



Grow Vegetables Enjoy Good Health

As we turn the calendar page to a new year, resolutions that will enable us to enjoy good health are often on our minds. High on that list is doing what we can to maintain healthful eating habits. One sure way to know that the vegetables we eat are pesticide-free, fresh, and nutrient-packed is to grow them ourselves. For the New Year, HGSA offers these words of encouragement:

- Growing food, whether on an acre of ground or a back yard patio, is not difficult.
- Besides the tasty harvest, benefits of gardening include stress reduction and exercise.
- Eating food that is garden fresh maximizes nutrient values.
- Food harvested fresh from the garden tastes better!

“It is widely recognized that regular contact with plants, animals, and the natural environment can improve our physical health and mental well-being.”

~Professor Tim Lang, Centre for Food Policy at City University London

How to Start

If you're unsure of how to start, think small.

A small raised bed, or even a single container of lettuce, will yield encouraging (and delicious!) results. Here are two simple schemes for growing food plants.

1. Pots of Baby Salad Greens

Baby salad greens are always tender and delicious, and can be harvested repeatedly. When the weather gets too hot and your greens start to bolt, fill the pots with easy-to-grow flowers, such as nasturtiums and marigolds, for summer color.

- Purchase attractive containers, or recycle nursery pots. Containers for greens should be at least 12 inches in diameter; the bigger the pot, the less often you'll have to water.
- Buy a good quality soilless mix. Fill the pots to about 2 inches below the brims with the moistened (but not wet) mix. You can use the potting mix as is, or add up to one-third garden soil or compost.
- Lettuce, arugula, tatsoi, kale, and mizuna are all suitable fast-growing baby greens. Sprinkle seeds on the surface, not too thickly. Use a different container for each type of green. Aim for about one seed for every 1 to 1½ inch.
- Cover the seeds, very lightly, by sprinkling moistened soil mix on top.
- Keep the pots evenly moist. Harvest with scissors when your greens grow to 3-5 inches tall, leaving 1-inch crowns to regrow for a second, and even a third harvest.



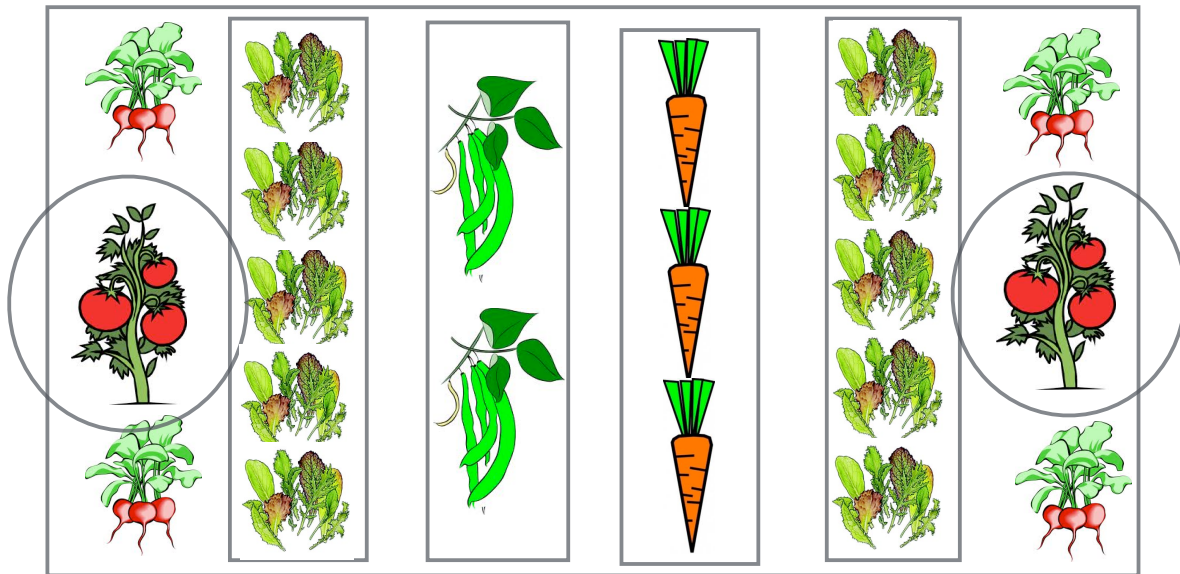
“Often, the most colorful greens are higher in nutrients.”

~Colorado State University Extension

2. A Raised Bed Plan

A 4' x 8' raised bed makes a perfect starter garden.

- Start with a plan. The example below includes radishes, 2 rows of salad greens, carrots, bush beans, and tomatoes.
- Build your bed with 2x10" boards and fill it with a mix of good garden soil and compost.
- Purchase seeds.
- In this plan, all but the tomato seeds can be sown directly in the garden.
- Start your tomatoes indoors about 6 to 8 weeks before the last frost.
- Sow the other seeds directly in the garden. In mid-spring, sow radishes, greens, and carrots. In late spring, when temperatures are above 55° F, sow beans and transplant your tomato seedlings.
- Weed between rows, or mulch to prevent weeds from growing. You can use shredded leaves, layers of newspaper, grass clippings or black plastic.
- Enjoy the bounty of your harvest.



“ Eating a variety of vegetables and fruits clearly ensures an adequate intake of most micronutrients, dietary fibres and a host of essential non-nutrient substances. ”

~World Health Organization International

Seven Nutrient-packed Vegetables that are Easy to Grow

Kale is a no-brainer. Its dark green color is a clue that it is packed with nutrients—Vitamin K (best known for its role in helping blood to clot, but also helpful in preventing osteoporosis), C, A, and B vitamins, as well as minerals and cancer-fighting antioxidants. It's long lasting in the garden, versatile in the kitchen, and generally a problem-free plant to grow.

Lettuce and other salad greens, including arugula, spinach, mizuna and others, lose nutrients in storage, so consume them fresh from the garden. Choose your varieties wisely: the darker the color, the more healthful the green. All salad greens, without exception, make excellent container plants.

Parsley is attractive as a season-long border plant. Use the mild, tasty leaves liberally in salads of all kinds. Gram for gram, raw parsley contains an equal amount of vitamin C to raw kale, twice the vitamin K, and four times the iron.

Bok Choy is a fast-maturing garden plant, and easy to grow in a container. One cup contains well more than a day's worth of vitamin A, most of your daily requirement of vitamins C and K, and a respectable dose of B vitamins and calcium.

Tomatoes are renowned for their lycopene content, a heart-healthy antioxidant responsible for the fruits' bright color. Though all tomatoes are healthful, orange and deep red varieties reportedly have higher lycopene contents. Yellow tomatoes are rich in beta-carotene, another important nutrient. You can't go wrong by growing delicious tomatoes of various colors!

Beet roots are a rich source of B-complex vitamins, especially folate, and they also supply our bodies with minerals, including iron, manganese, potassium, and magnesium. As healthful as the roots are, the tops carry even more nutrients, so use them as a braising green. You get two vegetables for the price of one pack of seeds!

Carrots are rich in beta-carotene, which converts to Vitamin A. In fact, one good-sized carrot provides about twice the recommended daily allowance of Vitamin A. Keep in mind that particular health benefits of a carrot can depend somewhat on its color, so treat your body by growing carrots of different colors. Each has its own unique taste.