

Grow a high yield veggie garden this season

By Melinda Myers

Spend less time and money while growing a bounty of flavorful vegetables this growing season. Increase your harvest, even in small garden spaces, with proper planning and easy care, high yielding vegetables.

A productive garden starts with a plan, but choosing the best vegetables to grow and where to plant them can be overwhelming.

You can break out the graph paper and pencils to design your garden or turn to technology for help. Many websites and apps provide ready-to-use garden plans or planning guidelines. Places like Gardener's Supply offers free pre-planned gardens that do the planning for you.



This plan enables gardeners to grow more than 50 pounds of produce in 18 square feet of space. Photo/Gardener's Supply Company

These and other intensively planted gardens require proper soil preparation to maximize productivity. Invest time up

front to reduce ongoing maintenance and increase your harvest. Dig several inches of compost or other organic matter into the top 8 to 12 inches of the soil. This improves drainage in heavy soil and increases the water holding ability in fast draining soils. Incorporate a slow release organic fertilizer at the same time. This provides needed nutrients throughout the growing season. Check the label and your plants to determine if a mid-season application is needed.

Maximize your planting budget by starting your plants from seeds. Many gardeners like to start long season plants like tomatoes and broccoli from seeds indoors. This keeps their green thumb warmed up for the season and provides the greatest selection of vegetable varieties. Others buy these plants from their local garden center. Start seeds of shorter season crops like greens, radishes, and squash directly in the garden when the growing season begins. Check the seed packet for specific directions on when and how to plant these seeds indoors and out.

When shopping for seeds, select varieties suited to your climate and known for their disease resistance and high yield. Most vegetables produce best when grown in full sun. Greens and root crops are a bit more shade tolerant.

Once planted, cover the soil surrounding the seeded rows and transplants with a thin layer of shredded leaves, herbicide-free grass clippings or evergreen needles. This mulch helps conserve moisture and suppress weeds. Plus, it improves the soil as it breaks down. You'll save time and improve your plants' health and productivity with this one task.

After it's planted and mulched, you'll spend minimal time maintaining your garden. But be sure to plan a bit of time to enjoy the big, flavorful harvest your high yield garden is sure to provide.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books,

including "Small Space Gardening".