



# How to Garden

Three Methods: [Choosing a Type of Garden](#) [Starting Your Garden](#) [Planting Your Garden](#)

Gardening can be a rewarding and enjoyable hobby. In order to do it successfully, you need to be informed, prepared and organized. Consider the following list of suggestions if you want to learn how to garden.

Method  
1

## Choosing a Type of Garden

- 1 Decide what you want to grow.** Are you interested in growing a vegetable garden, a berry patch, or a flower bed? Decide what types of things you would like to see growing in your garden.
  - If you want to grow vegetables, consider types that you enjoy eating or that may be expensive to purchase in the store. Look at your gardening conditions to choose which vegetables will work best for your space allotment and environment. For example, corn takes a lot of space to grow, but beans and tomatoes need much less.
  - Growing fruits and berries can be rewarding, but each needs specific weather and amounts of rain and sun. Fruits and berries that grow naturally in your area are a good choice to have in your own garden.
  - Flowers and other plants are the easiest to grow, as there is such a wide variety to choose from. Consider your favorite flowers or ones that would make good bouquets when they bloom.
  - Decide if you will be planting annual or perennial plants. Annual plants only grow for one year and must be replanted every year, but offer a longer blooming period and beautiful colors. Perennials are plants that grow back naturally each year, but may have a shorter bloom-span.
- 2 Choose how you want to grow your garden.** You have to make the decision if you want to grow your garden in-ground, in a raised bed or pots, and how large of a space you will require. Having a large yard with plenty of space makes gardening easy, but using a small space is equally as simple.
  - If you live in an area with good soil that is not too rocky or sandy, then growing your garden in-ground is a good option.
  - If growing your garden in-ground is not a viable choice, then consider buying gardening pots or building above-ground beds. These are great because they are easier on you back and can be moved around your yard if desired.
  - If you are limited on space, you can grow a vertical garden using a small planter or stacked crates and upright-growing plants.
- 3 Pick a method of growing.** As with all fruits, vegetables, and flowers, you can choose to grow them from seeds or to buy mature plants to transplant into your garden. Decide which you prefer based on your time and money needs.
  - Growing from seed takes several months and much more work than transplanting full-grown plants, but offers extra fulfillment in knowing you are responsible for the growth of the plant.
  - Growing from seeds is the cheapest option, as a pack of seeds costs only a few dollars or cents. Full grown plants purchased from a gardening store can cost anywhere from \$1-\$50 apiece.
  - Transplanting mature plants takes only a few minutes of work once the rest of your garden has been prepped.
- 4 If you choose to grow flowers, you also have the option of planting bulbs.** Bulbs are easy to plant, come back every year, but only bloom for a few weeks at a time.<sup>[1]</sup>

Method  
2**Starting Your Garden**

- 1 Choose a plot.** You need to select the space you want to grow your plants in. Take into consideration the size, the amount of sunlight, and how it will be watered.
  - Most vegetables and berries need at least eight hours of sunlight a day, but this varies from plant to plant. Read the tag or seed package for each plant to find out exactly how much sun it needs so you know where you put it in your garden.
  - Make sure the garden plot you choose is large enough for the amount of plants you want to grow.
  
- 2 Test the soil.** Good soil will have an adequate amount of lime, phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium. Find out how much of each you have in your soil, and what you need to add more of in order to get the best growing plants.
  - You can purchase an at-home soil testing kit from many hardware and garden stores. Follow the directions to find out the properties of your garden soil.
  - You can take soil samples from around your garden and have them sent to you local state-certified soil testing lab or university extension service, and for a small fee they will lab-test your soil and send you the results within a week. This is much easier than testing the soil yourself, but it does cost more.
  - Take multiple soil samples from around your garden to make sure that you are getting accurate test results.
  - **Test your soil's pH** to see if you need to make changes to balance it. To do this, use a pH testing kit or make your own test at home and check the soil from your garden. Certain plants prefer different pH levels, but it is best to have soil that is as close to neutral - a pH of 7 -as possible.<sup>[2]</sup>
  
- 3 Research your area.** It is important to find out information about growing conditions in your area. Look online, speak to a local garden consultant, or call your cooperative extension service.
  - Find out when frosts start and end on average, so you know the right time to plant. Planting too early or too late can kill your seeds or plants, so it is vital to know when the best time to start is.
  - Learn about local weather patterns that might impact your garden.
  - Look-up the best time to harvest your fruits, berries, and vegetables in your area. Some of these may be straightforward, but some plants require a little more know-how about when the best time to harvest them is.
  - Make a schedule of when each of your specific plants needs to be planted based on their habitat requirement and growing needs. Some may need to be started very early in the season, while others may not need planting until the summer.<sup>[3]</sup>
  
- 4 Gather your tools.** In order to make gardening as easy and relaxing as possible, it is important that you have all the right tools. Use a shovel, gardening trowel, a garden fork, baskets or buckets to hold weeds, and a watering can at least. Other tools can be purchased but are not necessary for a small to medium sized garden.
  - For a large garden you may need to purchase a wheelbarrow, rakes and hoes, loppers, and a post-hole digger for an easier time.
  - Look into installing an automatic sprinkler system if you don't have time or the ability to hand-water your garden.<sup>[4]</sup>
  
- 5 Prepare your soil.** Once you have your soil and pH tests completed, ready your soil by adding the necessary nutrients to help your plants grow.
  - Add organic matter to help enrich your soil with nutrients. You can use compost (from your own compost pile, if you have one), decomposing leaves, peat moss, or decomposed animal manure. All of these are available for purchase at local gardening centers if you don't have easy access to them.
  - Add fertilizer to your soil to help substitute in nitrogen, phosphorous, or potassium that you may be lacking. The label on the fertilizer bag will tell you exactly how much of each of these nutrients is present. 5-10-5, for example, tells you that the fertilizer contains 5% nitrogen, 10% phosphorous, and 5% potassium.
  - Following the results of your pH test, if your soil is alkaline (above 7), try adding lime or wood ash to neutralize it. If your soil is acidic (below 7), add peat moss or decomposing leaves.<sup>[5]</sup>

**Method**  
**3****Planting Your Garden**

- 1 Arrange your plants.** Choose where you want each plant to go in your garden. Keep in mind the amount of sunlight they need and the overall size they will grow. Starting with small plants can be misleading, as some may get very large and need bigger plots.
  - Typically it is safe to give about 10 inches (25.4 cm) of spacing between each plant. Read the seed pack or tag on the plants to see how much room they will need.
  - Try to keep your plants in groups by variety. For example, plant all your vegetables in the same section of your garden, keeping your flowers or berries in another section.
  - Find out which plants will grow the tallest, as they will create shade over time and should only be planted near other plants which require less sunlight and more shade.
  
- 2 Plant your garden.** Following your arrangement, place each plant in the garden by digging a hole roughly the same size as the root ball.
  - Don't dig a hole too deep, only far enough to allow room for all of the roots without covering up the stem at all.
  - Gently set each plant into their holes, so as to not damage any part of them. Use your fingers or a trowel to slowly scoop dirt back into the hole over the roots.
  
- 3 Add mulch.** Getting as much nutrients into the soil as your are able will help your plants to grow full and healthy. Spread mulch between each of the plants in a layer about one inch thick.
  - For vegetables, add straw or decomposed leaves as mulch around your plants for the best results.
  - Flowers and perennials do well with wood chips or bark as mulch.<sup>[6]</sup>
  
- 4 Water your plants.** The first few days after planting should have a bit more water to help the roots to get settled. Avoid over watering though, by flooding the top layer of your garden.
  - Use a watering can or a spray attachment to your hose to water the plants. Water them from high up, so that you don't damage any of their leaves or stalks.
  - After a few days of watering 1-2 times daily, you can make your waterings less frequent. Move to watering once every two days or so.<sup>[7]</sup>
  
- 5 Wait and enjoy.** once your garden is settled, give it time to grow. A healthy garden will last several seasons if it is properly taken care of.
  
- 6 Harvest your garden.** After a few weeks or months once your garden has grown to maturity, harvest the fruits of your labor. Carefully pick or cut vegetables, berries, herbs, and flowers for use in your own home.

**Sources and Citations**

1. <http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/gardening/outdoor/garden-starting-checklist-0000000002180/index.html>
2. <http://www.familyhandyman.com/garden/how-to-start-a-garden/view-all>
3. <http://www.realsimple.com/home-organizing/gardening/outdoor/garden-starting-checklist-0000000002180/index.html>

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