

## TIPS FOR GROWING VEGETABLES

- Start with a small garden to avoid becoming overwhelmed
- Plan to spend 1-1½ hours working in the garden over the course of each week (*Divide time into 15-minute visits*)
- Grow vegetables that you and your family enjoy eating
- Choose high-producing vegetables to get the biggest harvest from your space
- Start as many plants from seed as possible to save costs
- Research intensive planting methods, like *succession planting*, *relay planting*, and *intercropping* to increase harvest
- Use fertilizers, like compost in your garden to encourage growth
- Cover your garden soil with a 2-3 inches of light mulch (*e.g. straw, shredded newspaper*) to help keep the soil moist between watering and suppress weeds
- Learn preservation methods, like freezing, canning, and drying to make enjoy your harvest for longer
- Use University of Minnesota Extension resources if you need help

**Disclaimer:** Individual results may vary. The Home Garden Productivity Study was not a peer-reviewed or rigorously-controlled study, and therefore cannot be considered scientifically valid. It is intended to provide guidance for home gardeners but does not guarantee garden performance.

## RESOURCES

- University of Minnesota Extension **Yard & Garden website**  
<https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden>
- University of Minnesota Extension **Growing Vegetables website**  
<https://extension.umn.edu/find-plants/vegetables>
- University of Minnesota Extension **Plant Problem Diagnostic website**  
<http://apps.extension.umn.edu/garden/diagnose/plant/>
- University of Minnesota Extension **Food Preservation website**  
<https://extension.umn.edu/how/using-your-harvest>
- University of Minnesota Extension **Ask A Master Gardener For Help**  
<https://extension.umn.edu/master-gardener/ask-master-gardener>
- **Hennepin County Master Gardeners**  
<http://hennepinmastergardeners.org/>
- **Ramsey County Master Gardeners**  
[www.ramseymastergardeners.org/](http://www.ramseymastergardeners.org/)

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# Growing Vegetables in Home Gardens

Setting Expectations for New Gardeners



MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**EXTENSION**



## GROW YOUR OWN AT HOME

Growing vegetables at home is a rewarding summer-time activity. While a home garden is unlikely to produce all of your recommended servings of vegetables for a year, vegetables grown at home and picked right before eating provide higher amounts of nutrition and offer the better flavors than counterparts purchased from a store.

Gardening has also been shown to help relieve stress & anxiety, lower blood pressure, increase vitamin D, and improve overall mental health. It is an excellent way to involve your whole family.

Gardening is a good way to reconnect with nature while producing tasty food to eat. Gardens create a healthy environment for you and the small living creatures - like native bees and butterflies - that need a home.

## SETTING EXPECTATIONS

### Garden Time Requirements

Vegetables garden grow from May to September. Plan to spend about **1-1 ½ hours each week** working in the garden. It will be less in the spring and fall, and more during the summer. The amount of time is easier to manage if you can spend about 15 minutes every day or every other day.

### Garden Costs

You will need to buy seeds and plants at the very least, and may also want to buy fertilizer, shovels, gloves, watering tools, and rent for community garden beds. It is not uncommon to spend **\$50-100 per year** for your garden. However, the value of vegetables grown can be over \$500!

### Garden Size & Location

You can grow in pots on a patio, dig a garden in your yard or rent a plot at a community garden. For your first garden, start small - try **100 square feet** - but make sure to pick a sunny location that gets **at least 8 hours** of sun each day.

### Choosing Vegetables

When possible, grow plants from seed to save costs. Buy seeds and plants from sellers with a good reputation.

- Choose vegetables that you love to eat
- Choose vegetables that are expensive to buy or hard to find
- Choose vegetables that produce a lot of food per plant
- Choose vegetables that are the right size for your garden space

## VEGETABLE HARVEST PER SQUARE FOOT

VEGETABLE	POUNDS	SERVINGS
Beet	0.62	3.32
Broccoli	0.54	2.68
Cabbage	0.88	5.72
Carrot	0.75	5.59
Cauliflower	0.26	1.10
Collard Greens	0.59	7.49
Cucumber	1.98	2.98
Eggplant	1.42	7.83
Green Beans	0.62	2.83
Kale	0.87	18.70
Kohlrabi	1.70	7.73
Leeks	0.40	2.05
Lettuce	0.41	5.11
Onion	0.59	2.42
Parsnips	0.44	1.48
Peas (Pods)	0.49	1.52
Peppers (Hot)	0.39	1.50
Pepper (Sweet)	0.62	2.38
Potatoes	0.65	1.39
Radish	0.43	1.67
Spinach	0.23	3.41
Summer Squash	2.02	4.69
Swiss Chard	1.22	15.37
Tomatoes	1.49	5.50
Winter Squash	1.08	4.21
Zucchini	2.94	6.80

*The amounts above were calculated using the total average harvest and the total average space used per crop. Serving size determined by MyPlate.gov and the USDA.*