

Should You Grow Your Own Food?

It's no surprise that cooking and preparing your own food is the safest and healthiest bet. When you buy food already made, or go out to dinner at a restaurant, there is truly no way to know how it was prepared, where it came from, etc. By cooking your own food, you can at least know for sure everything that went into its preparation from start to finish. But what if we go so far as to say *growing* your own food is not only the ideal situation, but also a fun, tasty and inexpensive way to ensure you are eating the freshest foods possible?

You certainly don't have to be a Martha Stewart or own hundreds of acres of land to grow your own food. The process is rather simple and just requires regular attention and maintenance. There are a ton of methods by which you can approach growing your own food. Whether you use a raised garden, window garden, or grow them in pots, fresh veggies and herbs can be yours.

Let's take a look at the various methods of growing veggies and herbs at home, aside from the traditional ground-gardening.

Raised Garden Beds- These are ideal when the available ground soil is not of a good quality. Basically, you build a garden above the ground and fill it with healthy soil that you purchase. Because of the elevated construction of a garden bed, water drains better. You can either purchase a raised garden bed or build your own. HGTV (Home & Garden Television) offers a tutorial on how to build your own [here](#).

Window Box- Window boxes can be used both indoors and outdoors. They are great for people with no yard space or very little yard space. Using the highest possible quality soil is recommended, as the root growth on your plants will be limited due to the depth of the window box. HGTV offers a tutorial on how to grow veggies in a window box [here](#).

Pots- Able to be used both indoors and out, pots are a great option for growing herbs and vegetables. Picking the proper size pots is crucial when choosing different varieties of plants you wish to grow. One plus to using pots versus regular ground gardening is that you don't run the risk of soil-borne diseases that you would otherwise have to worry about if planting directly into the ground.

Regardless of which method you use to grow your herbs and veggies, there are some basic things to keep in mind in order to ensure a nice, healthy crop.

- Only plant what you can consume- It's easy to get excited about a new adventure and plant too much. The last thing you want to do is have to throw away your hard work because you can't consume it all. Keep in mind that vegetable varieties such as tomatoes, peppers, etc. continually grow throughout the season so from just one plant, you will get a routine crop.
- Find the right spot & amount of space- Depending on what you're planting, the amount of sun required will vary. If your plants need mostly direct sunlight, be sure you're placing them in an area that is predominantly sunny. Also, make sure you have enough space to accommodate the varieties of plants you choose to grow. Note projected growth heights on seed packets.

If you live somewhere where seasons drastically change, it's important to be prepared and know what steps you need to take to protect your garden. You can find helpful month-to-month tips for year round gardening [here](#).

Now it's time to talk about the types of herbs and vegetables that are best suited to grow at home. Keep in mind that the best herbs and veggies you can grow are the ones that you will benefit from most.

Herbs: Basil (multiple varieties), chives, thyme, marjoram, oregano, garlic, rosemary, parsley, mint

Vegetables: Lettuce, carrots, broccoli, beans, peas, peppers, radishes, squash, tomatoes

Growing your own food at home is a great way to get children involved in healthy eating. Broccoli is often much more appealing to a child when they grew and harvested it themselves. You also won't have to question how long that bag of carrots sat on the grocery shelf. There is something to be said of fresher-than-fresh foods. One of the cool things about growing herbs in particular is that you can either use them fresh, or hang them upside down to dry and use them dried. Either way, the flavor is incomparable to store bought spices. Try starting your own garden and enjoy all the new flavors and smells!