

We're all hearing more and more about growing your own food. Fun, rewarding and most of all easy! Easy? That depends on what you consider easy. A kitchen garden can be anything from an herb plant on a windowsill to an entire garden devoted to edibles. A full size garden full of everything you might eat in one season with plenty left over to freeze and can doesn't fit everyone's schedule, needs or idea of a good time.

The better way to approach the question of whether or not you'll grow something edible, is to start out small. Very small. Think about some of the easiest to grow foods that you do love to eat. Do you put basil on anything? Do you love salads? How about blueberries? Our aim here is to get you started growing a few items or even one that gives you confidence to do more later.

The first requirement for growing edibles is the sun. As long as you have a spot that gets 6 hrs. of sun a day, whether it's a windowsill, a spot on the front steps or a place in your garden, you can grow some eats!

What You'll Need:

A container or a space in the garden

Soil

Plenty of light

Plants or seeds

Containers

Pick your container first so you can then select plants, seeds or soil to fit your project. You'll need a container with drainage in the bottom. You'll also want to plant in something more than 2" high on the sides unless you're growing microgreens. [Read up on microgreens and sprouts.](#)

Soils & Potting Mixes

This may be a big obstacle for some people. Trying to figure out what to plant in can be very confusing. Big vegetable gardeners seem to know about their soil. But when you're starting out, this can be the most confusing moment of the project. It's not helped by the fact that the internet is rife with every mixture and recipe under the sun. For now, let's just keep it very simple.

Are you growing in the ground or in a container?

Most garden soils are too heavy to be good for plants in containers. Heavy soils hold too much water for container plants.

Soil for Containers:

Use a nutrient rich potting mix. It has all the ingredients pre-mixed for great vegetable and herb growth. Organic options are listed below:

Espoma Organic Potting Mix is a nutrient rich, premium blend of sphagnum peat moss, peat humus and perlite.

Happy Frog Potting Soil from Fox Farm is highly recommended for container gardens. Ready to use right out of the bag, it is pH adjusted to allow for maximum nutrient uptake.

How much to buy? This depends on how ambitious you are. For one flower pot with a basil plant in it, the smallest bag is enough. 8 or 16 qts are available. Maybe a neighbor or friend will give you some? If you're going to try your hand at a small herb collection a 1 cu. ft. bag will be more than enough. [For larger containers, check out our Raised Bed Info page.](#)

Soil for ground:

Most people are going organic when it comes to growing food. There are plenty of options in this arena. You can buy a pre-mixed product or mix your own. Dig up the area you'll be using to loosen all of the soil and get as many weeds out as possible.

Garden Soils:

Coast of Maine Penobscot Planting Mix - This is complete for all plants, no need to add anything to it. Penobscot Blend is made with fully matured salmon, blueberry and mussel compost (2/3) and sphagnum moss peat (1/3).

Fox Farm Happy Frog

Miracle-Gro Organic Choice Garden Soil

Mix Your Own Soil:

Here's a good recipe for growing vegetables in the ground:

Use 60% topsoil. If you're using your own, you'll want to screen it for weeds. Be sure to test the pH! Vegetables and herbs like a pH that's fairly acidic. Around 6-6.5 is good.

Use 30% compost. Have you been composting at home? Use yours or buy a nutrient rich compost. A great choice is Coast of Maine Quoddy Lobster Compost. This is perfect for edibles and one of our best sellers.

Use 10% potting mix or soilless medium that contains vermiculite, perlite or peat moss to add lightness to the soil. Small roots need to make their way through the soil. Pro-mix potting soil is ideal.

Light

Vegetables and herbs outdoors are happy with 6-8 hrs. of full sun a day. Indoors, look for a south facing window, but be aware that window glass can help to make the spot too hot for your plants at midday. Good airflow is important, so you may want to set your plants back from the window a bit so the light is a little more indirect. If you plan on keeping your plants going through the winter, grow lights may be needed.

Plants or Seeds

If you enjoy watching the entire growing process, then seeds are the way to go. Start with the easiest and fastest to sprout. The plants listed here are staples of the edible garden and almost can't fail. All can do equally well indoors or outside.

The herbs and vegetables listed below are among the easiest to grow and the ones many people start with. It's obvious when they're ready to harvest and all will continue to grow throughout the season. For Basil and mint harvest the topmost leaves.

Basil

Mint

Lettuces

Peppers

Cilantro

Tomatoes - Easily the most popular vegetable for growing. Does it seem a little daunting anyway? Here's one really important thing to know about them. Tomato plant labels can scare people off. If the label states that the tomato is *vining* or a *bush type*, that makes sense. But, many tomato labels state that the variety is *determinate* or *indeterminate*. What does that mean? Actually, it's different language for the same growing habit. Determinate means the plant will stop growing upward just as a bush will. indeterminate means the plant keeps moving upward and outward as a vine does. This information alone will help you in selecting a tomato.

Next, you'll select a tomato by the variety that appeals to you. If you've picked a vining or indeterminate tomato, your next step will be to think about what kind of support your plant will need. You can purchase a tomato cage, pre-made for handling stems and vines or you can use any trellis you already have. If you select a bush type, then you won't need a tomato cage or support.

Keep these tips in mind for growing tomatoes:

Tomatoes want a full 8 hrs. of full sun.

Don't plant in a spot that stays soggy.

Buy a disease resistant tomato variety. Fertilize when planting, then not again until the plant begins to flower.

Use a fertilizer made specifically for tomatoes.

Water the base of the plant, not the foliage.

Keep good air circulation around the foliage.

Give it a try! Growing your own food will be supremely satisfying!