FoodPrint.

GET GROWING
STEP BY STEP GUIDE

Growing your own food is a hands-on way to lower your foodprint and get closer to the process of where your food comes from. Gardening can be done on any scale, including on a windowsill. With the right plan in hand, a home garden can easily fit the demands of busy lives, small spaces and/or tight budgets. Use our interactive PDF to learn the basics and find links to further information.

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1. Pick a Space

Decide if you'll be growing outdoors or indoors. Do you have a yard? An alley? A community garden plot? A roof or windowsill?

2. Find a Water Source

Some options include your sink and a watering can; a hose; or a simple irrigation system.

3. Read Up

There are plenty of great websites and books that can teach you the basics, everything from container gardening to square foot gardening.

4. Figure Out What You Can Grow

What you can grow depends on your local climate and possibly the kind of soil you've got. Discover what will thrive in your area by using a guide like the USDA Plant Hardiness Map or the National Gardening Association's Garden Planting Calendar.

5. Talk to an Expert/ Find a Mentor

You don't have to do this alone! We have gathered tips from experts on FoodPrint, there are many online forums, and you can find Master Gardener volunteers through your local extension office who can offer in-person advice.

6. Choose Seeds, Starts or Both

Some plants start best from seeds. With some you're better off buying them as young plants. Learn which are which and figure out what's best for you.

7. Get Seeds

You can buy seeds or get them from friends or neighbors. There are many wonderful seed companies who offer beautiful varieties (and beautiful catalogues to peruse).

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8. Get the Essential Tools

Make sure you have some basic tools to get your gardening jobs done: gardening gloves, a spade, garden scissors and a hand trowel will all come in handy.

9. Prepare and Treat Your Soil Right

Good soil leads to nutritious, flavorful plants. Before planting, first figure out what kind of soil you have and then prepare your soil by adding in organic fertilizer, compost, and, if your soil is too acidic, sulfur.

10. Start Seeds/ Make Seed Starter Pots

Starting seeds indoors means you can get a head start during the cold weather. Keep in mind it doesn't work well for all seeds – read seed packets for instructions about what's best for that particular plant. You can use store-bought containers or DIY using recycled materials.

11. Don't Overwater

Skip watering from above; extra water on plant leaves can cause disease. Instead, water near the roots, soaking the soil about 6-inches deep, to reach the plant's roots.

12. Control Pests Responsibly

Cultivating the soil and mulching can help keep weeds down; the fewer weeds, the fewer pests your garden will attract. Avoid toxic pesticides.

13. Harvest and Enjoy

Fruits and vegetables won't improve in flavor or texture after being harvested, and should be picked at peak ripeness. Avoid bruising or damaging in storage, which can encourage spoilage.

14. Start a Compost Pile

Composting often goes hand-in-hand with gardening. It gives your food a second life, transforming it into a nutrient-rich material that can be used for home-gardening and farming.

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