

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA EXTENSION**  
MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MINNESOTA: ENVIRONMENT • FOOD & AGRICULTURE • COMMUNITIES • FAMILIES • YOUTH

## Introduction to Vegetable Gardening

**Introduction to Vegetable Gardening** is a 3-part series of classes to help beginning and intermediate vegetable gardeners expand their knowledge and improve their vegetable gardening skills. Whether you want to grow veggies in your yard, a raised bed, in containers or in a community garden plot, this workshop is filled with tips to help you reap the harvest and the satisfaction of "homegrown."

*Brought to you by the University of Minnesota Extension & Ramsey County Master Gardeners*

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## PART 1: PREPARING A GARDEN

- Benefits of growing food
- The needs of a garden
- Preparing your garden
- Garden tools



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5

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## Reasons to Grow Your Own

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**SAVE MONEY**



**\$3.99**  
10 oz



**\$3.99**  
192 oz

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7

**MORE OPTIONS**



Store



Seed Catalog

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8

**BETTER NUTRITION**

Vitamin  
Level



Time

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9

**DELICIOUS FOOD**



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10

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**REGULAR EXERCISE**



= 1.5 gallons  
= 12.5 pounds  
= Strong shoulders,  
back & legs



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11

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**PEACE OF MIND**

- Reduce anxiety & depression
- Increase happiness



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12

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**IT'S FUN**



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13

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**Making a Garden Grow**

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14

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**SUN**

- **Essential** for plant growth
  - Photosynthesis
  - Used to generate food for the plant
- Most vegetables need full sun
  - Full sun = **8+ hours** per day
  - Partial sun = **4-6 hours** per day
  - Shade = **<2 hours** per day



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15

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## WATER

- **Essential** for plant growth
  - Moves nutrients into & through plants
- Water in the morning
- Use clean water
- Apply to the roots; **NOT** the leaves
- Water deeply and as needed
  - Feel the soil (3+ inches down)
  - Count to 5


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16

## SOIL

- **Important** for plant growth
  - Supports roots
  - Provides nutrients
- Texture affects watering
  - Sandy = more frequent water
  - Clay = poor water drainage
- Structure can be improved with compost




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17

## COMPOST

- **Good** for plant growth
  - Improves soil structure (*air circulation & water penetration*)
  - Adds more nutrients
- Make your own OR
- Use Ramsey County compost
  - <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/recycling-waste/collection-sites/yard-waste>




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18

**PLANTS**

- Good for the **gardener**
- Recommendations
  - Grow what you like
  - Have a plan
    - Do I eat it fresh or cooked?
    - Can I preserve it? How do I store it?
    - What can I do with any extra?



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19



**Preparing Your Garden**

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20

**FIND A LOCATION**

- Full sun recommended
- Near water source
- Easy access
- Within sight



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21

**PICK A GARDEN TYPE**

- In-ground
- Raised beds
- Containers



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22

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**TYPES: IN-GROUND GARDENS**

- Benefits
  - Easy to start
  - Ground controls water & temperature
- Considerations
  - Unknown soil condition
  - More weeds
  - May require fencing



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23

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**TYPES: RAISED BEDS**

- Benefits
  - Minimal weeds
  - Ground controls water & temperature
- Considerations
  - Space restrictions
  - Need to build it
  - Need to fill it



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24

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**TYPES: CONTAINERS**

- Benefits
  - Can be moved with sun
  - Can be moved to avoid frost
  - No weeds
- Considerations
  - Need more frequent watering
  - Needs regular fertilizing
  - Susceptible to temperature changes



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25

**GARDEN DESIGN BASICS**

- Start small
- Dimensions
  - Keep 10+ feet away from homes
  - Arrange beds east-to-west
  - 3-4 feet wide beds
  - 2-foot wide paths
  - Research **mature** size of vegetable



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26

**SOIL IMPROVEMENTS**

- Test your soil
- If necessary
  - Add new soil
  - Add compost & amendments
  - Till new in-ground gardens\*

\* Avoid over-tilling established gardens



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27





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**GARDEN TOOLS**

- Garden shovel & trowel
- Gloves (Cotton, Leather, Nitrile-coated)
- Other tools
  - Watering tools
  - Bucket
  - Garden fork & hoe
  - Pruning shears

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29

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**CARING FOR GARDEN TOOLS**

- During the season
  - Remove dirt & plant material
  - Allow to dry before next use
- At the end of the season
  - Sanitize with 1:10 bleach solution
  - Sharpen shears & shovels
  - Store in a clean location

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30

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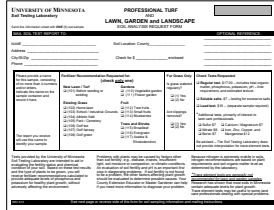
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### SOIL TEST

<http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu/> (\$17)

- Learn about your garden soil
  - Texture
  - Structure
  - Nutrient levels
  - pH
  - Recommendations to improve soil conditions



31

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### OTHER USEFUL TOOLS

- Support structures
- Fences
- Kitchen equipment
- Record-keeping tools
- Learning tools
  - Books & catalogs
  - Websites & user groups



32

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### CLASS RECAP

- Find the sunniest location possible
- Pick a garden style that works for you
- Buy & care for your garden tools
- Consider testing your soil



33

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## GARDEN RESOURCES

- U of MN Extension:
  - <https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden>
- Ramsey County Diagnostic Clinic:
  - <http://www.ramseymastergardeners.org/index.php/events/diagnostic-clinic>
- Ask An Expert Hotline:
  - <http://www.extension.umn.edu/garden/ask/>
- Ramsey County Yard Waste Sites:
  - <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/recycling-waste/collection-sites/yard-waste>
- U of MN Soil Test Services:
  - <http://soiltest.cfans.umn.edu/>



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