

# Garden Fresh



*How to Plant, Grow, Eat, Enjoy*



# What makes a great garden?



George Ball and his black lab Nathan.

Dear Burpee Gardener,

Some have correctly called today's explosion of interest in home gardening "a perfect storm." The diverse trends coming together in recent years include: aging Baby Boomers entering their prime gardening years; folks becoming more conscious of health and nutrition; the food scares of the past decade causing folks to want to "grow their own"; the awakening concern for the natural environment; the desire for an active family hobby that is both close to home and inexpensive; the need to tighten up the household budget; and, last but not least, the incomparable satisfaction—to the eyes as well as the taste buds—one feels by growing a home garden.

Almost every traditional New Year's resolution can be fulfilled by growing a vegetable garden, from exercise to fresh air to "chilling out." These are earthly pleasures money cannot buy.

Surely, there is always a cost to such a good thing as a garden. However, in gardening, the work is part of the pleasure. Lots of folks ask me, "What makes a gardener successful?" To which I always respond, "They love plants." Gardening is very similar to knitting and sewing. The journey is half the fun.

In the case of Burpee Home Gardens plants, they are a cut above the rest—like Thoroughbreds in a horse race. You will be enormously pleased with their harvests.

At other times, folks ask, "What makes a really great garden?" and I reply, "Optimizing your conditions." If that sounds odd, please bear with me. It is important that the site of your garden—especially vegetables—be sunny and as close to the house as possible. Most vegetables are a function of heat and light, and the closer to the house, the fewer the predators. It is also essential that your soil is garden-ready; it should be loose, well-drained, clean of weeds and disease, and include organic matter appropriate to the particular vegetables and herbs you wish to grow.

If you get confused or feel in a jam, this helpful guide is a great place to start. Or ask a neighbor. Nothing appeals to veteran gardeners quite as much as being asked for advice. Gardeners love to talk about gardening. Plus, it builds a sense of community, which is as vital as organic matter—and doesn't smell as bad!

Gardening on a spot of sunny ground involves the "optimization of conditions." The garden has become a member of the family. Whether it is a few tubs of tomato and pepper plants or a White House—like thousand square-footer, the more you put into it, the more—and the tastier—you get out.

Happy Gardening,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George".

**George Ball**  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, W. Atlee Burpee Co.



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# Planning your vegetable garden



## Top 5 Reasons to Plant a Vegetable Garden

5. Healthy food for you and your family.
4. Save money.
3. Share harvest with friends and neighbors.
2. Home-grown produce tastes better!
1. Fun project for kids of all ages.

### Planning your garden space

A home garden is one of those things that's uniquely yours. Whether it's the baskets of fresh produce you harvest or the satisfaction of seeing the reddest, ripest tomatoes that came from your own patio, growing your own vegetables and herbs is a fun activity that teaches skills to last a lifetime.

Like any home project you undertake, growing a vegetable garden requires work, but by learning a few basic skills and techniques, you can really make it a fun experience. Here are some tips and tricks for your healthy and productive garden.

### Start small & sunny

When deciding how big an area to prepare, consider your own skill level and how much time you want to spend in the garden. A common mistake that can really put a damper on your success is planning an area that's way too large to maintain. Once you've had success in your first attempt with a small garden, expand it next year. Start with an area about 6 feet by 8 feet and a couple of large containers and take it from there.

If nothing else, pick a spot with as much sun as possible. That means at least six hours per day—six to 12 is ideal. Remember that no matter where you live you'll have to water your vegetable and herb garden and containers, so keep that in mind when choosing the location of your garden. The closer you can get to a water spigot, the better. You'll thank yourself in the middle of summer.

### The necessary tools

Most projects will require a round point garden **shovel** to dig into the ground and break up the soil, as well as for scooping soil, compost and other materials. It's a good tool to have. Digging in heavy clay or in areas with stones might require a metal pitchfork for digging and lifting.

A standard **hoe** with a 4 or 6 in. (10 to 15 cm) blade will be your best bet for loosening soil and weeding in your garden. When using a hoe, let the tool do the work for you. Lift it and let the blade come down into the soil. Then simply pull back to loosen the dirt.

A **hand trowel** is used for planting and maintaining just about every plant in your garden. Use your trowel to dig holes for planting and for loosening soil or weeding. A good pair of **hand pruners** will improve your gardening experience more than you'll ever know.

### You'll also need ...

Remember, you don't have to buy all of your supplies ahead of time. You'll no doubt make a few more trips back to the local garden center before harvest time. But to get started, here are a few necessities.

It's always a good idea to grab a big bag of potting soil to add when planting. Depending on your soil, you might need a few bags. Potting soil amends compacted soil and clay and helps plants take root. Compost and peat moss are also available at most garden centers, providing an organic boost and improving soil during planting. It's important to add more organic matter, like compost, each year to keep your soil healthy.



# What in the world to grow?

From Brussels sprouts and Hungarian wax peppers to Italian parsley and Thai basil, your garden can sprout a veritable world of tasty goodness ... but how do you choose?

## Grow what you love to eat!

If there's any rule of vegetable gardening (and there isn't, so relax), it's that it's more fun to grow things you and your family enjoy eating. So to get started, compile a list of the veggies and herbs you'd love to enjoy fresh from your own garden. An easy way to do this is to think in terms of meals:

**Salads**—Lettuce, tomato and cucumber are the foundation of a good salad; onion and green pepper will add some zip.

**Side dishes**—These are your main cooking veggies, such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage.

**Regional favorites**—Love southern food? How about some okra and collard greens? Italian food? Plum tomatoes, basil and eggplant.

**Special recipes**—Is bruschetta your all-time favorite hors d'oeuvre? Plant plenty of tomatoes and basil. Green bean almondine is that much better with your own Blue Lake bush beans.

**Of-used herbs**—Think about the dried herbs you use and try growing fresh ones instead. A few options: parsley (for recipes and garnish), basil (for tomato-based dishes and pesto), thyme and sage (for French bouquet garni), cilantro (for salsa and guacamole) and dill (for salads, dips and fish).

Along with your favorites, you should try a new veggie and herb each season, just to expand you and your family's horizons in both flavor and gardening. Even if you don't like it, your neighbors might!

## How much to grow?

Like selecting varieties, quantity is based on personal preference and need. But here are some guidelines to get you started. Some rules of thumb to feed two to three people:

Tomatoes:	3-4 plants of several varieties
Cucumbers:	1-3 plants
Cauliflower, broccoli:	2-4 plants
Lettuce & spinach:	2-4 ft. row
Carrots & radish:	2-4 ft. row
Bush beans:	4 ft. row
Pole beans:	3 plants for each pole
Peppers:	1-2 plants each of 3-4 varieties
Squash, zucchini:	2-4 plants total
Melons, pumpkins:	1 plant per variety

## Top 5 Vegetable Garden Favorites:

- Tomatoes
- Cucumbers
- Zucchini
- Peppers
- Squash

## Top 5 Herbs for Healthy Cooking:

- Parsley
- Basil
- Oregano
- Thyme
- Sage





### A garden for all seasons

A home vegetable garden evolves with the seasons, from the cool of spring to the heat of summer and back to the cool of fall (that's in northern climates; in warm climates you get the warmth of spring and fall, the intense heat of summer and the cool of winter). That means three or even four opportunities for planting different crops, giving you maximum production from your garden space.

But when do you plant what? That's based on the crop.

**Cool-season crops:** Lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, peas. These can go in the ground as soon as it's warm enough to work the soil. They like cool temperatures and can even take a tiny bit of frost. They'll be ready for harvest before the days get warm—lettuce grows so quickly you can harvest in just a few weeks and keep harvesting for a month or more. In the South, plant these in the late fall for all-winter harvest.

**Warm-season crops:** Tomatoes, peppers, beans, eggplant, squash, melons, onions, herbs.

Plant these when danger of frost is past. They like warm to hot temperatures and need several months (50 to 90 days) to mature (except herbs, which can be harvested as soon as they have mature leaves to pick). In the South, these warm-season crops do well in the fall, winter and spring, but a frost will nip them back or kill them.

**Hot-season crops:** Summer crops that can tolerate a hot southern summer include okra and collard greens. Most warm-season crops can take some southern heat, although it's harder to keep them watered. Also, tomatoes stop bearing fruit during periods of high day and night temperatures.



# Dig in!—Building your garden



Enough planning—it's time to have some fun and get your hands dirty. The first thing to do is pick a spot for your vegetable garden. It needs to be reasonably level, in a sunny spot (six to 12 hours of full sun each day), with no tree roots to have to cut through, and located near enough to your house to make it easy to care for and water your plants. No yard space? You can just as easily garden in containers.



**Layout:** A tape measure, four thin stakes and a piece of string will suffice to outline your garden. Any size will do but 6 ft. by 8 ft. or 10 ft. by 10 ft. (100 sq. ft.) is a fine starting point for a small garden. Once you have your size set, use white spray paint to mark the where your string lines are for digging.

**Dig in:** Remove the string and, using a sharp, square-edged shovel, cut along your painted line, going down 4 to 5 inches. Moist ground will be easier to dig than dry, so you may want to dig just after a rain—or water your garden location the night before.

**Remove the sod:** Next, use the shovel to cut the turf into strips, and then cut the strips into easy-to-handle squares. Force your shovel under each square and lift. You can discard the sod or use it to fill in bare spots on your lawn.

**Loosen the soil:** With the sod removed, use a shovel to loosen the soil to a depth of 8 to 10 inches. A rototiller makes this job a breeze; rent or borrow one ... or use a shovel and just enjoy the exercise! This is also the time to decide if your soil could use some amending with compost or other organic matter (most yard soils can).

**Level it out:** With a rake, level the now-loose soil, being careful not to pack it down with your feet. Pick out any rocks, roots and weeds. Create a 1 ft. wide walkway down the center to allow easy access to the garden.

**Fertilize:** You can begin now to “top-dress” with granular fertilizer. Spread a few handfuls of granular fertilizer over the areas you’re about to plant, then use a rake to work it into the soil.

**Let’s plant:** Okay, now’s the time to decide what goes where. Tall plants and staked plants should be on the north side, so they won’t shade shorter plants. Use the spacing guidelines on the tag or seed pack to determine how far apart they should go. Don’t worry if you’re a few inches off—plants can’t read a yardstick.

**Water in:** Give your new garden a gentle but thorough watering as soon as possible after planting, so your young plants won’t wilt.

**Stake the plants:** Within a few days to a few weeks, you can begin staking those plants that will need it, such as tomatoes and pole beans. (See page 12 for more information on staking.)



Dig in!



Remove sod



Turn the soil



Level



Time to plant



Stake

# H<sub>2</sub>O & fertilizer

Pay special attention to this page of the book because it covers the two most important things you'll provide to your new vegetable garden.



**Note: Tomatoes are especially sensitive to water extremes.** Very wet and then very dry conditions can cause blossom end rot, where the bottoms of the tomatoes turn black. Also, sudden heavy watering—even heavy rains—will cause some tomatoes to split. Some cherry tomato varieties are susceptible to this.

## Water

Your plants will grow in most any sort of soil, whether sand or clay. And they can even manage to grow and produce (although not to their optimum) on whatever nutrients are in the soil. But without water, they'll die. So the first key is making sure you have a good supply of water close at hand. Ideally, you'll have a hose bib (faucet) within just a few steps of your garden so you can easily hand-water or set up a sprinkler once a week for a thorough watering.

How often and how much? The optimum is 1 inch of water per week. Which, of course, is hard to measure. So the best rule of thumb is to water your entire garden thoroughly about once a week, letting it get just a little bit dry between waterings. During rainy times you might not have to water for several weeks.

Try not to let your garden get so dry that your plants wilt. It won't kill them, but it will impact their health and harvest. And do not drown your garden with water. Too much water will suffocate the roots and cause the plants to rot.

## Two keys to watering:

- 1. Try to water the roots, not the foliage.** It's tempting to give plants a "shower bath," but wet foliage is of little benefit to the plant. For the same reason ...
- 2. Try to water in the morning.** That will ensure that the plant's root zone has plenty of moisture for the heat of the day. If you water in the evening, the plants could stay wet overnight, which could lead to diseases.

## Fertilizer

Before they can be eaten, plants gotta eat! Good plant food will help your plants grow to their maximum size and will provide the nutrients necessary for proper fruiting. Thankfully, vegetables for the most part are not picky eaters, and any good commercial plant food, whether in granular or liquid form, will suffice. You can buy special "tomato food" for your tomatoes if you like; it tends to contain slightly higher levels of phosphorus and potassium (the "P" and "K" of the formulation) than nitrogen ("N"). It's fine to use on all your veggies. But most any garden fertilizer, whether organic or not, will be fine—every gardener has his or her favorite.

The key with fertilizer is applying it regularly. Many gardeners put out a good first application ... and then forget to feed again. Irrigation and rain will wash away granular fertilizer in a few weeks, so you need to apply it at planting and again every few weeks through the growing season.

Liquid fertilizers should be applied at every other watering, as they don't last in the soil. Many gardeners use a combination of granular and liquid fertilizer. Whatever you use is fine, as long as you follow the label for amounts and frequency.

## Note:

### What about organic fertilizers?

By all means, use an organic fertilizer if it suits your style. Whether or not organics are better than traditional fertilizers is more a matter of opinion than science, but that's okay—there is no right or wrong way to garden, as long as you're having fun!

# Protect your investment



## Old-school Tip: Marigolds

For years, gardeners have planted marigolds around vegetable gardens to repel insects and deter small invaders. It's worth a try. Pick up a flat of marigolds when buying your vegetables and maybe you'll become a believer.

Don't be fooled by their cute smiles and playful nature; all sorts of small animals and birds will eat your tomatoes faster than you can say salsa verde. Not to mention all the bugs that love to nibble the leaves of anything you plant.

Keeping pests out of your garden doesn't have to be a full-time job if you try a few of these time-tested tricks. Here are some simple tips for getting your vegetables off to a strong start and protecting them throughout the season.

## Start early

As soon as the threat of frost has passed, it's safe to plant most vegetables. Get started clearing out your garden space and working your soil because the sooner you get plants established, the stronger and more resistant they'll be. Fertilize with slow-release or natural fertilizer when planting and make sure to water your young plants well. You can add compost throughout the season for continued feeding.

## Keep it clean

Slugs, snails and other crawling pests love to hide in grass and leaves, emerging to eat your vegetables when you aren't looking. Using a weed barrier when planting will help keep your garden area clear of weeds, but you should be able to weed by hand with no problem. Do not use any type of spray weed killer near your veggies and herbs, as the spray can kill the plants you want as well as those you don't.

## Protect your tomatoes

Two garden-tested tips for gardeners growing tomatoes are mulching and staking. A

1 in. layer of hardwood mulch around your tomato plants serves many purposes, from water retention and insect prevention to reducing rotten fruit and eliminating weeds. And when planting, be sure to plan for staking or install a cage so you don't damage your plants by attempting to add supports later in the season. Stakes and cages keep your plants upright, increasing airflow and reducing disease.

## Rabbits, deer: Install wire netting

Galvanized wire fencing is available at your local hardware store and can be used to enclose your garden area, protecting veggies and herbs from rabbits and deer. If deer are not a problem, 3 ft. tall fencing is sufficient. For deer protection, use a 5 ft. fence. Secure it on all sides with stakes placed three to five feet apart.

## Birds: Make a scarecrow

Farmers used them for years to keep birds out of fields. Scarecrows can certainly keep birds out of your garden. Get creative! You'll need a long stake or pole, bright-colored clothing, a staple gun, twine or thin rope, straw or fiberfill, gloves and a funny hat. Once you've attached the scarecrow to the pole, mount it securely in or near your garden. Be sure to move it every couple days to keep the birds guessing.

# Trellises, stakes and cages

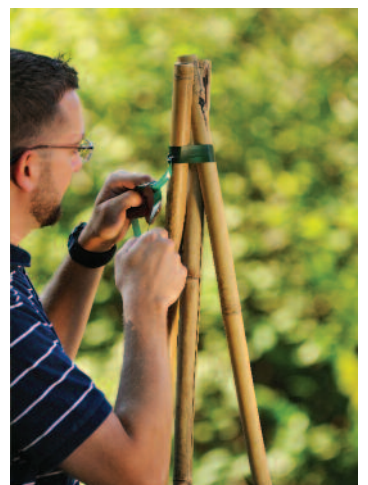
With plenty of sunshine, water, plant food and TLC, your small seedlings will soon overrun your vegetable patch and each other. That's why you need to provide them with some structure and support.

- Low-growing plants like lettuce, cabbage, squash, broccoli and herbs don't need any support—just let them do their thing.
- Bush-type plants—bush tomatoes, bush beans, peppers and eggplant, for instance—may be just fine, but they may also like a stake or small trellis to help protect them from wind damage and to support them when they're weighed down with fresh veggies.
- Vining vegetables with heavy fruit, such as melons, pumpkins and squash, are most often left to trail across the ground, which is why we give them plenty of space.

It's the vigorous vining plants—indeterminate tomatoes, cucumbers and pole beans—that benefit most from a good support structure ... and this is where your creativity can run wild! Your veggies will grow on anything you provide, whether store-bought or found in nature. Your stakes can be strictly utilitarian or works of garden art. In fact, too often gardeners miss the decorative aspects of their garden stakes and trellises. So go ahead—we give you license to get crazy in the garden.

## A few staking rules:

- **Go big!** Thin, wimpy stakes will bend or break under a heavy load. Thicker and stronger are better. (We like 4x4 in. posts topped with decorative finials for our tomatoes; we leave them in the garden year round.)
- **Go deep!** Try to sink your stakes into the soil at least 1/4 of their length; hence, a 4 ft. stake should be buried 12 inches. Consider that when buying or making stakes.
- **Go natural.** We love seeing tree branches recycled into garden supports. They blend into the landscape beautifully and lend a natural look. Of course, if you love pink, don't be afraid to paint your stakes pink! It's your garden, remember?
- **Tie them up.** A few plants, such as cucumbers, have tendrils that grab on to the stakes—little or no tying necessary. Everything else will need some help.
- **Tie loosely.** Use stretchy plastic tie material designed for the purpose, or use garden twine, raffia or other natural materials. Just try not to tie too tightly or the plant's stem won't be able to expand as it grows.



# Tips and tricks

Gardening is a little bit of science, a little bit of art and a little bit of luck. Here are 10 tried-and-true tricks from those who've been doing it a while.



## Consider raised beds

Rather than dig a garden, why not raise one? Make a frame from 2 x 10 in. (or similar) lumber and fill it with good garden soil. It's easier than digging out sod; plus you can move it, you can make it decorative...it also can help bring the garden up to a easy working height. Try four 4-ft. squares arranged in a cluster or line.

## Plant your tomatoes deep

Tomatoes are one of the few plants that benefit from being planted deeper than they were in the original pot. Plant your tomato in a hole or trench, leaving just the top two inches exposed, and you'll grow a stronger, sturdier plant. (Warning: don't try this with anything other than tomatoes or you may rot them.)

## Reuse branches as plant supports

Next time you prune bushes or trees, save some long, straight (or artfully curved) branches to use as supports for vines and climbers, such as beans and peas. They lend a natural look to your garden.

## Pull weeds early and often

Every morning, bring your cup of coffee and a bucket to the garden and pull weeds for just a few minutes. It's cool, quiet, therapeutic ... and is much easier than pulling them when they have deep root systems.

## Plant in paper cups

If you find that your seedlings have been nibbled off at the base, it might be cutworms. Next time, plant your seeds and seedlings in a collar made from the top of a paper cup. That will repel the worm but won't inhibit growth.

## Try a Hozon®

A Hozon is a little brass siphon device that connects to your faucet and sucks up fertilizer concentrate at a rate of 1 oz. of feed to 16 oz. of water. Mix your liquid fertilizer at 16 times normal strength and you can easily feed your garden with your hose. Or you can get really fancy and buy larger fertilizer proportioners. Feeding from a bucket of concentrate is more efficient than mixing up watering cans of fertilizer.

## Install permanent stakes

Big, tall tomato plants loaded with prize-winning fruit are heavy ... and your thin bamboo stakes may not support them. Instead, for a serious garden, consider redwood or cedar 4x4 in. posts (perhaps with a decorative finial on top) placed 3 ft. apart. Bury an 8 ft. post 2 ft. in the ground and plant your tomato at the base, then tie it to the post as it grows. Leave them in year-round so you're always set for the next season.

## Pick cherry tomatoes before a storm

Some varieties of ripe cherry tomatoes tend to split open after a good rainstorm—it's due to excess water pressure inside a thin-skinned fruit. If you think it's going to rain, harvest all your ripe and near-ripe cherries so you don't lose them.

## Bonemeal for your peppers

Bonemeal is a natural source of phosphorus and calcium, which pepper plants like. If they don't have enough, the foliage will appear puckered and crinkly. Sprinkle a few handfuls of bonemeal around your peppers for maximum plant health.

## Grow a little—often

Stagger your plantings throughout the spring. That way everything won't ripen at once, and you'll have smaller quantities of fresh produce for a longer period of time.

# tomatoes

Ripe and tasty, the hearty tomato is America's most popular home-grown vegetable, and with good reason: They're easy, prolific and useful. Modern varieties are almost foolproof and bear loads of delicious fruit starting in July (earlier in the South). And they come in forms, flavors and colors that match every global cuisine imaginable. Plant a dozen and preserve enough for the winter, or grow a single bush tomato on a small balcony—either way, the bright, fresh flavor can't be beat!



**Fact:**

Refrigeration temporarily reduces the strength of [Z]-3-hexenal, the key fragrance chemical in a tomato. Let them come back up to room temperature before serving for maximum flavor.

**Tip:** Plant your tomatoes deep, with just the top and a few leaves showing. They will put out additional roots along the stem, producing stronger, sturdier plants.

## Some varieties to try:

**For the first tomatoes on the block**—Fourth of July or Early Girl

**To top your famous ½-pound burgers**—Supersteak Hybrid, Big Beef

**For heirloom-style taste, shape and color**—Pineapple, Old Time Tasty, Black Pearl Hybrid

**Something your kids will love to grow and eat**—Sweet 100, Sungold, Tomatoberry Garden

Many gardeners use a combination of slow-release granular feed plus a liquid feed applied at every other watering.



### Types of tomatoes

**Cherry:** An excellent first-timer's tomato, cherries produce hundreds of bite-size fruits in a wide range of shapes and colors, with flavors that vary from tart to sweet. A great first vegetable for your kids to grow!

**Beefsteak:** The monsters of the garden, weighing in at half a pound to a pound or even more. Great for slicing on burgers and for showing off your tomato-growing skills to the neighbors. They can be challenging to grow due to the sheer size of the fruits.

**Plum:** Also called roma or paste tomatoes, plums are most often grown for sauces and other cooking duties, due to their meaty flesh and acidic flavor.

**Heirloom:** Heirloom tomatoes offer the most unusual shapes, colors and flavors, and are great for the gourmet garden. However, they can be the most challenging tomatoes to grow because they lack the bred-in disease tolerance of modern varieties.

**Slicing:** The mainstays of the garden, these are excellent multi-purpose fruits. Early Girl, Better Boy and Celebrity are excellent examples.



### How to plant

Plant your tomato deep! Leave just the growing tip and a few leaves showing. Then water thoroughly and keep the plants watered regularly. It's best to water thoroughly—several gallons per plant—and then let the soil dry slightly for two or three days before watering again.

How far apart should you plant them? That depends on whether it's a bush-type or stake-type tomato. Bush-types or "determinate" tomatoes produce lots of fruit at one time—a handy attribute when canning, for instance. They grow best when caged. Plant about 3 ft. apart. Stake-types or "indeterminate" tomatoes grow tall and need to be staked. They set fruit throughout the season. You can plant these closer, about 2 ft. apart, since they grow more upright.

To train the vine of a staked tomato, remove the side shoots or "suckers" that form at each leaf joint. Just snap them off—the plant won't mind. Your stake should be about six feet out of the ground for maximum production. Tie the plant to the stake with twine or plastic tape.

### Common problems

Blossom end rot is a black spot on the end of the tomato. This often results from excessive water—especially after several days of heavy rains. The best prevention is to keep your tomatoes evenly watered. Don't let them get too wet or too dry. Because it's also caused by a lack of calcium, an application of lime can help prevent it. Once your tomatoes have it, there's no cure—just discard any damaged fruit.

Tomato hornworms are the most common insects to bother tomatoes. The first sign you have them is large bites missing from your plants. Watch for their tell-tale black droppings, too. Pick worms off by hand (using gloves or a pair of scissors) or spray them with the natural bacteria "Bt" (*Bacillus thuringiensis*).

### Harvest time

Pick your tomatoes when they're nearly fully ripe. Don't let them overripen. Fruit that's still slightly green will ripen on your windowsill. Green tomatoes are great for frying.

# peppers

## Hot : Sweet

With such a variety from which to choose, peppers are a must-have in any vegetable garden. There are as many recipes as there are types, so it's best to pick the peppers you use most. Sweet peppers and bell peppers are versatile in the kitchen, and hot peppers add spice to any meal. Plant them in your vegetable garden or patio containers and expect a big harvest later in the summer and into the fall.

### Some varieties to try:

**For awesome peppers grown in patio pots—**  
Costa Rican Sweet

**To wow your family and friends with crisp,  
juicy sweet peppers—**Flavorburst

**For hot peppers from containers on your deck—**  
Tabasco

**An heirloom pepper with a spicy aroma—**Hot  
Lemon



Fact:

While the seeds in hot peppers carry some of the heat, it actually originates in the interior veins or ribs near the seed heart.





For recipes go to  
[www.burpeehomegardens.com](http://www.burpeehomegardens.com)



**Be sure to weed your garden. Weeds provide a refuge for garden pests and can also spread diseases to nearby healthy pepper plants.**

### Types of peppers

**Sweet:** The term sweet pepper covers a wide variety of mild peppers that belong to the capsicum family. The best-known sweet peppers are bell peppers, named for their bell-like shape. They have a mild, sweet flavor and crisp juicy flesh. When young, most bell peppers are a rich, bright green, but there are also yellow, orange, purple, red and brown bell peppers. Red bell peppers are green bell peppers that have ripened longer and are very sweet. Other sweet pepper varieties include Cubanelle and sweet banana types.

**Hot:** This group of infamous characters includes chili, cayenne, Hungarian wax and long yellow peppers. Most hot peppers have red and orange-scarlet fruits when ripe.

**Tip:** The traditional bell pepper is harvested green, even though most varieties will mature red, orange, or yellow. Peppers can be harvested at any stage of growth, but their flavor doesn't fully develop until maturity.



### How to plant

Choose a sunny location that gets six or more hours of sun each day and dig a hole about two times as wide as the pot that holds your pepper plant. Place your plant in the soil a little bit deeper than it was in the pot. Refill the space around your plant with soil and press lightly to compact the dirt. You can stake peppers for more stability as they grow.

Water immediately to settle the soil. Most gardeners fertilize with a slow-release or natural fertilizer when planting. You can follow up with liquid feed throughout the season.

Your pepper plants should be spaced 18-24 in. apart in the garden. One or two plants will easily fill most patio pots.

### Common Problems

Peppers are thirsty plants! They need a moderate supply of water from the moment you plant them until the end of the season. However, they won't tolerate saturated soil that waterlogs their roots. The soil must drain well yet hold enough moisture to keep the plants in production. To maintain a proper balance, work some organic matter such as compost or humus into the soil when planting to enhance moisture retention. Use mulch to prevent excessive evaporation from the soil during the dry summer months.

**Don't overfertilize.** This tends to make the plants develop lush foliage at the expense of fruit production.

Generally, peppers are problem-free, but the same pests and diseases that plague tomatoes and eggplants will occasionally attack them. With basic precautions, you can keep your peppers "clean." Avoid working in your garden after a rain because diseases can spread rapidly among wet pepper plants.

Pepper plants are easily damaged when laden with fruit. For support, loosely tie the plants to stakes using rubber bands to allow for the expansion that comes with growing. Don't use wire twist-ties or twine, which will gradually choke off or even snap the stems.

# summer & winter squash

You can grow a squash for every season's recipes, from the Fourth of July cookout to Christmas dinner. From the salad bowl to the grill, from soup to bread, squash can do it all. You can even eat the blossoms, either cooked or raw. Best of all, squash is one of the easiest and most prolific vegetables in the garden.



*Fact:* "Zucca" is Italian for gourd, pumpkin or squash.

## Some varieties to try:

**If you want colorful meals with yellow squash**—Burpee Golden

**For great-tasting acorn squash**—Burpee's Bush

**Delicious and ideal for small-space gardens**—Peter Pan

In much of Europe, zucchini is known by the French name *courgette*.

### Types of squash

Native to the Americas, squash can be divided into two types: summer and winter. Summer squash ripen quickly and are consumed soon after harvesting, skin and all. Winter squash ripen later in the season and can be stored for up to six months thanks to their hard rinds. They're often cut in half and baked, or cooked and then mashed like potatoes.

### Summer squash

**Yellow:** Perfect for vegetable trays and salads; or steamed, grilled, boiled—even stuffed and baked.

**Crookneck:** Similar to yellow squash but with a crooked neck and a bumpy skin.

**Zucchini:** This dark green relative of yellow squash is grown and used the same way. It's also popular in Italian dishes; in fact, today's green zucchini originated in Italy.

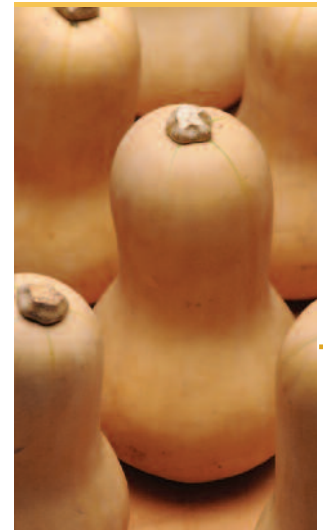
**Pattypan or scallop:** Popular grilled, stuffed or cut into chunks and steamed or sautéed with other vegetables.

### Winter squash

**Acorn:** Acorn squash are delicious baked. You can also toast the seeds.

**Butternut:** Bake them or puree them into a soup. Great in breads, too.

**Hubbard:** Hubbards have a heavy skin, making the best overwintering squash.



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### How to plant

Summer squash are bushy, semi-vining plants that need space to grow, so allow 3 ft. by 3 ft. for each plant. Winter squash are more vining and need 4 to 5 ft. of space per plant. Semi-bush-type squash are somewhat more compact and can grow in 2 to 3 ft. of space.

Plant only as deep as the seedling's existing soil line and water thoroughly, then apply your choice of all-purpose fertilizer, such as 10-10-10, or organic fertilizer. During the growing season water your plants thoroughly once a week during dry periods.

### Common problems

While they're growing, keep your planting beds weeded, and when watering try not to get the foliage wet, as this can lead to powdery mildew. Use a fungicide to control the disease, and pick off and dispose of infested leaves.

Squash bugs and squash vine borers are the most common insect pests. Vine borers will tunnel into the vines near the soil line and lay their larvae, which eventually kill the plant. Natural pesticides applied near the base of the plant starting a few weeks after planting can help prevent the problem. Rototilling in the spring can kill any pupae that overwintered in your soil.

### Harvest time

Summer squash are fast! You'll have fruit ready in just 50 days. A fruit that's too small one day will be a foot long two days later, so check them daily. For the most tenderness and best flavor, harvest fruits when they're 1 to 2 in. in diameter and 6 to 8 in. long. Harvest pattypan when they're 3 to 5 in. in diameter. Larger squash are best for grating to make bread. Your plants will continue to set fruit as long as the plants are healthy and growing.

Winter squash are ready starting about 80 days from planting. The color will be deep and the skin tough and hard. Eat them right away or store them in a basement or unheated space at 45°F to 50°F.

To freeze your squash, blanch the summer types and cook the winter ones.



**Tip:** Squash blossoms can be eaten raw or cooked. Because they're so perishable, they're a treat reserved for only the best restaurants—and you, the home gardener!

# eggplant

Back when some of us were kids, eggplant was a mysterious vegetable reserved for the vegetarian lasagna cooked by our crazy aunt from California. But today the lowly eggplant is enjoying amazing popularity, thanks to the proliferation of new varieties and more adventurous cooks who are discovering exciting ways to prepare them, as well as resurrecting classic dishes like eggplant parmesan and baba ghanoush. If you want to go venture beyond lettuce, tomato, beans and peppers, eggplant is your perfect first “exotic” vegetable.

## Some varieties to try:

**For the traditional large purple eggplant—**  
Burpee Hybrid

**For small-but-delicious fruits in crazy neon—  
purple and white stripes—**Purple Blaze

**For the fun of an egg-sized fruit (ostrich egg,  
that is)—**White Star Hybrid



*Fact:*

Eggplants are in the nightshade family and are related to tomatoes, potatoes and tobacco.



For recipes go to  
[www.burpeehomegardens.com](http://www.burpeehomegardens.com)



**The most common are dark purple, sometimes almost black colored eggplants, which are either globe or round shaped.**

### Types of eggplant

Native to India, eggplants have been cultivated throughout the Middle East and Asia, which is why there are so many shapes and colors beyond the traditional purple oval shape. Colors range from white and cream to almost black, and from solid to stripes. Chinese varieties tend to be cucumber shaped, but the plant got its unique name from a popular traditional type raised in Europe in the 18th century that has fruit that look just like hens' eggs. In British English, eggplants are referred to by the much-fancier French word "aubergine."

### How to plant

Eggplants are semi-tropical to tropical, so they love the heat and want to be planted when it's warm out and all danger of frost has past. The fruit can be large (8 to 12 in. long, depending on variety), but the bushy plants don't usually grow more than about 2 to 3 ft. tall, so spacing is generally 18 to 24 in. apart. Because the fruits can be heavy, use tomato cages or stakes to keep them from bending and breaking.

Water eggplants regularly and thoroughly to get them started. Once established, water deeply but infrequently, as the roots don't like to remain wet. Eggplants can, in fact, take a bit of drought. But don't let them wilt because that stresses the plants, which makes them more susceptible to insect damage and diseases.

Feed them regularly along with your other vegetables with your choice of standard or organic plant food.

### Common problems

You might find tiny holes in your leaves. These are most likely caused by flea beetles, which can be controlled with beneficial nematodes. Cover your young plants with spun-bonded plant fabric to help keep insects away from them. Mature, healthy plants can usually withstand damage.

### Harvest time

As with most vegetables, bigger is not usually better, so harvest when the fruits reach a medium size and the skin is still shiny. Smaller fruits tend to be less bitter, too. Watch out for thorns, which you'll find on some varieties. Cut the stems with a knife or scissors. You can keep eggplants for about a week in the fridge.



**Tip:** "Sweating" your cut-up eggplant by salting it and leaving it in a colander for about 30 minutes before cooking will reduce bitterness and keep it from soaking up extra oil (if you're frying it).

# lettuce

You have no idea how easy it is to grow gourmet greens in your home vegetable garden—either in the ground or in pots on your patio. And fast!—you'll go from the pot to the salad bowl in just a few weeks. Combined with your home-grown tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and herbs, your garden-fresh greens will make you a hero at lunch, brunch or dinner. Oh, don't forget the spinach, a tasty green whether raw or cooked.



**Fact:** Thomas Jefferson reportedly grew 19 varieties of lettuce in his gardens at Monticello.

**Tip:** Harvest your lettuce by cutting just the outer leaves and leaving the center and your plants will continue to make new leaves—this technique is called “cut and come again.”

## Some varieties to try:

**Buttercrunch types**—Burpee Bibb, Butter Crunch

**Leaf types**—Gourmet Blend, Heatwave Blend

**Romaine types**—Little Caesar

**Spinach (for spinach salads)**—Bloomsdale, Baby's Leaf Hybrid



**What's "mesclun mix"?  
It's a traditional blend of  
salad greens that  
originated in Provence,  
France, containing equal  
proportions of chervil,  
arugula, endive and leaf  
lettuces.**

### Types of Lettuce

You can divide lettuce into four main types: **crisphead, butterhead (or bibb), leaf and romaine (or cos)**. Crispheads are your typical grocery store head lettuces—such as iceberg. Perfectly nice ... but widely available and slower to grow than the other. For the home garden, instead consider the other three. Butterhead, or bibb, lettuces makes a small, soft head of sweet leaves. Leaf (or looseleaf) lettuces don't form a head; instead, they produce separate bunches of thin, delicate, tender leaves in various shades of green to purple that can be sweet to slightly spicy. Finally, romaine lettuce is most known for its use in Caesar salad. It has sweet, crisp leaves that form an elongated head.



### How to Plant

Most lettuce varieties like cool temperatures, so plant them early along with your carrots, broccoli and cauliflower and before your tomatoes and peppers. They'll take some frost, so don't worry about cold nights. You can also plant them in late summer, when it's starting to cool off again. Temperatures between 60°F and 70°F are just right. Heat-tolerant varieties, such as Heatwave Blend, can be grown in hotter conditions if grown in the shade of taller veggies and given plenty of water.

Plant lettuce in rows or squares, planting two to four plants per person per week for several weeks. That way you'll get a continuous harvest of fresh leaves for a month or two, until the heat is too much for your plants. Plant should be spaced 8 to 12 in. apart.

Lettuces are green, leafy plants, and nitrogen makes green leaves, so be sure to fertilize them when you plant and once a month after. They also like plenty of water, so don't let them dry out and wilt.

### Common Problems

Lettuces are quick, so they aren't prone to insects or diseases. Aphids and slugs are your biggest worry; picking or washing them off at harvest is a simple solution.

### Harvest Time

You can pick your leaf lettuce anytime you like—even days after planting in the garden. The smaller the leaves, the sweeter and more delicate the flavor. Use scissors or simply tear loose the leaves you want for your salad. Leave the plant in the ground and it will continue to develop new leaves. Butterheads and romaine are best harvested by cutting the whole head when it's reached the size you want. Don't wait too long to harvest either type, as heat and age make leaves tough and bitter.

# cucumbers

Cucumbers—or “cukes” if you prefer shorthand—are a great crop for taking your garden vertical. Being vining plants, they’ll thrive if you let them climb a trellis or other support. This saves space and lets the fruits grow clean and straight. The large foliage forms a nice screen, which can be used to create some privacy around your garden. But by all means, if you’ve got the space, let them sprawl along the ground if you prefer. Or grow a bush type if you have limited space for sprawling or trellises.



**Fact:**

Cucumbers contain an as-yet unidentified compound that a percentage of folks find makes them “gassy.” “Burpless” cucumbers cause less burping among taste-testers.

**Tip:** Tall, trellised cucumber vines will shade other crops, so plant them along the north side of your garden, since the sun is usually coming from the south.

## Some varieties to try:

**For a good all-around slicing cucumber**—Burpee Hybrid II

**An awesome burpless slicer**—Sweet Burpless Hybrid

**For a small garden or to grow in a pot**—Bush Champion

**For a Japanese-style cucumber**—Burpless No. 26

**You’re hungry for delicious homemade pickles**—Mathilde, Pickalot Hybrid





**Leaving over-mature fruit on the vine can slow production of new fruit, so harvest often and regularly. The more you pick, the more you'll produce.**

### Types of Cucumbers

There are two main types of cucumbers: slicing (or garden) and pickling. Slicing types include the standard form we all know and love, as well as the more "exotic" English and Japanese types, which are long and slender and are often wrapped in cellophane at the grocery store.

Pickling cucumbers are smaller than slicing types, with thinner skins, firmer flesh and smaller seeds that make for a tasty, crisp pickle.

### How to Plant

Cukes like warm temperatures, above 70°F, so plant them out when all danger of frost is past. They also like space, so spread them out: one plant every 18 to 24 in. if you're going to grow them up a trellis; allow 3 to 4 ft. between plants if you're letting them sprawl. Bush cucumbers, such as Bush Champion, can be planted on 18- to 24-in. centers or in large (5 gallon bucket-sized) pots.

Cucumbers are mostly water, so you can imagine that the plants don't like to dry out or wilt. Consider mulching your plants with garden mulch or grass clippings to hold moisture in the soil.

Install your trellis just above and behind your plants within a couple weeks of planting, then stand back. Cucumbers have tendrils that will grab the supports, so you shouldn't have to worry about tying.

### Common Problems

Powdery mildew is the most common disease you'll find. This is a whitish powder on the foliage that's spread through the air. Your best prevention is to grow disease-resistant varieties and to keep the foliage dry by watering the soil, not the plants (a good practice for all vegetables).

### Harvest Time

As with squash, pick your cucumbers when they're smaller rather than larger for the best flavor and tenderness. There's no set time when they're ready—you decide when you want to eat (or pickle) them. Watch them, though—they can grow an inch or more a day! Also, leaving over-mature fruit on the vine can slow production of new fruit, so harvest often and regularly. The more you pick, the more you'll produce.



# beans

There's a type of bean native to every continent except Antarctica, and being relatively quick to grow and easy to store has made them a garden favorite around the world. In addition to being fun to grow, beans are one of the healthiest foods a person can consume, so including them in your vegetable garden is a great idea.



## Some varieties to try:

**For sweet, tender beans excellent fresh, frozen or for canning—Blue Lake Pole**

**For the flavor and tenderness of Blue Lake beans in a bush form—Blue Lake Bush**

**Add a flavorful and colorful twist to any recipe—Gold 'N Green Mix**



*Fact:*

Green beans are an excellent source of vitamins A, C and K as well as fiber.



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[www.burpeehomegardens.com](http://www.burpeehomegardens.com)



**When your bean plants begin to produce, be sure to harvest daily to encourage more production and maintain tenderness and flavor.**

**Tip:** Help prevent disease by avoiding working in or around bean plants when they are wet. This will reduce the risk of rust developing and spreading throughout your garden. Wait until beans are completely dry before handling.

### Types of beans

**Pole:** Many gardeners prefer the rich flavor of pole beans and grow them every year, producing a high yield in a small area. Green and yellow varieties of pole beans are available, with green being the most popular. These beans grow as tall as 9 ft. and require a trellis (see page 12). The time it takes pole beans to mature is longer than bush varieties, but they produce more beans over a longer period of time. Another benefit of pole beans is that they help conserve space in smaller gardens, as well as being easier to harvest than bush varieties.

**Bush:** Also available in green and yellow (or a mix like Burpee Home Gardens' Gold 'N Green), Bush beans tend to be a bit more tender than pole beans, and some gardeners feel they are easier to grow because they do not require staking. Bush beans are thinner and less starchy than pole beans and are excellent in recipes fresh or frozen.

### How to plant

Plant bean plants after all threat of frost has passed and daytime temperatures are above 60°F. As with most vegetables, choose a sunny spot that gets more than six hours of sun each day and be sure to follow spacing instructions on plant tags to avoid crowding, which can lead to disease and reduced yield.

Beans do not require much care, making them a perfect addition to all vegetable gardens. Keep soil moist and remove weeds throughout the growing season. Be careful when pulling weeds because beans have shallow root systems.

Pole beans will need to be staked, and installing stakes before planting will save a lot of hassle down the road. Most gardeners prefer to create a "teepee" using six or eight stakes (6 to 8 ft. tall) tied at the top. Beans can be planted around the base of each stake.

### Common Problems

Beans are susceptible to a variety of diseases, but today's hybrids are resistant to most of the common problems. There is a Mexican bean beetle that can attack your plants, so keep an eye out for beetles or their eggs that attach to the underside of the leaves.

### Harvest Time

The real trick to a successful bean harvest is frequent picking. When your bean plants begin to produce, be sure to harvest daily to encourage more production and maintain tenderness and flavor.

# basil & cilantro

Two of gardeners' favorite herbs to grow are basil and cilantro. Not only are they useful in the kitchen, flavoring many recipes, they're also quick to grow, making basil and cilantro ideal for gardeners of all experience levels. Both are grown for their leaves, which can be harvested throughout the summer.



Fact:

Cilantro is two herbs in one: the leaves are commonly called cilantro, and the seeds (whole or ground) are called coriander.

**Tip:** If you plan to grow basil and cilantro in pots, be sure to add coarse gravel to the bottom of the container to maintain adequate drainage. When planting in the ground, make sure your soil is well dug, loose and fluffy.

## Some varieties to try:

**For a highly ornamental and fragrant edging for the patio and herb pots by the door—Boxwood Basil**

**For a Thai-type basil with licorice flavor perfect for curry recipes—Siam Queen**

**THE authentic Neapolitan basil for Italian cuisine, especially pesto—Sweet Italian Large Leaf**

**For fast-growing and highly aromatic cilantro ideal for bunching—Santo**



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Basil



Cilantro

**Basil and cilantro leaves have the best flavor when they are harvested before your plants start to flower.**

**Basil:** A member of the mint family, basil is a sweet herb used for flavoring food and also in many traditional remedies. There are many varieties of basil, and each has a distinct flavor, making the herb versatile and appealing to a wide range of tastes. Basil leaves can also be very different in terms of size and color, making them beautiful standouts in gardens and mixed containers. There are four basic types of basil: sweet green, dwarf green, purple leaf and scented leaf.

**Cilantro:** Referred to as “coriander” when using its seeds and “cilantro” when using the leaves, this member of the parsley family is one of the most popular fresh herbs for home gardeners. Fast-growing and highly aromatic, cilantro is the staple herb in salsa and other Mexican dishes. The leaves can be cut at any time using the upper, new leaves in cooking. Cilantro is rarely dried and saved, since it loses its flavor when dried.

**How to plant**

Both basil and cilantro can be grown outside in garden beds and patio containers, but be sure to wait to plant until there is absolutely no threat of overnight frost. These herbs are very sensitive to cold temperatures and even a mild frost will do irreparable damage to small plants. Wait until daytime temperatures are above 70°F and night temps stay above 50°F to avoid losing any young plants.

Basil and cilantro prefer sunny locations with very well-drained soil. With less sun, the plants tend to get “leggy,” growing tall but not filling out.

The secret to growing basil and cilantro is to make successive plantings about two weeks apart so you will have fresh herbs to harvest for a longer period of time. Both of these herbs go to seed and stop producing leaves fairly quickly, so growing a few plants is recommended.

**Common Problems**

The most common problem gardeners have growing basil and cilantro is that the plants will begin to grow tall and leggy unless harvested often enough. The leaves have the best flavor when they are harvested before your plants start to flower. Harvest full stems rather than removing individual leaves, cutting just above each pair of lower leaves. This helps create bushy, compact plants.

Like other herbs, basil and cilantro do not require a lot of maintenance. Amend your soil with organic matter and try to make sure they get about an inch of water each week. It’s easy to provide nutrients for the entire season by applying a controlled-release fertilizer when planting.



# More to try

Now that you've had a look at some of the most popular veggies for your garden, here are a few other fun vegetables and herbs to try.



**Fact:** Broccoli and cauliflower are the only vegetables that are also flowers.

## Some broccoli varieties to try:

For delicious broccoli early in the season—Flash Hybrid

For Italian and Chinese cuisine—Raab

## Some cauliflower varieties to try:

For a quick-to-grow cauliflower that's perfect raw or cooked—First White Hybrid

For a novel and delicious orange-hued cauliflower (it's loaded with beta carotene!)—Cheddar

### Broccoli & Cauliflower

Broccoli and cauliflower are popular in the frozen veggie aisle at your grocery store, so why not try growing your own in your garden? These two vegetables are best for “cool season” growing, which usually means early spring or, in warmer climates, fall. Both should be planted in full sun before summer temperatures heat up.

**Care tips:** Cauliflower requires a little extra help to keep its nice, white, healthy appearance. The plants like sun, but once the head of white “curds” begins to form, tie up a few of the outer green leaves over the head to cover it. Think of it like a sun parasol for your plant.

Broccoli likes lots of water to help it grow, and a layer of mulch can help keep the roots cool. Broccoli and cauliflower are plant relatives, so to keep your garden healthy, avoid planting them in the same spot two years in a row.

### Herbs: Parsley, Sage, Rosemary & Thyme

There’s a reason there’s a song about these four classic herbs—they’re easy to grow and versatile in the kitchen. (Okay, we don’t really know what influenced Simon and Garfunkel to sing about them in the ‘60s, but that seems like a good guess.) Herbs are great because most of them grow quickly, do well in containers or in the ground, and require little in the way of special care. They’re staples of many recipes and are good to have on hand to add fresh flavor to a wide variety of dishes.

**Care tips:** Like most herbs, these plants grow best in full sun (six hours or more of direct sunlight per day). Herbs are all about the leaves, so make sure you water as needed and keep an eye out for wilt. Want an herb that can easily survive your summer vacation? Thyme, especially, requires very little care and only needs water in especially dry conditions.

If you’re a real “foodie,” don’t stop there—consider trying mint (which is really best in containers), dill, chives, marjoram, and more.

### Strawberries

Wait a minute, you say ... strawberries aren’t vegetables! And that’s true—strawberries are fruits, just like tomatoes, peppers, and many of the other “veggies” you’ll find in most gardens. Strawberries are great garden companions for lots of favorite vegetables, including bush beans, spinach (strawberry-spinach salad, anyone?), lettuce and onions. They are especially ornamental for the garden, with pretty white, or sometimes pink, flowers and dark green leaves. And of course, they taste great, too!

**Care tips:** Strawberries benefit from a layer of mulch to keep the soil around them moist and weed-free. They like full sun, and can be grown in the ground or in containers. Because strawberries tend to trail, they can even make pretty hanging baskets.



### Remember:

There are so many vegetable and herb varieties out there that you can certainly find a good selection to fit your family’s tastes. After all, that’s the only real “rule” of vegetable gardening: plant what you like to eat! Think of it as an adventure not just for your “budding” green thumb, but also for your palate.



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