

Raising Vegetables in Mini Gardens

HGA-00136

Vegetables are usually grown on farms, gardens or in greenhouses. But you can raise vegetables on a sunny deck, windowsill or balcony. It's easy. To get started, you'll need some containers, a soil mixture and seeds.

Containers

You can grow vegetables in many kinds of containers. Three-pound coffee cans, plastic buckets, gallon cans and bushel baskets make good "pots." Large-growing vegetables, like tomatoes, should be planted in large containers, such as bushel baskets or 5-gallon cans. Radishes and other small vegetables can be grown in the smaller pots. On the side of your containers, near the bottom, punch four or more ¼-inch holes for drainage of water.

Soil

Fill your container with a commercial potting soil or make your own. Mix two parts sand, two parts peat moss and one part compost. Add ¼ cup of garden lime for every 5-gallon bucket of soil made. Slow-release fertilizer pellets can be added directly to the dirt before planting. An example of a slow-release fertilizer is Ozmocote for vegetables. Follow the directions on the label.

Optional — Adding up to ⅓ volume compost will help with success.

Planting and Thinning

Plant seed twice as close as shown in the spacing chart. When plants come up, remove the weaker ones, leaving remaining plants spaced about as far apart as the growing guide in this booklet suggests.

Light

Full sunlight outdoors is best for growing vegetable plants. Plants grown indoors will require supplemental light such as fluorescent lights. Cool white fluorescent bulbs will work for leafy vegetables. Flower plants will require full spectrum bulbs.

Fertilizer

Plants need fertilizer for healthy growth. They can be fertilized with either a soluble fertilizer such as 15-30-15 or a 8-32-16 granular fertilizer. Soluble fertilizer should be applied weekly following the directions on the label. Pre-

warm the water before using. Granular fertilizers are used less often. Put 1 level teaspoon of 8-32-16 fertilizer on each square foot of soil about two weeks after plants have emerged and every three weeks thereafter. Mix the fertilizer with the top ½ inch of soil and water well. Take care not to damage roots.

Watering

When the soil becomes dry to a depth of ½ inch it's time to water. It is best not to let the soil dry out completely as this will cause vegetables to have a bitter taste and bolt prematurely. If containers are put outdoors during summer, they may need water every day. Plants growing in cool weather need water less often. Slowly apply water until approximately 10 percent drains from the bottom of the container each time you water. Use a pan to catch the excess water, then remove the drained water.

Insects and Diseases

Your vegetable crop may be attacked by diseases or insects. If insects or diseases become a problem, contact your district Extension office for information on control options. Integrated pest management (IPM) techniques are very adaptable to container plantings.

Harvesting

You can tell when your vegetables are ready for harvest by comparing them to the size and color of fresh vegetables in markets. If you wish, you can harvest leafy vegetables (lettuce, collards, etc.) before they grow as large as those in markets. Beet greens and lettuce can also be used as they are thinned. Remember that your homegrown vegetables may not be as large or as blemish-free as market produce, but their flavor is just as good or better.



Vegetable Growing Guide

Group 1

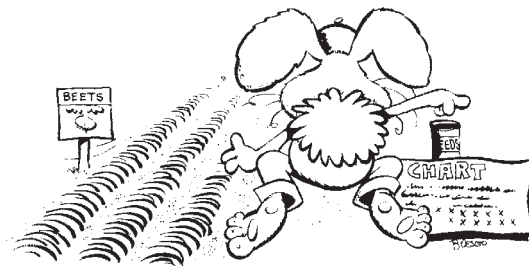
These vegetables can be grown in small pots (6-10 inches). They can withstand a little shade and do well in cool weather.

VEGETABLE	DAYS TO HARVEST	PLANTING DEPTH	SPACE BETWEEN PLANTS
Mustard greens	30-60	¼ inch	4 inches
Leaf lettuce	45-60	¼ inch	4 inches
Swiss chard	60-80	¼ inch	4 inches
Turnips	55-65	¼ inch	3-4 inches
Green bunching			
Onions	90	¼ inch	2-3 inches
Chives	80	¼ inch	2-3 inches
Radishes	25	½ inch	2 inches
Beets	60-80	¼ inch	2-3 inches
Collards	80	¼ inch	1 plant per pot
Carrots	65-75	¼ inch	2 inches

Group 2

Plant seeds of these vegetables in large containers (5-gallon size). They need full sunlight and warm water. The vegetables should be planted outdoors in June. You can start tomato and pepper plants indoors six weeks early, then move them outdoors at the proper time.

VEGETABLE	DAYS TO HARVEST	PLANTING DEPTH	SPACE BETWEEN PLANTS
Tomato	140-150	¼ inch	1 per pot
Green pepper	140-160	¼ inch	1 per pot
Summer squash	50-60	¼ inch	1 per pot



To simplify information, trade names of products have been used. No endorsement of named products by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products that are not mentioned.

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Stephen Brown, Extension Faculty, Agriculture and Horticulture. Originally adapted by Alan C. Epps, former Extension Horticulturist, with permission from the University of California Agricultural Extension Service, Orange County.



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