

United Way
Pantry Partners

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GARDENING GUIDE



HOW TO GROW A VEGGIE GARDEN

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**United Way
of Northern New Jersey**

UnitedWayNNJ.org/PantryPartners

LIVE UNITED



INTRODUCTION

Fresh fruits and vegetables are essential to a healthy life. Unfortunately, the high cost of these items often makes them a less viable options for many families living in our communities. **United Way Pantry Partners** is working to change that by ensuring everyone in our communities has access to healthy food options, especially fresh produce.

This simple how-to-garden guide will show you how to start your own vegetable garden which will provide you with fresh vegetables throughout the summer and early fall. And if you don't think you have the space, we want you to know that vegetables can be grown anywhere there is sunlight, including indoors!



10 REASONS TO GROW YOUR OWN VEGETABLES:

1. **Taste great** – fresh-picked fruits and vegetables are flavorful and delicious
2. **Cost less*** – 80 to 90 percent less than store-bought produce
3. **More nutritious** – food begins to lose nutrients immediately after picking
4. **Safer to eat** – no pesticides, chemical fertilizers, or preservatives
5. **Good for the environment** – avoids pollutants from transporting food
6. **Fun outdoor activity** – great opportunity for family and friends
7. **Educational opportunity** – kids can learn how things grow and experience how delicious healthy foods can be
8. **Convenient meals** – just grab something from your garden rather than making a trip to the store
9. **Beautiful landscape** – just as pretty as a flower garden and more productive
10. **And can be shared with others** – you will be surprised by how much a garden can yield...plenty to share with friends and neighbors or to donate to a local food pantry

**According to a survey by the National Gardening Association in 2009, the average person spends \$70 on a food garden each year. A typical garden can produce more than 300 pounds of produce.*

7 STEPS TO GROWING A GARDEN

- 1 PICK A SUNNY SPOT**
- 2 DECIDE WHAT TO PLANT**
- 3 MAKE A SHOPPING LIST**
- 4 IMPROVE THE SOIL**
- 5 PLANT THE GARDEN**
- 6 WATER, WEED, & FEED**
- 7 PICK VEGGIES & ENJOY!**



STEP 1: PICK A SUNNY SPOT

You can grow vegetables just about anywhere there is sunlight.

WHERE IS THE BEST PLACE TO PLANT A GARDEN?

A garden only needs a few simple things:

- **Sunlight** – at least 6 hours each day
- **Good soil** – best to plant away from trees and shrubs
- **Water** – either reachable with a hose or easy to use a watering can

HOW MUCH SPACE IS NEEDED?

It depends on what you grow. A first-time gardener should start small. A 4 foot by 4 foot (4x4) area works well and you can always expand the garden later. The garden area can be any shape – just make sure you can reach in (about 2 feet) to get the veggies. Decide the right garden size for you after you consider what you want to grow.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE A YARD?

A garden can be planted almost anywhere. Here are a few ideas:

- **On the porch or front steps** – a pot, wood crate, or well-cleaned bucket will all work
- **On a window ledge** – as long as there is a lot of sun
- **Hanging from the ceiling** – tomato and strawberry plants work best (easy kits are available at home and gardening stores)



Quick Tip: *If you are creating an in-ground garden next to a building constructed before 1978, contact your Rutgers Cooperative Extension County Office to ask about purchasing a lead screening test kit. For links and more information about soil testing, go to <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/soiltestinglab/services.asp>.*

STEP 2: DECIDE WHAT TO PLANT

WHAT DO YOU LIKE TO EAT?

That's a great starting point for deciding what to grow, but some vegetables are harder to grow than others. Try to start with these plants:

- Beans
- Eggplant
- Leaf lettuce
- Radishes
- Beets
- Herbs like basil, parsley, etc.
- Peppers
- Tomatoes

If you have limited space, avoid the “space hogs” like squash, melon, and pumpkins, which need a lot of room to grow.



Quick tip: Plant marigolds close to tomatoes to repel nematodes (pests that can attack tomato plant roots). Marigolds can also be helpful to deter other insects harmful to vegetable plants.

WHEN SHOULD A GARDEN BE PLANTED?

You can plant vegetables in the spring to harvest throughout the summer and fall. Then plant a second crop in the fall of vegetables that grow well in cooler weather.

Start with seeds or small plants (seedlings) based on the timing indicated here:

TYPE	PLANT BY JUNE 30	PLANT AUGUST 1-15
Basil	small plant	n/a
Beans (bush)	seed or small plant	n/a
Beets	seed	seed
Broccoli	n/a	small plant
Cabbage	n/a	seed or small plant
Eggplant	small plant	n/a
Leaf lettuce	*	seed or small plant
Parsley	small plant	n/a
Peppers	small plant	n/a
Radishes	seed	seed
Spinach	*	seed or small plant
Tomatoes	small plant	n/a

*Note: Lettuce and spinach develop seed heads and become bitter in hot weather; plant them in early spring and/or closer to fall.

STEP 2 (CONTINUED)

HOW MUCH SPACE IS NEEDED FOR EACH VEGETABLE?

Each vegetable requires a different amount of space to grow well. Refer to this list of the common vegetables and the amount you can plant in a 1-foot-square area.

















Quick tip: Don't follow the instructions on seed packets – they're geared toward large row gardens in rural areas.

LARGE PLANTS	MEDIUM PLANTS	SMALL PLANTS	XSMALL PLANTS
1 PLANT/SQ. FT	4 PLANTS/SQ. FT	9 PLANTS/SQ. FT	16 PLANT/SQ. FT
Broccoli	Basil	Beets	Carrots
Cabbage	Corn	Beans (bush)	Onions
Cauliflower	Leaf Lettuce	Spinach	Radishes
Cucumber	Marigold		
Eggplant	Parsley		
Okra	Potato		
Pepper	Strawberry		
Tomato	Turnip		

IS THERE A TRICK TO MAXIMIZING THE SPACE?

Think about your garden in square feet. You can even create a visual grid by laying string on the ground. For example, if you have a 4 foot by 4 foot section of your garden, divide it into 16 equal squares (each section is 1 square foot). Each square will have a different number of plants, depending on what you're growing.

Here is a sample starter plan for a 4 foot by 4 foot garden you can plant in June in New Jersey:

 Tomato (1)	 Tomato (1)	 Tomato (1)	 Tomato (1)
 Pepper (1)	 Pepper (1)	 Pepper (1)	 Eggplant (1)
 Parsley (4)	 Green bean (9)	 Green bean (9)	 Basil (4)
 Marigold (4)	 Beet (9)	 Radish (16)	 Marigold (4)

STEP 3: MAKE A SHOPPING LIST

WHAT DO I NEED FOR THE SAMPLE 4X4 GARDEN PLAN?

Here are the very basic items you will need to plant your garden:

- **Plants:** tomato (grape and cherry tomatoes are easiest), pepper, eggplant, basil, parsley, marigolds
- **Seeds:** bush green beans, beets, radishes
- **Peat Moss:** 1 large bag
- **Organic, composted manure:** 2 to 3 bags
- **Organic fertilizer** (e.g., PlanTone)

Quick tip: All of the above is available at local home and garden centers

WHAT ELSE MIGHT BE NEEDED FOR MY GARDEN?

While not essential, the following items will make gardening easier and possibly more enjoyable:

- **Raised bed frames or edging** to define the area and hold the dirt in place (as simple as a piece of wood held in place by stones)
- **Shovels** (a large, long-handled shovel also known as a spade, and a hand trowel)
- **Paper bags for garden refuse** (if your town requires bags for pick-up)
- **Garden gloves** with plastic on the finger tips
- **Watering can or hose** with sprinkle/shower nozzle
- **Plant stakes** to support peppers (e.g., a bag of 3 foot bamboo stakes)
- **Cages/supports** for tomatoes (necessary if planting tomatoes)

Quick Tip: Prepare the area first, and then buy the plants. The plants dry out quickly in small containers before they're in the ground.



STEP 4: IMPROVE THE SOIL

It is possible to just put plants in the existing soil and let them grow. However, for better results, it's a good idea to improve the soil first. The simplest way to do that is to add some peat moss and composted manure (equal parts). These are both sold at home and garden centers.

Optional: Soil Moist or vermiculite is a little expensive, but is a great addition to the mixture as it helps retain moisture in the soil. One bag will go a long way. They are sold at specialized garden centers.

HOW DO I PREPARE THE AREA FOR MY GARDEN?

- Clear the area of any grass or unwanted plants.
- Use a spade to loosen the soil, creating a welcoming environment for the deep roots of your vegetable plants.
- If you're framing the area to create a raised bed (e.g., with wood or stones), place the material around the area.
- Mix equal parts (50/50) peat moss and manure. You can do it in a wheel barrow, on a large sheet of plastic, or right on the ground. The goal is to have at least 3 inches (and ideally up to 6 inches) of this rich mixture on top of your soil.

Quick tip: If you are mixing the vegetables within a flower bed, just mix some organic manure/peat moss into the soil where you are going to plant veggies.



STEP 5: PLANT THE GARDEN

Planting is so much fun! And it's great to get the kids involved whether you're working with seeds or with plants.

FOR SMALL PLANTS:

1. Dig a hole a little bigger than your plant.
2. Squeeze the bottom of the container to push the plant out, trying not to disturb the roots.
3. Place the plant in the hole and gather the dirt around it.
4. Press down slightly near the base of the plant to make it feel snug in the ground. Be careful not to push on the stem.



FOR SEEDS:

1. Check the seed packet for depth (but refer to the details in this guide for spacing).
2. Use your finger to poke holes in the loose dirt.
3. Place 2 to 3 seeds in each hole (to safely get 1 strong plant from each).
4. Gently cover the holes with the loose dirt.
5. Close and store the seed packet to use again later.

Quick tip: Gently fertilize (*PlanTone* or other) and water your new garden right after you plant. They'll thank you for a good soaking.



MARK YOUR PLOT

For plants and seeds, it's helpful to add tags so you can keep track of everything. You can use the tags in the containers for plants purchased. Use whatever you have for the seeds – e.g., popsicle sticks, the back of extra plastic plant tags, etc.

STEP 6: WATER, WEED, & FEED

Plants need regular water to survive and thrive. The best advice is to pay close attention to your plants. Different types of vegetables, soil conditions, and atmosphere make the watering needs unique.

HOW MUCH AND HOW OFTEN SHOULD I WATER MY GARDEN?

When – Water before 11:00am or between 4:00pm and 7:00pm. Mornings are best so plants can dry before nighttime to help avoid disease.

How often – It depends on how hot it is and how much it has rained. Check how dry the soil is by putting your finger in a few inches. If it's dry to your touch, it's time to water. Some special situations requiring more water:

- Water newly planted seeds and transplants frequently.
- Water every day during sweltering heat.

How to water – Focus on watering the roots of most plants. Lettuce and other leafy greens prefer to be misted on the leaves, but it's better to water the roots of other plants. Be gentle – use a shower spray nozzle on a hose to avoid blasting soil away from young seedlings.

Quick tip: *For plants in containers outside, add water until it runs out of the bottom. Plants in containers require watering more often – as much as daily.*



HOW OFTEN SHOULD I FEED AND WEED MY GARDEN?

Feed – Continue to add organic fertilizer at regular intervals, following the instructions on the product you have.

Weed – Be sure to pull weeds regularly. Weeds can steal water, light, and nutrients from vegetables and can lead to more insects or disease. They're easiest to pull when the ground is wet, so you're sure to remove the root and not just the tops.

STEP 7: PICK VEGGIES & ENJOY!

TIME TO EAT!

Pick vegetables when they are young and tender for best taste. For the vegetables growing under the ground, mark when the seeds were planted and note on the packet how long they take to mature. Below are some tips for picking select vegetables featured in this guide.

Basil – Pick leaves from the top of the plant as you need them. For a larger quantity, cut the plant down to about one-third of its height. If you see buds/flowers, pick them off.

Beans – Look for beans that are firm, green, and smooth (not lumpy or wrinkly). Snap the bean off the plant just below where the stem attaches to the bean if you are using the beans that day. If not, break off the bean along the thin stem that connects it to the plant.

Beets – Beets are ready any time after you see the top of the dark red beet sticking out of the soil. For sweeter beets, pick on the smaller side – about 1.5 to 3 inches diameter.

Broccoli – Pick heads while they are green, before the buds start to open into flowers. If you see little yellow flower petals, harvest right away. Cut the stem a few inches below the head.

Eggplant – Slightly immature fruits taste best. The eggplants should be firm and shiny. Cut rather than pulling from the plant.

Leaf lettuce – Pick as soon as the leaves are 4 to 5 inches. Pick outer leaves or cut the entire plant off about 1 inch above the ground. The plant will grow again and provide more leaves in another 3 to 5 weeks.

Peas – Pick when the pods are plump and starting to look bumpy. Peas are sweeter if harvested before fully plumped. Cut the vine or use two hands to harvest.

Peppers – Pick when they are shiny and firm to the touch and to their intended color. Use shears or scissors to cut them from the plant. Pulling may damage your plant.

Radishes – Radishes can be ready to eat in as few as 21 days! It's best to pick on the smaller side – about 1 inch diameter. Pull them straight up to avoid disturbing other plants.

Tomatoes – Harvest tomatoes when they are fully colored and slightly soft to the touch. Gently twist and pull from the vine.

Quick Tip: *Harvesting vegetables in the morning is best!*



SHARE THE BOUNTY

Donate extra fresh vegetables from your home gardens to local food pantries and soup kitchens. This extra produce can provide healthy food for those in need in our community. Or you can even “plant an extra row,” to donate and help your neighbors in need eat in good health!

OTHER WAYS TO ENJOY HEALTHY FOODS WITH YOUR COMMUNITY.

United Way *Pantry Partners* recommends a variety of other ways you can help to promote the benefits of eating a healthy diet and increase access to healthy foods.

1. **Hold a healthy food and produce drive** in support of your local food pantry or soup kitchen. This is a great volunteer opportunity for your congregation, club, family, neighborhood, or school. Drives can be held at supermarkets, grocery stores, farmers’ markets, block parties, festivals, and other community events.
2. **Spread the word about SNAP (Food Stamps).** Many people who are eligible don’t know it. For more information on eligibility or to get help with the SNAP application in our North Essex communities, call 973.746.4235. Otherwise, please contact: NJ Anti-Hunger Coalition, 201.569.1804, x21.
3. **Celebrate Food Day.** On October 24, United Way *Pantry Partners* participates in this national day of action in support of healthy food access. Go to UnitedWayNNJ.org/PantryPartners for more information.

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Gardening is unlocked very early on in Three Houses - keep an eye out for Dedue in Chapter 1, as he'll give you the side quest called Green Thumb Beginnings . This quest is basically a mini tutorial for using the greenhouse for the gardening mini-game - and once unlocked, it should become a staple of your time in Fire Emblem: Three Houses.Â Check out our gifts and flowers guide for an idea of what flower you should be giving to each of the cast. The latest Tweets from Gardening Guide (@GardeningGuide). I'm Jane, vegetable grower from family of gardeners, enthusiastic gardener and dedicated garden writer. I encourage families to grow food in their own gardens. Garden.