

# Gardens Large and Small

Last year more people than ever planted a garden, including The First Lady! Planting a garden is an activity that gives you a special connection to the earth and provides nutritious fruits and vegetables for your family.

Not only does a vegetable garden provide an amazing cost saving for food, it is a much better use of available land than grass or ornamental plantings. Gardening also provides healthy physical activity that every member of the family can participate in regardless of age.

Whether you live in the country, suburbs or inner city everyone can grow a garden. You don't require a large space to garden – even an apartment dweller can put in a container garden and most can put in a square foot garden.

The square foot garden is just that, one square foot. They are easy to tuck into even the smallest location. The square foot can be a tiny window box, a square in the corner of a parking lot, playground, front, back or side yard. They can be planted singly or in groups. If you plant enough of them together you can create a large garden in one space or lots of little gardens in many spaces, thus, creating little pockets of peace and tranquility.

The square foot garden can be prepped and planted in an hour or two by even young children. In fact, it's so easy and fun to do, it can be hard to stop at one!

Select a location that is easy to access – full sun for at least 6 hours is best. But, there are plants that work in partial sun or shade. Easy access to water is important for larger garden groupings, but a single square foot garden can be watered easily with a half gallon size water bottle.

If you haven't gardened before you should start out small and grow the size of your garden as your skills develop.



## Seed and Plant Resources

There are plenty of online resources for seeds or plants for your square foot garden(s). Sometimes, however, it's nice to order the catalogs so you can compare varieties side-by-side and figure out what will fit well in your garden.

[Burpee](#) – The perennial (pun intended) source for all things gardening. Offers vegetables, herbs, flowers, seeds and plants.

[Gurney's](#) – Vegetables, flowers, fruit and flowering trees, seeds and plants.

[Territorial Seed Co.](#) - Offers wide array of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers - many not available elsewhere. A bonus of this company is they are certified to ship many live plants to states with tough agricultural restrictions, such as CA, AZ, FL and HI.

[Johnny's Selected Seeds](#) – Employee owned company with over 35 years in the business.

[Bountiful Gardens](#) – a non-profit sells untreated open-pollinated non-GMO seed of heirloom quality for vegetables, herbs, flowers and grains. They also specialize in rare and unusual varieties, medicinal herbs and super-nutrition varieties.

As you look over the catalogs think about what kind of garden you want to grow. Below are some “theme” garden ideas perfect for a square foot garden:

**Miniature Garden** - plant varieties that will stay really small, such as baby carrots, tiny pumpkins, miniature eggplant or grape tomatoes.

**Pizza Garden** - grow ingredients to make your own pizza, like tomatoes, onions, basil and oregano.

**Salsa Garden** – grow ingredients to make salsa, such as tomatoes, jalapeno peppers, onions and cilantro.

**Butterfly Garden** - plant varieties of flowers and plants which attract butterflies or hummingbirds.

**Fragrant garden** – plant a selection of fragrant plants and herbs – some plants are only fragrant at night.

**Rainbow Garden** - Use plants that show off the different colors of the rainbow.

Or you can also plant a larger plot with foods that you like to eat.

Regardless of the size of your garden you should sketch out your space and what you’d like to fit in it. This gives you an opportunity to visualize the space and make sure that you have room to grow what you want.

In most parts of the country, April is the time to at least start working the soil if not actually planting the garden. Be sure to work when the ground isn’t soggy.

First, mark out the space for your garden and clear the soil of existing plants and weeds to a depth of 8 – 12 inches.

You do this with a shovel, hoe or spade and break up the clumps of soil and remove the plant matter (set aside). Mix compost in with your dirt to organically enrich the soil and improve the texture.

For a square foot garden this will only take an hour or so at the most. Larger plots will take more time. If using containers to garden in the preparation of the planting bed takes even less time.

Remember, when it comes to your garden it is best to grow organically. You can augment the soil during growing season with an organic fertilizer, such as fish emulsion, bone meal, blood meal, bat guano or other natural nutrients.

Fortunately, most plants natural imperative is to grow and thrive. With the right amount of water and sunlight most plant and seeds from reputable nurseries will germinate and grow with little trouble.

Just pay close attention to the descriptions in the catalogs. These will help you make the right choices about what works for your climate, and what suits your families taste.

Keep in mind that some types of vegetables are heavy producers: 2 - 3 zucchini plants may provide plenty of squash for a family for the season – so plant accordingly.

Some vegetables actually grow better just placed in the yard in a spot by themselves than in a row e.g. zucchini, tomatoes, melons, cucumbers. Also don’t forget the vertical space in your garden. Many plants will climb if provided with the means to do so.

Plant your garden and watch it grow!

Additional Resources for gardening:

[Shirley’s Garden](#)

[National Gardening Association](#)

[Kids Gardening](#)

[Container Gardening](#)

[Journey to Forever](#) – a treasure trove of articles books and websites for the container gardener