounds us and is a necessary resource required for our survival, but most people don't know much about where their food actually comes from or that they can easily grow it themselves, no matter where they are.

Growing your own food or growing food with your community, can help build independent and community-wide food security, which is especially crucial in communities affected by food apartheid. By taking control of your own food production, communities can reduce dependence on external food systems, protecting against food scarcity and inequity. Promoting local food production empowers communities to reclaim sovereignty over their food sources, which can create a sense of empowerment and autonomy.

In this campaign we aim to equip you and your site with some of the tools needed to empower your neighbors and community to be successful in becoming independently food secure by reclaiming the power of the land and growing your own food.

You'll read about the benefits of gardening, which type of garden would be best for you and your community, how to start and maintain that garden, and a bit about closing the food cycle by preventing food waste.

We encourage you to share this campaign with your organization, partners, and neighbors!

We are committed to providing you with the tools and knowledge to empower those you serve.

Best,

Nutrition Education Team
Community Food Bank of New Jersey



Health Benefits

Starting a garden can be great for your budget and belly, but it also has some significant health benefits!

Physical Exercise



Digging, lifting, raking, and planting all produce movement. Bending and stretching to dig and rake gives the body movement that is needed to support strong joints and flexible muscles.

Empowerment



Gardening can help raise your spirits and confidence, encourage self-care, boost self-esteem, and inspire paths for self-growth and self-determination.

Socializing with Community



Through shared gardening activities, relationships among community members are nurtured and strengthened, creating a close-knit fabric of connections. The garden, much like a common living room, becomes a gathering place where stories are shared and community bonds are strengthened.

Getting Outdoors



Sunlight, fresh air, and experiencing nature has been scientifically proven to improve mental health. People tend to breathe deeper when outside, clearing out the lungs, improving digestion, improving immune response and increasing oxygen levels in the blood. Spending time outdoors has been shown to reduce heart rate and muscle tension. Sunlight lowers blood pressure and increases vitamin D levels.

Environmental Benefits

- **Reduce Fossil Fuel Consumption:** Conventional Agricultural practices transport foods all across the country and world. When we grow or shop from local sources we can decrease this consumption that pollutes our environment and causes climate change.
- **Reduce pesticide and Synthetic Fertilizer Usage:** Growing your own foods allows you to use natural fertilizers and not over use pesticides that can lead to chronic health diseases like cancer, pollute our water systems, and decrease biodiversity.
- **Promote Biodiversity and Soil Health:** Monoculture farming (the practice of growing one type of food in the same soil) can deplete soil nutrients and biodiversity, crucial for a healthy ecosystem.



Which Garden Method is Best for Your Site?

In-Ground Garden

The most traditional garden consists of a simple in-ground garden bed, which is a plot of land in which the soil has been dug up and rocks, roots, and weeds have been removed. Plants are grown directly in the ground. The soil can be flat or mounded.

PROS

Cheap and easy to start, all you need is safe soil and seeds

Can have a larger garden

Less watering attention required

Easier to install irrigation than in raised beds

CONS

Outdoor only and requires land space

Creating safe soil can take years

People can easily step on soil and crops

Requires more weed and pest management

Must bend over to access crops, less accessible to all populations and abilities

Can flood easier than other growing methods



Raised Beds

Planting in raised beds is a growing method where large, bottomless containers sit on top of the ground. It is typically a frame of wood, stone, or concrete built to your specifications, placed in a sunny spot, and filled with good-quality soil.

PROS

Ideal where ground soil is rocky or of poor quality

Raised, so makes garden work easier on the back and knees and can be accesible to all populations

Allows for a longer growing season

Can provide a higher yield through better drainage and deep rooting

Less weeds and pests than in ground gardening, especially if the bottom is screened

Prevents water runoff and less watering required than container gardening

Prevents people from stepping on plants and soil

CONS

Installing irrigation can be difficult

Requires building or procurement of raised beds and high quality soil to fill them, can be expensive

Harder to weed, hoe, and harvest than other growing methods

Not ideal for a large garden, unless you want a lot of raised beds

More susceptible weeds and pests than container or soilless methods

More watering attention required than in ground gardening

Outdoor only and requires land space



Container / Vertical Gardening

No plot? Grab a pot! Container gardening is a method where you plant in containers instead of the ground. Containers can be placed on a floor, balcony, outdoors where soil is unsafe, or even vertically along walls!

PROS

High control over growing conditions = high crop yield

Can be utilized indoors or outdoors and can be easily moved (if on wheels or not too heavy)

Great method for when there is minimal space or unsafe soil

More accessible to all populations and abilities and less bending required

Less weeds and pests

Easiest growing method to start, requires less tools and money

Can upcycle almost anything you already have to build the system

CONS

Large containers can be very heavy

Requires more watering attention since the soil dries out faster, especially if outside

Crop yield might not be as high, since the size of the container determines how large a plant can grow

Requires fresh, high quality soil which can be expensive



Hydroponics

Hydroponics is a soilless growing method where plants are grown in nutrient enriched water. This method can be utilized outdoors or indoors, as long as the plants have adequate light.

PROS

With hydroponics, nutrients and water can be reused many times. This allows savings in water and nutrients of up to 50% compared to conventional cultivation.

No soil = a cleaner, less messy system, less pests, and no weeds

Less space required per plant = more plants in less space

Less weight due to no soil and less space needed = lighter which can be ideal for verticle structures

High control over growing conditions = high crop yield

Can be utilized indoors or outdoors and can (usually) be easy to move

Great method for when there is minimal space or unsafe soil

More accessible to all populations and abilities and less bending required

Can upcycle items you already have to build the system

CONS

If using a non-passive system (most systems), constant electricity is required

Higher initial costs to start, but evens out in the long run

A stricter control of irrigation is required

More niche, so might require more expertise than conventional cultivation

More susceptible to water borne illnesses



How to Start a Garden

Growing your own garden can be intimidating, but with these simple steps, you'll be a pro gardener in no time!

Before jumping right into the soil, you need to do a little planning to start your garden. Begin by jotting down some goals you have for your garden. This will help guide your decisions later. Once you have thought a little about your intentions, it's time to get started!



Step 1: Choose Your Garden Location



To grow fruits and vegetables, you will need a sunny spot that gets **6-8 hours of direct sunlight** per day. Observe your land to determine the sunniest area.



If you don't have an outdoor space to plant in, consider container gardening on a south facing windowsill or balcony. If you want to plant outside, but don't have land space, try container gardening. You can even try hydroponics, a soilless gardening technique that can be done indoors or outdoors. Check out [this site](#) if you're interested in hydroponics.



Be wary of how much water the location you chose receives. If it is very wet and water pools there, you might want to consider planting in raised beds. If you are interested in building raised garden beds, check out [this site](#). All plants need water, but too much can be detrimental so be sure your plants will have adequate drainage.

How to Start a Garden

Step 2: Determine Your Garden Size and Plants

No matter what type of garden you are creating, it is always best to **start small**. Gardening is a joyful, relaxing, fruitful hobby, but does take time, effort, and energy. A large garden can be overwhelming and time-consuming. So, especially if you are a new gardener, focus on a small garden that you will be able to realistically take care of. Be sure to consider paths and space for walking and garden chores when choosing your plot size.

When choosing your crops, focus on what your community likes to eat and start with that. It is much more manageable to master the growing of one crop and then branch out rather than trying to learn about 10 different species all at once. **Start with 2-3 different crops**, depending on the size of your garden.

Companion planting, the practice of growing several different types of crops near each other to enhance crop production, is a great way to try your hand at growing different crops and getting the most yield possible. Check out [this site](#) to learn more about companion plating and what grows well together.

Be sure to choose crops that will grow in your area if you are growing outdoors. To find out what grows best in your location, visit [this site](#).



Pro Tip!

Lettuces/ leafy greens and herbs are the easiest things to grow, so those are great starter crops. Lettuces and herbs are great indoor or container gardening crops, as well.



How to Start a Garden

Step 3: Prepare For Your Garden

If you are planting in existing land, it's time to clear the space! **Remove weeds, sod, and any large rocks.** If your space is really overtaken by weeds, be sure to remove as much of the roots as possible. You may even want to cover the weedy land with landscape fabric or cardboard to slow down regrowth. Cardboard is a great option to reuse what you have, just be sure the cardboard is free of tape, paint, or dyes.

You will also want to **cultivate the soil.** This means loosening up the soil to increase retention and penetration of water, air, and nutrients. I recommend using a cultivator for this rather than tilling, since tilling can disrupt soil structure leading to runoff and erosion.

If you are planting into the ground with existing soil, it is best practice to test your soil to make sure it is safe and optimal for growing your desired crops. **Learn how to test your soil [here](#).** If your soil is unsafe, use a raised bed or soilless planting technique. Most soil, especially residential, will usually need a little extra love to make sure it is nutrient dense enough to grow healthy crops. Remember, our **fruits and vegetables get their nutrients from the soil, so the richer your soil is, the more nutrient dense your fruit will be!** To learn more about fertilizing your crops check out [this site](#), however, I recommend sourcing high quality compost and enhancing your soil that way. It is simple, effective, and environmentally safe.

If you are planting in raised beds or containers, you will need to source your containers and high-quality soil. When it comes to containers, get creative and upcycle! Just be sure the containers are sterilized and have adequate drainage.



How to Start a Garden

Step 4: Start Planting



For most plants, it is best practice to grow seedlings outside of their permanent planting location before planting them into the ground. If you start your seeds in spring, you should be on track to plant them by the time the ground is warm enough. Check out [this site](#) to learn all about starting your own seeds.

To learn about which crops to start and when to transplant them, visit [this site](#).

You can also purchase seedlings from a nursery that are ready to go and be transplanted. When transplanting, push up from the bottom. If there are a lot of roots all grown together, gently untangle them up with your fingers before planting. Plant into very moist soil and water your plants into their permanent location once planted.



To know exactly when, in what conditions, and how to plant your seeds properly, read the packets! Your seed packets will tell you everything you need to know.



Pro Tip!

Create a seed packet rolodex so you can easily refer back to the instructions.



Garden Maintenance

Garden Management

Gardens require frequent attention. If you do not have a dedicated person to maintain the garden, try a lower maintenance option like indoor container gardening or hydroponics because without having someone to regularly maintain the garden, it will fail. Especially with an outdoor garden, get into the habit of taking a daily garden walk through. Use this time to observe your land and plants. Is there water pooling in an area? Are some plants ridden with little holes? Is there fruit that is ready to be harvested? Are some weeds taking over the space? Keeping a close eye on your plants will ensure that you are growing the healthiest, most fruitful garden possible.

Garden Cleanliness

Be sure to weed regularly and remove any dead leaves and fruit from plants and the ground. Leaving dead and decomposing fruit and leaves and other unwanted debris on your plants and soil will create an environment where pests and disease thrive.

Watering

Check your seed packets to know when to water your plants. When watering, rainwater is best and reverse osmosis water is second best, but use what you have access to. If it is raining, a good rule of thumb to follow to know if you should still water your plants is to check for a rain shadow under a car on a flat surface. If there is a rain shadow, water. If there is no rain shadow and under the car is completely wet, hold off on watering. If you're still not sure when to water, feel 3-4 inches beneath the soil and if it's dry, it's time to water!

Pest Management

If you are struggling with pests, you can pluck them off and toss them into some soapy water or try other natural pest remedies [listed here](#). It is not recommend to use chemical pesticides as they pollute our water systems, lead to the loss of biodiversity, and can have negative health implications. Learn more about why chemical pesticides are a risk [here](#).

Harvesting

It is best practice to harvest in the early morning, before field heat kicks in, and then immediately store your harvest in a cool area. This means the plants will be cooler when harvested so they will stay fresher longer and have a better texture. Print out [this handy flyer](#) to hang on your fridge to know exactly how to best store your harvested produce to maximize freshness!



Tips to Maintaining a Successful Garden Long Term

1. A Dedicated Garden Manager

Before building a garden, you must ask yourself if you will have the capacity to maintain it or if there is a dedicated person who is interested in spearheading maintenance. Gardens require very frequent maintenance to be successful, so if you do not have someone who will be able to check on the garden at least every other day or so, you should consider a lower maintenance option like indoor container gardening or hydroponics. Once you have identified your garden manager, create a work schedule to ensure the garden will receive adequate attention. This is a great way to engage volunteers in a new way at your site, so don't be afraid to include them in the work schedule.

2. Signage

When creating any garden, signage is key, especially if many hands will be helping. In your garden be sure to post:

Crop Labels



In addition to your garden map, you should also label each individual bed. Painted rocks are a great option to use what you have, but they also withstand the elements best. It can also be a fun project to engage volunteers!

Task and Kanban Board



Having a task board with a list of daily tasks and a to do, doing, and done columns are a great way to ensure that all tasks have been completed when many hands will be maintaining your garden.

Rules and Best Practices List



Keeping a highly visible list of rules and best practices for your garden will ensure visitors, maintainers, and consumers are safe and will help keep your garden in the best shape possible.

Garden Map



This is a map of the layout of your garden including what crops are planted in which beds.

3. Visibility, Security, and Language of Signage

Be sure to print all signs large enough for all populations to read, in the appropriate languages your community speaks, and hang them in a central, easily visible location. You will also want to waterproof the signs, like lamination, and hang them up in a very secure manner that will be able to withstand the elements like wind and rain. The side of a building or shed that has an overhang is a great spot.

How to Engage with your Community in the Garden

1. Organize workshops on gardening topics like composting, pest control, and seed starting for both experienced and novice gardeners to share skills.



2. Encourage community members to contribute art installations or decorative elements to the garden for aesthetic purposes, and to express themselves creatively.



3. Collaborate with gardeners to compile a community cookbook featuring garden-grown recipes, promoting healthy eating using nutrient dense, local ingredients.



Repurposing Food Scraps

There are so many ways to use up things that we conventionally consider food scraps. Get creative and give them another life! This can help to stretch your food dollars and save your grocery budget!

Get ready to spend less!



From shopping to freezing, check out these [tips](#) on reducing food waste to stretch your food dollars and help the environment.

Ready, set, regrow!



This [short video](#) will show you step by step how to regrow your herbs for continuous growth.

Don't toss those scraps!



Give your food scraps new life. Check out all the ways you can reuse scraps to make tea, veggie stock, bone broth, new recipes & more right [here](#).

Unlimited supply of produce!



Did you know you can regrow many popular vegetables and herbs food from scraps you might have thrown away? Check out these [7 veggies & herbs](#) you can regrow at home!

Composting Basics

What is Composting Anyway?

Composting is nature's way of recycling. It is a controlled, aerobic (oxygen-required) process that converts organic materials into a nutrient-rich, biologically-stable soil amendment or mulch through natural decomposition.

You can compost at home using food scraps from your kitchen and dry leaves and woody material from your yard.



Benefits of At-Home Composting:

Composting involves minimal effort, equipment, expense, and expertise.

You save money by producing a free, high-quality soil amendment (compost) which reduces your use of fertilizer and pesticides.

You can use your compost to build healthier soil, prevent soil erosion, conserve water, and improve plant growth in your garden and yard.

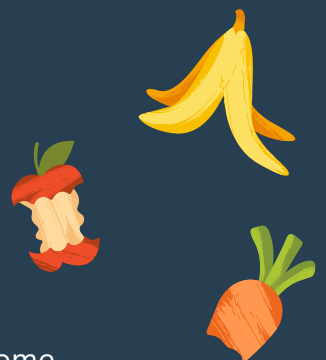
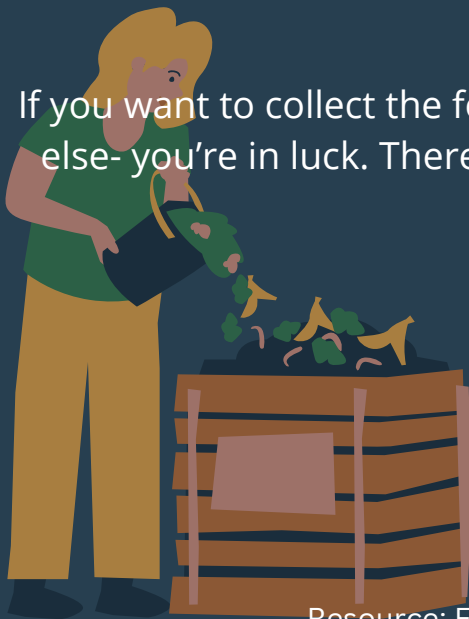


How to Compost:

You can get as adventurous as you want! You can generate your own compost using a hand made or prefabricated kit. Find step by step instructions on how to take on composting on your own [here!](#)

If you want to collect the food scraps & lawn trimmings but leave the magic to someone else- you're in luck. There are local entities in New Jersey that can pick up your scraps and drop off your compost:

- [Neighborhood Compost](#)-
- [Litterless New Jersey](#)-
- [Green Bucket Compost](#)-
- [Java's Compost](#)-



WHAT YOU CAN AND CAN'T COMPOST IN YOUR BACKYARD

CAN BE COMPOSTED



- Cardboard (uncoated, small pieces)
- Coffee grounds and filters
- Eggshells
- Fireplace ashes (from natural wood only)
- Fruits and vegetables
- Grass clippings
- Hair and fur
- Hay and straw
- Houseplants
- Leaves
- Newspaper (shredded)
- Nutshells
- Paper (uncoated, small pieces)
- Sawdust
- Tea bags
- Wood chips
- Yard trimmings

SHOULD NOT BE COMPOSTED



- **Black walnut tree leaves or twigs** (release substances that might be harmful to plants)
- **Coal or charcoal ash** (might contain substances harmful to plants)
- **Dairy products and eggs*** (create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies)
- **Diseased or insect-ridden plants** (diseases or insects might survive and be transferred to other plants)
- **Fats, grease, lard, oils*** (create odor problems and attract pests such as rodents and flies)
- **Meat or fish bones and scraps*** (create odor problems, attract pests such as rodents and flies, and might also carry pathogens)
- **Pet feces or litter*** (might contain parasites, bacteria, germs, pathogens, and viruses harmful to humans)
- **Yard trimmings treated with chemical pesticides** (might kill beneficial composting organisms)

***These materials should not be composted at home but may be accepted by your community curbside or drop-off composting program. Check with your local composting or recycling coordinator.**

Handouts & Flyers

Click on the images below to download and print them to share with your organization, partners, and neighbors!

How to Grow Your Own Veggie and Flower Garden!

- 1 Read the directions on your seed packages. Each seed variety will have different instructions, so be sure to follow them carefully.
- 2 If using toilet paper rolls, fold in one of the open ends so it creates a bottom. This should leave one end open, and the other end closed.
- 3 Add potting soil to individual egg carton cups or toilet paper rolls. Use your finger to make a small hole in the soil. Add a few seeds in each cup, or the number of seeds as listed in the directions. Water the soil and seeds until the soil is wet, but not soaking.
- 4 Place your seedlings indoors in an area that is warm and gets long hours of direct sunlight until your seeds sprout. Be sure to water the seeds daily, or as the directions require. You want the soil to remain moist.
- 5 Once the seeds have sprouted and are a few inches tall, it's time to get them used to being outdoors. Take them outside and place them in the shade for a day or two.
- 6 After a few days, transfer the seedlings to their permanent location in a large pot or to an outdoor potting location of your choice. Make sure the seedling cups are saturated with water. If you are using an egg carton, cut or tear off each cup so they are all separated.
- 7 Use your digging device to dig holes in your permanent planting location. Dig the holes about 12 inches apart, or as recommended in the directions. You want to make sure your plants have enough room to grow!
- 8 Place each cup (cardboard, soil, and seed) in each hole so the seedlings are sticking out above the soil. The cardboard cups will decompose so it is okay to plant them. Be sure that the plants are well-watered. The soil should be damp and moist. Water daily or follow the directions on the seed pack for a watering schedule.
- 9 Now watch your plants grow and enjoy their beautiful flowers and delicious fruit!

You'll need:

- Paper egg carton or cardboard toilet paper rolls
- Seeds
- Water
- Potting soil
- Watering device (watering can, spray bottle, or any cup that can pour)
- Something to dig with (Garden trowel, large spoon, or your hands!)
- Planting location (large planting pot or outdoor location like a garden bed)

Fun Ways to Enjoy Your Veggies!

With dip!

- Cut veggies into strips and dunk them into your favorite dip! Try them with this simple homemade ranch dip: Mix 1/2 cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt with 1 tsp garlic powder, 1 tsp onion powder, 1 tsp lemon juice or apple cider vinegar, 1/2 tsp dill, 1/2 tsp chives or green onion, and salt and pepper to taste! Optional: 2 Tbsp water to thin.

Roasted!

- Preheat oven to 425°F. Dice veggies up into equal sized cubes. Season with a drizzle of olive oil and your favorite seasonings. One delicious and universal seasoning combo is garlic powder, onion powder, dried basil, salt, and pepper. Mix up your veggies and seasonings and make sure they are evenly coated. Spread on a baking sheet and cook until veggies are tender. Flip them once during the baking process, after about 20 minutes of baking. You can use roasted veggies as a side to your favorite meal, in pasta, or even on a salad!

As a Salad!

- Dice your veggies into equal sizes. Mix them with lettuce and top with your favorite salad dressing to make a tasty homemade salad! You can also add other things like your favorite protein or grains, such as chicken, beans, rice, or pasta, to make your salad even more delicious and filling!

MAXIMIZE FRESHNESS Produce Storage Guide

Food Item	Where to Store	How to Store	Shelf Life	Things to Avoid
Cabbage & Brussels Sprouts	Refrigerator	Loose → sealed container when cut	2 weeks +	Ethylene producers
Green onions, Parsley, Dill, Cilantro, Asparagus	Refrigerator	Cut stems in water like flowers	1 week +	Ethylene producers
Basil	Room temp.	Cut stems in water like flowers	1-2 weeks	Refrigerator
Apples	Refrigerator	Plastic bag	2 weeks +	Cabbage, leafy greens, carrots
Citrus	Room temp. to ripen → refrigerator	Loose or open container	Room temp: 1-2 weeks Fridge: 2 weeks +	Ethylene producers, airtight containers
Berries	Refrigerator	Breathable container with paper towel	1 week	Moisture, overcrowding containers
Broccoli & Cauliflower	Refrigerator	Sealed container	1-2 weeks	Ethylene producers
Bananas	Room temp. to ripen → refrigerator	Loose or open container	1 week	Ethylene producers, airtight containers
Head Lettuce & Leafy Greens	Refrigerator	Sealed container, unwashed with paper towel	1-2 weeks	Moisture, ethylene producers
Potatoes, Onions, Garlic, Winter Squash	Dark pantry	Loose or open container	Sweet potatoes: 1-2 weeks Potatoes: 3 weeks + Onions & garlic: 2 weeks + Winter squash: 3-6 months	Refrigerator, plastic bags, ethylene producers
Turnips, Beets, Radishes, Carrots	Refrigerator	Sealed container, leafy tops removed	2-3 weeks +	Ethylene producers
Pineapple, Mangoes, Melons	Room temp. to ripen → refrigerator	Loose → sealed container when cut	1-2 weeks	Ethylene producers
Tomatoes	Dark pantry	Stem side down on paper towel in open container	4 days	Refrigerator
Cucumbers	Room temp.	Wrapped in plastic in an airtight container	1-2 weeks	Ethylene producers
Peppers & Summer Squash	Refrigerator	Breathable container	1 week +	Ethylene producers, airtight containers
Avocado	Room temp. to ripen → refrigerator	Loose → sealed container when refrigerated	Room temp: 2-4 days Fridge: 2 weeks +	Ethylene producers, airtight containers

QUICK TIPS

- 1 Avoid storing fruits and veggies together.
- 2 Avoid washing produce until use.
- 3 Refrigerate all cut produce in a sealed container.

Ethylene Producers: Apples, Avocados, Bananas, Cantaloupe, Kiwi, Peaches, Pears, Peppers, Tomatoes

<http://pubwww.usda.gov/plow-to-store-fruits-and-veg/>

SNAP Grows Gardens!

SNAP EBT benefits can buy seeds and plants, which produce food for the household to eat.

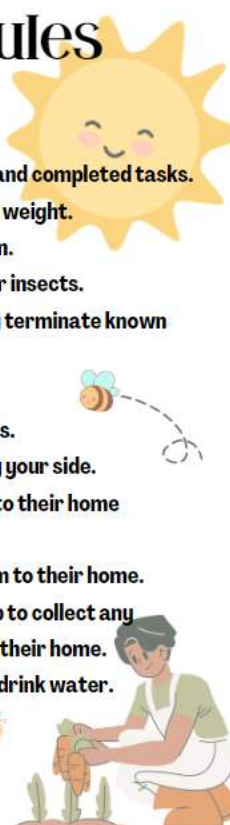
You Can Grow Your Benefits!

Did you know that SNAP* benefits can be used to purchase seeds and plants to grow food?

Handouts & Flyers

Garden Rules

1. Walk, never run.
2. Do not stand in the garden beds.
3. Mark the task list when working on and completed tasks.
4. Log the produce harvested type and weight.
5. Respect and care for the food grown.
6. Do not pick flowers that are food for insects.
7. Respect and look after insects. Only terminate known pests.
8. Never litter.
9. Wash hands before harvesting crops.
10. Always hold and carry tools down by your side.
11. Never leave tools out. Return them to their home immediately once finished.
12. Wash all tools before returning them to their home.
13. Do a garden sweep before closing up to collect any misplaced items and return them to their home.
14. Take breaks, protect your skin, and drink water.



How to Start a Garden

Growing your own garden can be intimidating, but with these simple steps, you'll be a pro gardener in no time!

Before jumping right into the soil, you need to do a little planning to start your garden. Begin by jotting down some goals you have for your garden. This will help guide your decisions later. Once you have thought a little about your intentions, it's time to get started!

Step 1: Choose Your Garden Location

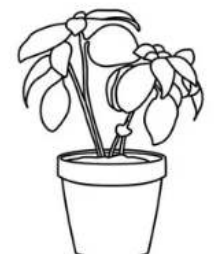
To grow fruits and vegetables, you will need a sunny spot that gets 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day. Observe your land to determine the sunniest area. Be wary of how much water the location you chose receives. If it is very wet and water pools there, you might want to consider planting in raised beds. If you are interested in building raised garden beds, check out [this site](#). All plants need water, but too much can be detrimental so be sure your plants will have adequate drainage. If you don't have an outdoor space to plant in, consider container gardening on a south facing window sill or balcony. If you want to plant outside, but don't have land space, try container gardening. You can even try hydroponics, a soilless gardening technique that can be done indoors or outdoors. Check out [this site](#) if you're interested in hydroponics.

Step 2: Determine Your Garden Size and Plants

No matter what type of garden you are creating, it is always best to start small. Gardening is a joyful, relaxing, fruitful hobby, but does take time, effort, and energy. A large garden can be overwhelming and time-consuming. So, especially if you are a new gardener, focus on a small garden that you will be able to realistically take care of. Be sure to consider paths and space for walking and garden chores when choosing your plot size. When choosing your crops, focus on what your community likes to eat and start with that. It is much more manageable to master the growing of one crop and then branch out rather than trying to learn about 10 different species all at once. Start with 2-3 different crops, depending on the size of your garden. Companion planting, the practice of growing several different types of crops near each other to enhance crop production, is a great way to try your hand at growing different crops and getting the most yield possible. Check out [this site](#) to learn more about companion planting and what grows well together. Pro tip: lettuces/ leafy greens and herbs are the easiest things to grow, so those are also great starter crops. Lettuces and herbs are great indoor or container gardening crops, as well. Be sure to choose crops that will grow in your area if you are growing outdoors. To find out what grows best in your location, visit [this site](#).

Beginner Garden Plants

Have you ever wanted to start your own garden but didn't know where to start? Below are some easy vegetables and herbs that anyone can grow!



Basil can be grown indoors or outdoors in the summer.

Lettuce is easy to grow and resistant to frost.





Green beans have an abundant harvest.

Mint can be grown in sun or shade.



Other easy to grow vegetables and herbs include: Spinach, cucumbers, carrots, bell peppers, chives, parsley, and thyme.

Color and cut out the plants. Then, paste them to a strip of paper to make your own windowsill garden!

 www.artsphere.org #loveartsphereinc McKenna Mason

MINDFUL GARDENING

5 Simple Techniques

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

"Mindfulness is the quality of being present and fully engaged with whatever we're doing at the moment... free from distraction or judgment, and aware of our thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them." - Headspace





HEARING
Activate your sense of hearing to fully immerse yourself in the present moment.
Spend 2-3 minutes breathing deeply and counting how many unique sounds you can hear.



TOUCH
Activate your sense of touch to fully immerse yourself in the present moment.
Spend 2-3 minutes running your hands through the soil and weeding a small patch.



SMELL
Activate your sense of smell to fully immerse yourself in the present moment.
Spend 2-3 minutes burying your face in a few plants and deeply breathing in the scent of each one.



SIGHT
Activate your sense of sight to fully immerse yourself in the present moment.
Spend 2-3 minutes inspecting only 1 plant and count how many unique textures you notice (rotated earlier to a new growth, insects, etc.).



TASTE
Activate your sense of taste to fully immerse yourself in the present moment.
Try each of the following to contrast the textures and tastes: a leaf, a flower, and a fruit.



LET'S GROW. MIND & SOIL

Handouts & Flyers

Best practices for COMMUNITY GARDENERS during COVID-19

Our priority is to keep our community safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. These guidelines are here to keep you and others safe and our garden open.

Feeling ill? Stay at home!

Always rinse vegetables before use.

Keep your distance.
Allow at least **6 feet** between gardeners.

Wash your hands regularly with soap.

Avoid touching your face.
Wearing a mask is recommended.

Clean commonly touched surfaces.
Don't share tools if possible.

An EEO/AAE employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Community provides equal opportunities in recruitment and programming, including 504, Title IX, Title XX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements. Icon adapted from freepress.com.

GARDENING SAFETY TIPS

NO REPETITIVE MOTIONS
Repetitive motions - such as digging, raking, trimming hedges, pruning bushes or planting bulbs - may cause skin, tendon, joint or nerve irritation. Make sure your gardening activities are varied, tasks are rotated every 15 minutes, and you allow a brief rest between each activity so that the same muscles are not used repetitively.

USE THE RIGHT TOOLS
When purchasing pruners, loopers or shears, look for brands featuring a safety lock. Try to find tools without form-fitting grooves. Such tools do not fit all hands and can cause injuries or require more pressure to maintain control. As always, use tools for their intended purpose.

RELAX YOUR WRIST
Be sure your wrist is in a relaxed or neutral position. Studies have shown that you can lose up to 25% of grip strength when your wrist is bent.

WEAR GLOVES
Wearing gloves will not only reduce blistering but will also protect your skin from fertilizers, pesticides, bacteria and fungus in the soil. When exposed to soil, even the smallest cut can turn into a major hand infection.

WATCH FOR OBJECTS
Sharp objects and debris buried in the soil can cause serious cuts or injuries. Use a hand shovel or rake rather than your hand for digging.

MORE THAN 400,000 gardening injuries are treated each year in the emergency room.

VISIT THE EMERGENCY ROOM IF...

- Continuous pressure does not stop the bleeding after 15 minutes.
- You notice persistent numbness or tingling in the fingertip or have trouble moving the finger.
- You are unsure of your tetanus immunization status.
- You can't thoroughly cleanse the wound by rinsing with mild soap and clean water.

VISIT WWW.HANDCARE.ORG FOR ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS.

Attention Green Thumbs: PROTECT YOUR JOINTS

Here are some tips for safer gardening.

Check your body mechanics
Bend at the knees to lift soil bags. Hold the item close to your body to reduce the load. Keep your work close to you to avoid reaching too far. Vary your position to avoid fatigue.

Check your tools
Gardening tools have changed over the years. Larger handles and lighter equipment have been proven to be easier on your joints. Long handled weeders, shovels and rakes with angled handles help you avoid poor posture and reduce stress on your joints. Try equipment in the store before you buy it.

Stretch
It's tempting to just get out there as soon as the sun shines! But, be sure to stretch your joints before you get started. Talk to your health-care provider to learn good stretches for you.

Equipment can help
Thumb splints can protect your joints. Wrist splints can keep your wrist in a good position. Or, there are combination splints. Talk to your health-care provider for more information.

Be sun safe! Wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen when in your garden!

Visit health.sunnybrook.ca for more

10 Spring Gardening Injury Prevention Tips

While gardening has many health benefits, it also is a physically demanding activity that can place strain and stress on your body. Check out our tips to prevent injury!

- WARM UP**
Do a 10 minute stretch & muscle warmup before gardening to loosen your muscles and joints and decrease the risk of straining a muscle.
- EASE INTO GARDENING**
Don't overdo it with a 3 hour initial gardening session. Invest twenty to thirty minutes of gardening at a time and add more time as your body gets used to the demands of gardening.
- VARY YOUR GARDENING TASKS**
Avoid staying in one position for too long and overworking certain parts of your body. Alternate weeding & digging with watering and harvesting.
- USE PROPER LIFTING TECHNIQUE**
Lift using your legs, not your back. Keep the object close to your body and do not twist or strain your low back. When moving a heavy item, think push-pull-carry.
- USE & MAINTAIN GARDENING TOOLS**
Use wheelbarrows, tarp, carts, and ergonomic tools. Maintain your tools by sharpening dull blades and use long-handled tools with easy to grip handles.
- AVOID BENDING YOUR WRIST UPWARDS WHEN USING TOOLS.**
Keep your wrist straight and use your shoulder muscles to pull and lift to reduce wrist strain.
- ALTERNATE KNEES WHEN KNEELING OR USE A GARDEN STOOL.**
Kneeling on both knees can cause knee and back pain. Kneel on one knee with the other foot on the ground and alternate.
- USE CORRECT TECHNIQUE WHEN DIGGING OR SHOVELING.**
Insert the head of the shovel vertically into the ground & step on the blade. Lift small amounts of dirt at a time.
- COOL DOWN & STRETCH AT THE CLOSE OF YOUR GARDENING SESSION.**
Stretch your back, neck, & limbs to prevent strain & cramping. Do a short cool-down walk around the garden.
- USE FLOWER BOXES, POTS, & RAISED BEDS.**
Using a vertical garden or hanging baskets are other ways to garden without needing to bend and kneel.