

The Basics of Planting and Growing a Vegetable Garden

In the Vegetable Gardening for Beginners Guide, we cover how to start a vegetable garden from scratch, which vegetables to grow, and when to plant what. This year, we've added a "starter" garden plan consisting of easy-to-grow vegetables, companion planting techniques, and some lovely flowers!

The **Backyard Agri DIY Gardening Tunnel** is portable, has no permanent foundations and can easily be assembled, disassembled, and moved. It is anchored with Y-standards which are driven into the ground. The construction is relatively light because it is made out of HDPE tubes.

Would you like your own fresh vegetables every day; all year?

A six-meter long DIY Gardening Tunnel can do that for a family of four; winter or summer.

Keep bugs and birds off your precious vegetables and have much more control over the success of your gardening efforts.

This gardening tunnel can easily be assembled and moved because it does not have foundations. It is anchored with Y-standards which are driven into the ground. The construction is relatively light because it is made out of HDPE (high-density polyethylene) tubes, aluminium and long-lasting 40% shade netting.

The HDPE arch poles and the aluminium spacers are tied together to form a strong durable construction that will last for years and is virtually maintenance-free. The dome shape can resist the wind very well. Please consult with us if you stay in an extremely windy area.



Watch us grow



Hoc Lettuce as big as a hand already



PIC-COLLAGE



A DIY Gardening Tunnel has many advantages above a permanent steel structure:

- No permanent foundations
- Portable
- No rust issues
- No painting
- Hose down to clean

DIY Gardening Tunnels come in a wide variety of sizes: small enough for your garden; large enough for your farm or smallholding.

We offer two widths: 3-4 meters and 4-5 meters, depending on how high the tunnel needs to be or the space available. A narrower tunnel will be higher and a wider tunnel will be a little bit lower.

Lengths range from 3 meters up to 30 meters.

The height of all our kits is between 2.2 and 2.4 meters.

Other widths and lengths are available on request.

The parts included in this kit are:

- HDPE plastic arches
- Aluminium spacers
- 40% shade netting
- Front and back ends according to your choice
- Y-standards
- Staple Gun and Cable ties

Vegetable Gardening for Beginners

Why garden, you ask?

How about enjoying the best vegetables and fruit you've ever eaten? If you've never tasted garden-fresh food, you will be amazed by the sweet, juicy flavours and vibrant textures. There's absolutely nothing quite like fresh veggies, especially if you grow them yourself—which you can!

It may seem daunting at first, but gardening is a very rewarding hobby. On this page, we'll highlight the basics of vegetable gardening and planning: how to pick the right site for your garden, how to create the right-size garden, and how to select which vegetables to grow.

Pick the Right Location

Picking a good location for your garden is absolutely key. A subpar location can result in subpar veggies! Here are a few tips for choosing a good site:

1. **Sunny spot:** Most vegetables need 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight per day. There are a few veggies (mostly the leafy ones) that will tolerate some shade.
2. **Drains well and doesn't stay wet:** If you have poorly drained soil where water pools, plant veggies in a raised bed or raised row for improved drainage. Wet soil means wet roots, which can turn into rotted roots. If you have rocky soil, till and remove the rocks, as they will interfere with root growth and make for weaker plants.
3. **Stable and not windy:** Avoid places that receive strong winds that could knock over your young plants or keep pollinators from doing their job. Nor do you want to plant in a location that receives too much foot traffic or floods easily. Plant in a location that would make Goldilocks smile—somewhere that's "just right."
4. **Nutrient-rich soil.** Your soil feeds your plants. If you have thin, nutrient-poor soil, you'll have poor, unhealthy plants. Mix in plenty of organic matter to help your plants grow.

Remember: It's better to be proud of a small garden than be frustrated by a big one!

One of the most common errors that beginners make is planting too much too soon—way more than anybody could ever eat or want! Unless you want to have zucchinis taking up residence in your attic, plan your garden with care.

Start small, and only grow what you know you and your family will eat.

Size of Garden

If planting in the ground, a 10' x 10' garden (100 square feet) is a manageable size. Pick 3 to 5 of your favourite vegetables and buy 3 to 5 plants of each one.

If planting in a raised bed, a 4' x 4' or 4' x 8' is a good beginner size. Raised Garden Bed which covers the benefits of raised beds, how to build a raised bed, and what type of soil to fill a raised bed with

If you want to go bigger, a 12' x 24' garden in the ground is probably the biggest a first-timer should go. For example, a garden that feeds a family of four could include: 3 hills of yellow squash; 1 mound of zucchini; 10 assorted peppers; 6 tomato plants; 12 okra plants; a 12-foot row of bush beans; 2 cucumbers on a cage; 2 eggplant; 6 basil; 1 rosemary, and a few low-growing herbs such as oregano, thyme, and marjoram.

Whatever the size of your garden: Every four feet or so, make sure that you have paths that allow you to access your plants to weed and harvest. Just make sure that you can reach the centre of the row or bed easily without stepping on the soil.

Choosing Vegetables

As a beginner, start by choosing easy vegetables that are also productive.

We've listed ten easy vegetables below. However, it would also be wise to contact your state's Cooperative Extension Service to find out what plants grow best in your area.

For example, if you live in an area with extremely hot weather, vegetables that prefer cooler temps may struggle.



Top 10 Easy Vegetables

Lettuce, Green beans

Radishes, Tomatoes (bush variety or cherry are easiest)

Zucchini. Peppers

Beets, Carrots

Chard, Spinach, or Kale

Peas

Mix in flowers such as **marigolds**—which discourage pests, attracts pollinators, and adds some colour!



Five tips for choosing vegetables:

Choose what you (and your family) like to eat. If no one likes brussels sprouts, don't bother planting them! But if your kids love green beans, put more effort towards growing a big crop of beans.

Be realistic about how many vegetables your family will eat. Be careful not to overplant, as you will only stretch yourself thin by trying to take care of tons of plants! (Of course, you could always give excess veggies away to friends, family, or the local soup kitchen.)

Consider the availability of veggies at your grocery store. Maybe you want to grow tomatillos, instead of cabbage or carrots, which are readily available. Also, certain veggies are so far superior when homegrown, it's almost a shame not to consider them (we're thinking of garden lettuce and tomatoes). Also, homegrown herbs are far less expensive than grocery store herbs.

Be prepared to take care of your plants throughout the growing season. Going on a summer vacation? Remember that tomatoes and zucchinis are growing strongest in the middle of summer. If you're gone part of the summer, you need someone to look after the crops or they will suffer. Or, you could just grow cool-season crops such as lettuce, kale, peas, and root veggies during the cooler months of late spring and early fall.

Use high-quality seeds. Seed packets are less expensive than individual plants, but if seeds don't germinate, your money—and time—are wasted. A few extra cents spent in spring for that year's seeds will pay off in higher yields at harvesttime.

Where and When to Plant

If you are simply growing two or three tomato plants, this process is easy. But if you plan to grow a full garden, you need to consider:

Where will each plant go?

When will each vegetable need to be planted?

Companion Planting Guide



Carrots	Corn	Garlic	Onions	Peppers	Summer Squash	Zucchini	Tomatoes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans Garden peas Lettuce Onions Tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans Cucumbers Garden peas Melons Potatoes Squash 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beets Carrots Corn Eggplant Radishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beets Carrots Cole crops Lettuce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basil Onions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans Corn Garden peas Radishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basil Carrots Cucumbers Squash (as a part of a three-way companionship)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dill Parsnip Parsley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tomatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spinach Tomatoes Cucumbers Peppers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans Peas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cole crops Corn Potatoes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beans, Garden peas

✓ = Companion plants ⊘ = Plants to Avoid



Here are a few guidelines for arranging your vegetables:

Not all vegetables are planted at the same time. **“Cool-season”** vegetables such as lettuce and broccoli and peas grow in cooler weather of early spring (and fall). **“Warm-season”** such as tomatoes and peppers and cucumbers aren’t planted until the soil warms up in late spring and summer.

Plant tall veggies (such as pole beans on a trellis or sweet corn) on the north side of the garden so they don’t shade shorter plants. If you do get shade in a part of your garden, save that area for small, cool-season veggies. If shade is unavoidable in parts of your garden, save those areas for cool-season vegetables which appreciate shade as the weather heats up.

Most veggies are annuals (planted each year). If you’re planning on growing “perennial” crops such as asparagus, rhubarb, and some herbs, provide permanent locations or beds.

Consider that some crops mature quickly and have a very short harvest period (radishes, bush beans). Other plants, such as tomatoes, take longer to produce, but also produce for longer. These “days to maturity” are typically listed on the seed packet.

Stagger plantings. You don’t want to plant all your lettuce seeds at the same time, or all that lettuce will need to be harvested at around the same time! Stagger plantings by a few weeks to keep ‘em coming!

When to Plant What

Every region has a different planting time based mainly on their weather, and every vegetable has its temperature preferences, a gardening calendar customized to your local frost dates.



Vegetables	Planting season	Harvest
Broccoli	January	10 to 15 weeks
Carrot	January to April	12 to 18 weeks
Capsicum	August to September	10 to 12 weeks
Cucumber	September to December	8 to 10 weeks
Chilli peppers	September to November	9 to 11 weeks
Cabbage	January to March	11 to 15 weeks
Tomato	January	10 weeks

A Starter Beginner Garden Plan

To help out beginners, we thought that it may be useful to see a garden design. Here is an example of a starter family garden using mainly of the common easy-to-grow vegetables listed above. It also features companion planting (the practice of placing plants that thrive together next to each other).



You'll see that we have given the garden decent-sized paths and mixed in a few herbs and flowers, too. Frankly, if we had grown this garden in our very first year, we would be thrilled! In planning the garden this way, we have made it so much easier for you to succeed with it.



Garden Planning Tool

The Old Farmer's Almanac offers an excellent online garden planning tool which makes your garden planning fun and easy. With this tool, draw your garden plan on the computer and drop in your preferred vegetables, and it automatically calculates the proper spacing for each type of crop! This way, you don't waste seed or crowd your plants. The Garden Planner automatically pulls in the frost dates for your specific location, identifies easy vegetables, and even identifies companion plants. Then you can print out your plan and the tool reminds you of your seeding and harvesting dates for every vegetable!

Plus, you'll see many free garden plans for inspiration! Over time, you'll see that this tool also provides "crop rotation" so that if you plan a second season, you can properly reposition your plants to avoid pests and disease.

Planting Guide														
South Africa - summer rainfall climate zones														
Plants	Space plants	Harvest in	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Amaranth	50cm apart	7 - 8 weeks									P	P		
Asparagus	20 - 40cm apart	2 - 3 years	Tr							P	P	P	P	P
Asparagus pea	20 - 25cm apart	8 - 11 weeks									P	P	P	P
Basil	20 - 25cm apart	10 - 12 weeks	P	P	P	P					P	P	P	P
Beans - climbing	10 - 20cm apart	9 - 11 weeks								P	P	P	P	P
Beans - dwarf	5 - 15cm apart	7 - 10 weeks	P							P	P	P	P	P
Beetroot	20 - 23 cm apart	7 - 10 weeks	P	P	P	P				P	P	P	P	P
Broccoli	35 - 50cm apart	10 - 16 weeks	P										P	P
Brussel sprouts	45 - 60cm apart	14 - 28 weeks	P	P	Tr									
Cabbage	50 - 75cm apart	11 - 15 weeks	P	P	P	Tr			P	P	P	P	P	P
Cape Gooseberry	50cm apart	14 - 16 weeks								ST	Tr	Tr		
Capsicum	100 - 150cm apart	10 - 12 weeks								P	P	P	Tr	
Carrot	25 - 30cm apart	12 - 18 weeks	P	P	P	P				P	P	P	P	P
Cauliflower	60 - 100cm apart	15 - 22 weeks	P	P	P								P	P
Celery	15 - 30cm apart	17 - 18 weeks		ST	Tr	Tr				ST	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr
Chilli pepper	40 - 50cm apart	9 - 11 weeks								ST	Tr	Tr	Tr	
Chives	5cm apart	7 - 11 weeks	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr			Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr
Coriander	Thin to 45cm	30 - 45 days	P	P							P	P	P	P
Cucumber	40 - 60cm apart	8 - 10 weeks									P	P	P	P
Dill	15cm apart	8 - 12 weeks	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr	Tr				ST	Tr	Tr	Tr