PLANT SOMETHING

A Simple Guide to Growing Your First Garden



You don't need a perfect garden. You just need to plant something.

Maybe you've been thinking about growing a garden for years.

Maybe you've bought the seeds.

Maybe those seeds are currently sitting in a drawer because you aren't quite sure what happens next. 😂

Good news: **you don't need a huge garden, fancy equipment, or a degree in horticulture to get started.**

You need a little space, a little sunlight, and the willingness to give something a try.

This guide will help you choose a few beginner-friendly plants, figure out where to put them, and make a simple plan you can actually follow.

Let's get something growing.



Rooted in Reality

Gardening for real life, real people, and the occasional plant that refuses to cooperate.

START WITH THE SPACE YOU HAVE

Before you buy 37 packets of seeds because the pictures looked good, take a look at your growing space.

You don't need much.

Backyard Garden

Have a patch of sunny ground? Great. You can grow everything from vegetables and herbs to flowers for pollinators.

Think about:

- How much sunlight does the area get?
- Does water drain well?
- Is there easy access to a hose?
- How much space do you realistically want to maintain?

Small Space

Even a sunny corner can become a garden. Try:

- Herbs
- Lettuce
- Radishes
- Green onions
- Bush beans
- Compact tomatoes

Raised Bed

Raised beds are a great option if you want a defined growing area. They're especially helpful when you want to control the soil and keep your garden contained.

Containers

No yard? No problem.

Tomatoes, peppers, herbs, lettuce, radishes, and some compact varieties of vegetables can grow happily in containers.

Just remember: containers dry out faster than garden soil.

YOUR REAL-LIFE GARDEN RULE:

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Start with the space you actually have—not the space you wish you had.

A small garden you enjoy is better than a giant garden you dread maintaining.

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PICK YOUR FIRST PLANTS

Now for the fun part.
You do NOT need to grow everything.
In fact, I recommend starting with 3-5 things you actually want to eat or use.

BEGINNER-FRIENDLY PICKS

Want something quick?
Try lettuce or radishes.

Want something that keeps producing?
Try green beans.

Want something for summer meals?
Try zucchini.

Want something you can preserve?
Try tomatoes.

Want fresh herbs?
Try basil, parsley, chives, or dill.

Want something you plant and harvest later?
Try garlic.

Want something the kids might enjoy?
Try sugar snap peas or cherry tomatoes.



DON'T FORGET FLOWERS!

Your garden doesn't have to be all vegetables.

Add a few flowers such as:

- **Marigolds**
- **Zinnias**
- **Sunflowers**
- **Calendula**
- **Nasturtiums**

Flowers can bring color, pollinators, and a little joy to your garden.

THE "WILL I ACTUALLY EAT THIS?" TEST

Before planting something, ask:

Would I buy this at the grocery store?

If the answer is no, you probably don't need 14 plants.

Unless, of course, you really enjoy giving zucchini to everyone you've ever met.



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KNOW BEFORE YOU PLANT

A little planning now can save you a lot of frustration later.



☀️ SUNLIGHT

Most vegetables need plenty of sunlight.
A good beginner goal is to find a location that receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day.
Some leafy greens can tolerate less.



💧 WATER

Your garden needs consistent moisture, especially while seeds are germinating and plants are getting established.
A garden close to your house is often easier to maintain because you're more likely to notice when it needs water.
If your garden is a quarter-mile hike from the hose…you may suddenly become very good at forgetting about it.



🌱 SOIL

Healthy soil gives plants a much better start.
Look for soil that:

- Drains reasonably well
- Isn't packed hard
- Contains organic matter
- Holds moisture without staying soggy
- Adding compost can help improve many garden soils.



📏 SPACING

More plants isn't always better.
Plants need room for:

- Roots
- Air circulation
- Sunlight
- Growth
- You!
- Follow the spacing recommendations on your seed packet or plant tag.



🌡️ TIMING

Planting dates depend on where you live.
Your local last spring frost date and first fall frost date are useful starting points for planning.
Don't rush the garden just because the calendar says spring.
Sometimes Mother Nature has other plans.

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MAKE A SIMPLE PLANTING PLAN

You don't need graph paper, a ruler, or a spreadsheet with seventeen tabs.
You just need a basic plan.

MY PLANTING PLAN

Plant #1: _____

Where will I plant it?

How many will I plant?

When will I plant it?

What does it need?

- ☐ **Full sun**
- ☐ **Partial shade**
- ☐ **Regular watering**
- ☐ **Support/trellis**
- ☐ **Other:** _____

Plant #2: _____

Where will I plant it?

How many will I plant?

When will I plant it?

What does it need?

- ☐ **Full sun**
- ☐ **Partial shade**
- ☐ **Regular watering**
- ☐ **Support/trellis**
- ☐ **Other:** _____

Plant #3: _____

Where will I plant it?

How many will I plant?

When will I plant it?

What does it need?

- ☐ **Full sun**
- ☐ **Partial shade**
- ☐ **Regular watering**
- ☐ **Support/trellis**
- ☐ **Other:** _____



ONE MORE THING...

Leave yourself some walking space.
Future You will appreciate being able to reach the tomatoes without performing an Olympic-level obstacle course.

YOUR FIRST WEEK IN THE GARDEN

You've planted something.
Now what?
Don't panic.
Your job during the first week is mostly to pay attention.



DAY 1 — PLANT

Get those seeds or plants into the ground.
Water gently and give yourself a little high five.
Seriously.



DAY 2 — CHECK

Take a look at the soil.
Is it dry?
Does it still feel moist?
You don't need to drown your plants
to prove you love them.



DAY 3 — OBSERVE

Look for:
- Seedlings emerging
- Wilting
- Pests
- Dry soil
- Anything unusual



DAY 4 — WATER AS NEEDED

Water based on the condition of the soil
and the needs of your plants—not simply
because it's Tuesday.



DAY 5 — LOOK AROUND

Pull a few weeds while they're tiny.
Tiny weeds are annoying.
Giant weeds have confidence.



DAY 6 — CHECK YOUR PLAN

Is everything where you expected it to be?
Did you learn something?
Make a note.



DAY 7 — CELEBRATE

You planted something.
That's a win.
Your garden doesn't have to be
perfect to be successful.

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NOW KEEP GROWING



Here's the secret nobody tells you when you first start gardening:

You will make mistakes.
You will forget to water something.
You will plant something too close together.
A bug will eat something you were looking forward to eating.
You will accidentally pull a plant that you thought was a weed.
And at some point, you will probably grow an absurd amount of zucchini.

That's gardening.
The goal isn't perfection.
The goal is to learn, grow, and enjoy the process.

YOUR NEXT STEP

Now that you've planted something, choose one small gardening goal.

- ☐ Grow one more vegetable
- ☐ Start an herb garden
- ☐ Add flowers for pollinators
- ☐ Try growing garlic
- ☐ Start a garden journal
- ☐ Plan a larger garden
- ☐ Learn how to preserve something I grow
- ☐ Just keep the plants I already have alive 😂

REMEMBER:

You don't need to grow everything.
You don't need a perfect garden.
You don't need to know everything before you begin.

YOU JUST NEED TO PLANT SOMETHING.

And then see what happens.

KEEP GROWING WITH ROOTED IN REALITY

Looking for more practical gardening help?
Explore the Rooted in Reality garden guides, planners, and real-life gardening tips.

🌱 **Garden Planning**
Get your garden organized before the first seed goes in the ground.

🧄 **Garlic Growing**
Ready to grow garlic? Start with the Rooted in Reality Garlic Growing Guide.

🌿 **Gardening Tips & Ideas**
Practical ideas for growing, organizing, harvesting, and enjoying your garden.