

Plant Buying Guide

Gardenary



Nicole Johnsey Burke

Gardening for
Beginners





About Nicole Johnsey Burke

Nicole Johnsey Burke, the founder of Gardenary, Inc., and the author of *Kitchen Garden Revival* and *Leaves, Roots & Fruit*, is on a mission to bring back the kitchen garden and make it an ordinary part of life for everyone, no matter their level of gardening experience.

Since starting her own kitchen garden business in 2015, Burke and her company have built hundreds of kitchen gardens, taught thousands of students to create their own through her online courses, and trained hundreds of garden consultants through the Gardenary Consultant Certification.

Her work has been featured by *Southern Living*, *This Old House*, *Modern Farmer*, and the Garden Club of America. She believes kitchen gardens are a step that everyone can take to create positive change. To find more tips and tricks for building your own kitchen garden, visit her online at www.gardenary.com and download the Gardenary app from your favorite app store.

AS SEEN IN



Before You Head to the Plant Store...



Buying plants from a great source is the simplest and easiest way to get started growing in your garden. It's also—unfortunately—the most expensive way to plant. The growers have invested the time to start these plants for you, and that comes at a cost. It's often worth it as long as you shop smart. Follow the tips in this guide to make every single plant purchase count.

You'll have the most success buying plants that were grown locally, naturally, and organically. Look for plants that were born and bred, so to speak, in the climate that you're trying to grow them in.

The two best sources for plants are local nurseries and farmers' markets. When you head to the big box store to source your plants, you often end up with plants that were started and grown in massive plant nurseries, typically in a very different climate than the one you're gardening in. When those plants finally make their way to your garden, they're stressed out. They've also most likely been pumped full of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, or fungicides, and they will never be happy again unless you give them the exact chemical cocktail they're used to.

It may be cheaper to buy edible plants from the big box store than your local nursery, but you'll be much happier and save money in the long run if you buy local.

Some of my favorite plants to buy from the nursery are perennial herbs like chives, rosemary, sage, oregano, and thyme, plus flowers. Herbs that come in 4" pots are the perfect size to go into your garden, and you'll get so much value from them.

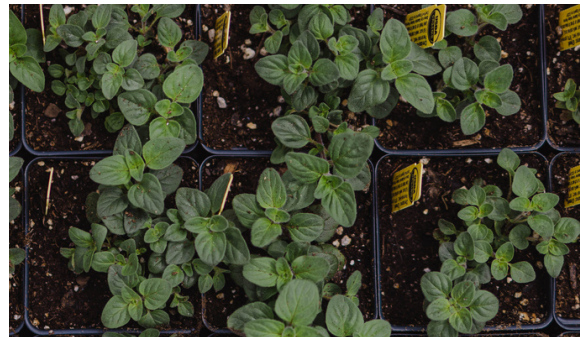
When you bring your plants home, you'll want to make sure they're well watered. Plant them as soon as the conditions are right.

I hope this guide helps you spend your hard-earned dollars wisely and fill your garden with healthy, happy plants that will give you harvest after harvest.

Love from my kitchen garden to yours,




Nicole Burke
Owner of Gardenary, Inc.



PLANTS THAT ARE ALWAYS WORTH YOUR MONEY

- ▶ Perennial herbs
- ▶ Biennials like parsley, kale, & Swiss chard
- ▶ Flowers in bulk





How to Buy Plants at the Nursery

Buy Large Plants

Large plants are those that will take up a lot of space in your garden (at least 1 square foot) and require **90 or more days** to grow to harvest. These plants tend to do best going into the garden as seedlings or small plants instead of seeds because of the length of time they need to grow. Here are some of the large plants you might consider buying each season.



Large Plants to Buy Each Season

COOL 35°-64°F	WARM 65° - 84°F	HOT >85°F
Broccoli Brussels Sprouts Cabbage Cauliflower Kale Kohlrabi Swiss Chard	Eggplant Peppers Squash Tomatoes Zucchini	Okra

WHAT NOT TO BUY

Plants that are smaller in size don't take as long to reach maturity and may do much better in your garden being direct sown from seed. You also don't want to buy root crops, which typically don't do well being moved once they've started growing.

DON'T BUY THESE:

- ⦿ Arugula
- ⦿ Lettuce
- ⦿ Spinach
- ⦿ Beets
- ⦿ Carrots
- ⦿ Radishes

LARGE DOES NOT MEAN MORE MATURE

You might be tempted to buy the more mature version of these plants so that they're already nice and big. You'll generally have better luck, however, if you buy a plant that's more moderately sized, something more like a tweenager than a grown adult.

Plants don't like being transplanted at any point, but it's better to move them before they're too mature. They'll be better at handling the stress of moving, and they also cost less money. So, whenever you have the option of buying the same plant at different stages, go with the smaller, younger version.

You also want to look for flowers that haven't bloomed yet. This is most important for annual plants since they have such short lifecycles. By the time they're blooming, they've shot their main shot, you know? You want to catch them before they're that far along so that you can enjoy them for longer.

This is also true for flowering vegetables. If you're looking to buy little tomato or pepper starts for your garden, pick plants that aren't flowering yet. If there are flowers, pinch them off so that the plants can focus on getting established in your garden before they try to bear fruits.

Buy Plants That Are in Season

Just because a plant is available for purchase doesn't mean your local weather is actually ideal for that plant to be growing right now. Big box stores *love* to set out tomatoes and cilantro together, even though these plants actually prefer two completely different growing seasons.

Do a little research to figure out which growing season you're in and which plants love to grow during that season. That way, you'll only be spending your money on plants that will thrive in your current temperatures. Here are some examples of plants that like to grow in each season.



WHAT NOT TO BUY

- ⦿ Don't buy cilantro when it's hot.
- ⦿ Don't buy tomatoes when there's still a chance of frost.
- ⦿ Don't buy warm season fruiting plants like tomatoes and peppers at the end of summer if you're getting close to your **first frost date**.

Buy Healthy Plants

Before you buy a plant, see if you can ease it out of its pot and check the roots. If you see roots wrapped round and round the bottom, the plant is root-bound and has probably been sitting on the shelf a little too long. Root-bound plants are often starved of nutrients and water. You also don't want to see brown roots. Roots should be nice and white and healthy-looking.

Then, check over the leaves. Yellowing or wilting leaves are signs the plant has been stressed from lack of water or nutrients and may need a while to recover. Be on the lookout for visible signs of disease, pests, and damage caused by pests (like holes in the leaves).

Lastly, check to make sure just one plant is growing in each nursery pot. If there's more than two to three plants growing in one pot, they're likely stressed out and fighting over resources. It's much better to have one healthy plant that's ready to grow to maturity than several struggling plants.



WHAT NOT TO BUY

- ⦿ Don't buy plants that are root-bound.
- ⦿ Don't buy plants with visible pests on them or with damaged, spotted, or yellowed leaves.
- ⦿ Don't buy plants that are crowded into pots unless you're prepared to separate them and really baby them over the next couple of weeks.

A person wearing a light-colored lace top is holding a black tray filled with various green herbs in small pots. The background shows a nursery or garden setting with wooden planters. A large green circle with a white border is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text.

How to Keep Your Plants Alive Once You Buy

3 Tips to Keep Your Plants Alive

Once you've picked the healthiest plants for your garden, get them home and under shade as quickly as possible. Here are three tips to help you settle your newly purchased plants into your garden in a way that will help them succeed.

▶ PLANT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

Get your plant babies planted in their new home as soon as possible (assuming the weather is right). Nurseries care for plants daily, but we can easily forget to do so when we get them home. The small pots those herbs, flowers, and veggies are currently in won't keep them happy for very long, so make it your goal to transfer your plants pronto.

▶ WATER DAILY FOR THE FIRST 2 WEEKS

Use the mist setting on your sprayer hose to gently water the plants in—a nice welcome home party. Make sure to aim your water at the roots of the plants, not at the leaves. Watering daily for the first couple of weeks helps the plants deal with the stress of moving.

▶ PRUNE

After planting, prune back any old, wilted, or damaged foliage. This takes some of the pressure off the plant following its big move. It'll have more energy to focus on developing stronger roots before it tries to send out new growth. Remember the Golden Rule of pruning: Never cut more than a third of a plant at one time.

By following these tips, may you never go plant shopping only to bring the plant home and watch it die again.

I hope this guide helps you fill your garden with plants that will give you so much joy and many harvests!



You're Invited to our Summer Garden Challenge

gardenary.com/workshop

Learn simple ways to discover your green thumb and start growing your own food.

*Thank you for being part of the
kitchen garden movement*

Gardenary's mission is to make
gardening an ordinary part of life for
everyone again through its unique
gardening systems and its personalized
approach.

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WWW.GARDENARY.COM TO
FIND MORE WAYS TO GROW
WITH US!**