



Want to Grow Veggies? Join the Craze

There's a real satisfaction to sitting down for a meal of home grown fare. Home garden veggies taste better than those commercially marketed, the nutritional value is multiplied significantly; not to mention the savings. A \$2 pack of lettuce seeds will pay for itself 10 times over in savings at the grocery store checkout. Even better, beyond the culinary, nutritional and economic benefits of growing at home, another wonderful discovery is being made: vegetable gardening is fun!

Vegetable gardening is now a certified trend. What began as an exercise to economize the household budget, has become a national pastime. Millions of people are discovering the joys of home gardening. From large raised beds and small backyard gardens, to those grown in containers on lanais and decks, any size garden will surprise you with its ability to produce abundantly. So, create the right size garden to suit your lifestyle. If limited space or back bending are issues for you, check out the new cedar vegetable "bins". Built with legs that elevate the garden to waist height, they are 30" wide, 16" deep and come in lengths of 3, 5 or 7 feet. These self-contained "bins" are perfect placed against a house or fence and make it easy to create a vegetable garden without a time consuming and strenuous overhaul of the backyard.

Want to get started? All you need is a sunny spot, some good soil, seeds or starts, fertilizer, and most importantly, some learned advice. So before you begin, read a good book or better yet, talk to experienced gardeners. There's no substitute for years of practical knowledge, so seek out a good nursery professional. These folk have not only grown their own veggies, but helped 1,000's of others reap many bountiful harvests.

Jenny Jorgensen, Nursery Manager at Wight's Home and Garden, has been helping people grow veggies (and everything else) for years. To Jenny, gardening is not a trend; it is a way of life. Never-the-less, she is delighted to see people of all ages getting back to the practice of vegetable gardening. Even kids

are feeling the buzz, and enjoying the process of tending the family harvest. It is fun to watch a seed turn to sprout and then grow into something good to eat. And, remember parents, you can't text a tomato, they must be planted, watered and cared for, giving kids a wholesome alternative to all that technology. Plus, with a little dirt under their fingernails, kids are more likely to wash their hands before dinner.

These are a few tips for planting:

Cold weather crops include peas, spinach, broccoli, cabbage, lettuce, carrots, radishes, and; can be planted as early as March if you're planting by seed (some seeds may require soaking overnight). Planting vegetables using 'starts' (those already planted and growing in small pots indoors), can be done through mid-May. Greenhouse starts may need to be 'hardened' before planting into the ground. Do this by setting them out in the weather for several hours a day for a week or so. And certain cold weather crops can be planted in two week intervals for successive harvests.

Warm weather crops include beans, corn, tomato, cucumber, squash, pumpkin, zucchini can be planted by seed now and with starts through mid-June with a harvest time starting around August. A few other things to remember: when it comes to timing in your garden, temperature rules over calendar date. Always plant in good soil and stick to the proper fertilizing regimen for the crop as each vegetable is different and requires slightly different care. Some years our NW summers are not hot enough for certain heat loving vegetables like tomatoes, peppers, and pumpkins to ripen, so consider buying gallon size starts to advance the growing season or choose varieties that require less time to mature. Whether the topic be best timing for planting, garden soil preparation, seed and plant selection, or care and feeding of your vegetable plants: the advice of a nursery professional is an invaluable (and free) resource for achieving a successful harvest.