

Spring into Gardening

If you live in a place where the weather is warm most of the year, then you've already seen many different types of plants and flowers this spring

season. If you live further north, now may be the perfect time to think about planting a garden. Here are a few tips to get started.



Cool Kinds of Gardens

Gardens can grow just about anywhere!

Rooftop Gardens

Since some places in large cities do not have much extra land for gardening, many people use the rooftops of buildings to plant gardens. This is a great way to use the extra space on roofs for a very special purpose.



Container Gardens

All you need to create a container garden is a bag of potting soil, a package of seeds, and regular watering. Container gardeners use everyday containers such as buckets, old gutters, and wheelbarrows to grow all sorts of flowers and vegetables. An adult may need to drill holes in the bottom of the container to make sure that water drains through. These kinds of gardens are fun to look at, and they're a great way to recycle old things you have at home!



Yes, Grandpa is old, but no, you cannot use him for a container garden!



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY

Cool Garden Creatures

Bees are a garden's best friend. Bees love to buzz from flower to flower to collect pollen and nectar. As the bees travel to each flower, pollen from the bees lands on a special part of the flower that helps the flowers produce fruit and more flowers. Without bees, plants would not even exist!

Earthworms may be squiggly and squirmy, but they can help your plants grow. These underground creatures create tunnels in the soil as they squiggle and squirm. The tunnels create spaces for air and water to get to the roots of plants. Earthworms also eat things in the ground like dead leaves, grass, and yes, even dirt! After an earthworm's yummy meal, it produces waste called "castings." This adds great nutrients to the soil to help plants grow even healthier. The more worms in your garden, the better!





How to Plant a Garden

Step 1: Ask an adult for permission.

It is probably not a good idea to start digging in your backyard without asking a parent first! If you are not able to plant a garden in your backyard (or if you live in an apartment or condo), you could make a cool container garden instead.

Step 2: Choose the type of garden you will grow.

Decide what you want to grow in your garden. You could grow vegetables or flowers—or both! If you choose a vegetable garden, find out which vegetables grow well in your area. Ask a parent to help you buy a few packets of seeds. Here are some seeds that grow quickly: sunflowers (unless your garden is big, plant just one or two of these since they take a lot of room), leaf lettuce, radishes, cherry tomatoes, and snow peas (these last two are fun to eat right off the vine!).

Step 3: Choose a good spot with lots of sunshine.

Plants need plenty of sunshine, so be sure to choose a space that gets lots of sun. Your garden will thank you!

Step 4: Prepare the soil.

Once you find a good gardening spot, use a shovel to break up and loosen the dirt. Remove rocks and sticks. Ask a grownup to check your soil; you might need to add some compost, manure, or other organic material. Soil that is too hard is not good gardening soil.

Step 5: Plant the seeds!

Ask your mom or dad to help you follow the planting directions on the back of your packet of seeds.

Step 6: Water your garden regularly.

Make sure your garden gets plenty of water. Some gardeners say that your garden should get about 1 inch of water each week. Unless it rains, you'll need to use a watering can, hose, or sprinkler.

Step 7: Wait, wait, and wait.

Now it's your job to wait! Within a few weeks you should have a spouting garden.



Make Your Own Egg Carton Garden!

Here is a fun way to make a garden right in your home! It's best if you do this activity outside, since you may get a little dirty.

Here's what you'll need:

- Styrofoam or plastic egg carton
- Potting soil
- A spoon
- Seeds of your choice
- Water
- A pen or pair of scissors

Here's what to do:

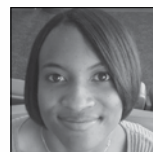
1. Carefully cut off the flat top of the egg carton. Put it aside for later.
2. Poke a small hole in the bottom of each egg space with a pen or a pair of scissors.
3. Using a spoon, carefully fill each egg space with soil.
4. Make a small hole with your finger in the dirt of each egg space.
5. Plant three or four seeds into each hole and cover with soil.
6. Place the cut-off top of the egg carton under the soil-filled part of the carton. This will catch any water that drains from the holes.
7. Pour just enough water into the carton to dampen the soil. Do not add too much water—that can make it hard for the plant to grow.
8. Take the egg carton inside and put it in a warm, dry place in your house where it will not be disturbed.
9. Watch your garden grow!

Sun
Water
Seeds
Soil



Depending on the type of seeds you plant, the seeds should sprout within a couple of weeks. Keep the soil moist while you wait. After your plants begin to grow, place your garden on a windowsill where your seedlings will get more sunlight. When the weather outside is warm with no more days of chilly frost, you can plant your seedlings outside.

Enjoy watching your garden grow!



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