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Gardening for Your Kitchen and Your Community

Have you considered dabbling in your very own veggie garden, but weren't sure how to dig in? Growing your own produce does require some planning and work, but the fruits of your labors can pay off in spades! Not only is it possible to grow delicious fruits and vegetables for your own culinary adventures, you can grow them to help people in your community who don't have enough to eat. What's more, it's something anyone can participate in, regardless of age or ability. Read on to learn more!

Plants and Seeds and Labels, Oh My!

Growing produce can seem pretty darn complicated. Fortunately, you don't really need a green thumb to have a bounty of goodies, as long as you have the right information, tools, and resources.

- All plants have different requirements for space, sun, water, and soil. Learning how to [read a plant tag](#) for planting instructions will tell you how to nurture each plant and what to expect from it in your garden.
- Growing plants from seeds can be a bit trickier. [Understanding seed packets](#) will help you learn not only how the plants grow, but also how to check when the seeds expire.
- You could fill a garden shed with new equipment for your endeavor, but a [few must-haves](#) will ensure you cover all the basics.
- Don't limit yourself to veggies and fruits! You can add to your kitchen garden by [growing herbs and composting](#).

From Beds to Pots and Plots

Aside from the plants themselves, you need to pick out the best style of garden to meet your needs. Options abound, and with a little preplanning, you can even get the family and your community involved!

- Do you have a big yard? [Choosing a smart site](#) for your vegetable garden involves growing requirements and space.
- No yard? No problem! Even in an urban setting, you can learn how to grow edibles in [pots and planters](#) with as little as a few square feet on your balcony.
- Sometimes neighborhoods have land that would lend itself well to a community garden. If you have your sites on a plot in your local park or an empty lot, TreeHugger explains how to [start a community garden](#). It's a great way to get a garden started not only for yourself, but also for other people in your neighborhood who might need to supplement their grocery shopping.

Cooking Up a Storm

New gardeners are often surprised at how prolific their plants are! What will you do with all that extra produce? Here are some ideas for feeding your family long-term, and for feeding others.

- Fresh vegetables and fruit can be donated; just find a [food bank](#) for your extra produce.
- You can stock your own freezer as well to enjoy your produce later in the year; just read up on how to do it [properly](#).
- Another idea is to learn how to [can food](#). Canned goods are nice not only when you don't want to make grocery runs during a pandemic, but also as gifts to vulnerable neighbors who might need to stock their own pantry. Just be sure to wear a mask when you make deliveries.

A Family Affair

Gardening is a hobby for people of all ages and abilities. From the youngest to oldest and your home to your community, there is something for everyone!

- Be sure to get your kids involved. With a few [tips and activities](#), they will love learning all about growing things and working in the garden with you!
- Whether it's through a community garden, donations to a local food pantry, or gifts to vulnerable neighbors, there are plenty of ways to teach kids about not just tending gardens, but also [tending the hungry](#) in their community.
- Bending and digging can be hard on older joints and backs, but there are methods for [senior-friendly gardening](#), like raised beds, portable seats, and vertical plantings. Making it easier for them to garden means making it easier for them to enjoy nutritious, fresh foods!

The pandemic means it's prime time to get growing! If you have considered dabbling in the dirt, learn about how different plants grow, decide on how and where you'll plant your garden, and then think about the many ways you can enrich not just your own table, but your neighbors' as well.