

MAY: How Does Your Garden Grow?!

Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow? Yes, just how does a garden grow? What does a garden need? What kind of garden can I plant (in ground, containers, etc.)? What kind of soil? What seedlings and/or seeds should I plant? What sun exposure is needed? We offer some tips below for installing your summer garden!

What type of edible garden can I plant?

Even if you don't have a plot of land to plant, you can plant an edible garden! Based on space, and sun, try:

- Planting in the ground, find a spot, till/turn over the dirt, mix in compost, and you are on your way!
- Planting in raised beds, those you make and/or kits you buy, are always a fun gardening method!
- Planting in containers of all sizes is a great solution if you have only concrete space available! And, in winter, you can move some containers inside and continue the harvest!



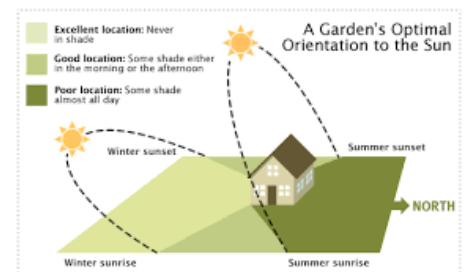
What key elements are critical to successful edible gardening?

Your children are learning about the key elements to gardening at their park and recreation site as part of their out-of-school programming. Ask them about these key elements to successful gardening!

1. Location. Where is the sun? Walk around your yard, community grounds, or hard tops to find out where you get the most sun. Check out the location a few times throughout the day to make sure it has sun most of the day because most vegetables and fruit require the most sun they can get!

2. Good dirt! After making sure the garden will get enough sun, and figuring out what kind of garden you will plant, the next most important thing is the soil in your garden. Whether you are planting in the ground or in containers, you likely need to mix in some good compost to provide nutrients and break up dense soil. Check out these links for a few "recipes" for edible garden soil: <http://bit.ly/CHGgoodsoil>; <http://bit.ly/CHGgoodsoil2>. If you are planting in the ground and suspect contaminants may be present, contact your local Extension Office to find out how to get your soil tested: <http://bit.ly/CHGextension>.

3. Plant! After your garden is prepared, determine your garden zone (<http://bit.ly/zonegarden>) and planting schedule (<http://bit.ly/plantschedule>) to figure what you want to grow. Or visit a local gardening store and talk to someone knowledgeable about local conditions. Then choose seeds and/or seedlings that will grow well, and easily, in your area.



MAY: Gardening Tips Continued



4. Protect. In most locations, gardens need to be protected from animals who seek your produce - rabbits, squirrels, and deer just to name a few. Find out which are in your area, and put up barriers to keep them out! Also, you may need to have some plastic or fabric handy to protect/cover your garden in the event of a cold snap (during late spring/early summer or early fall, in particular).



5. Tend! Tending your garden may be the least favorite garden activity, but it has to be done! Set regular schedules for watering, weeding, thinning, and pruning each week so you don't forget!

MAY: Intergenerational Gardening!

The National Gardening Association reports that three-quarters of households age 55 or older participate in some sort of gardening. Think about the wealth of knowledge they have, and how fun it could be to plant an intergenerational garden! Invite your grandparents, aunts, uncles, or older neighbors to help you with your edible garden at home, at a community location/park, or at school.



Intergenerational gardening can help young people learn how to grow their own food — a lifelong gift they can use to improve their quality of life at home and in their community. Older gardeners will benefit from the moderate-intensity aerobic workout - physical activity and stretching - that happens when you garden. Indeed, intergenerational gardening is a win-win activity for everyone!

Intergenerational gardening may be easier if a few things are considered.

- Raised beds and/or container gardens may make gardening easier for older gardeners because they bring the gardening surface closer to waist height, and thus make it easier for them to participate.
- A clear pathway with a firm foundation (mulch, etc.) to the garden may be necessary if the older gardener uses a cane, walker, or wheelchair.
- Consider locating the garden near the water source to make it easier for the older gardener to help with watering tasks. Also, smaller watering cans that do not get too heavy for the older gardener to carry may be useful.
- Select ergonomic tools that are easy for older gardeners to use as well as good-quality, child-sized tools for your young gardeners. Using real tools sized for kids makes gardening more fun for children.

Adapted from: <http://www.nationalgardenmonth.org/index.php?page=200903storyline> and <https://www.agingcare.com/articles/growing-connections-gardening-with-seniors-147111.htm>



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