

# Apartment Gardening

*A Practical Guide to  
growing Vegetables  
in small spaces*

By Jami Leigh  
*YoungWivesGuide.com*

Please visit [YoungWivesGuide.com/Design](http://YoungWivesGuide.com/Design) for cover design and formatting.

### **Disclaimer**

This book contains some affiliate links. If you purchase through them, the author receives a small commission which benefits our family. Thank you.

Jami Leigh

© 2012 | All rights reserved.

[YoungWivesGuide.com](http://YoungWivesGuide.com) | [Facebook.com/YoungWivesGuide](https://www.facebook.com/YoungWivesGuide) | [@YoungWivesGuide](https://www.instagram.com/YoungWivesGuide)

# Table of Contents

## Introduction

Chapter 1: Biblical Truths Found in the Garden

Chapter 2: What to Plant

Chapter 3: Setting Gardening Goals

Chapter 4: When to Plant

Chapter 5: Start Your Seeds

Chapter 6: Quick & Easy Seed Starting Method

Chapter 7: Transplanting Your Seedlings

Chapter 8: Growing from Young Plants

Chapter 9: Caring for Your Vegetables

Chapter 10: Benefits of Growing Herbs

Chapter 11: Herb Gardening 101

Chapter 12: Why Grow Organically

Chapter 13: Making Your Own Worm Compost

Chapter 14: What are GMOs?

Chapter 15: How to Garden Organically

Chapter 16: The Story of the “Good” Bug

Chapter 17: Harvesting Your Garden

Chapter 18: Enjoy Your Harvest ~ Juicing

Chapter 19: Enjoy your Plants Year Round

Chapter 20: Preserving~ Spring Berries

Chapter 21: Preserving ~ Swiss Chard

Chapter 22: Preserving ~Tomatoes

Chapter 23: Canning, Freezing, & Dehydrating

Chapter 24: All About Sunlight

## Suggested Resources

About the Author

About the Contributors

Image Credits

# Introduction

Gardening can be an excellent way to save money, eat healthy, and incorporate more vegetables into your diet.

My husband and I are eating healthy this year. We eat fairly healthy now, but are really committing to whole/real foods this year. And this means more vegetables.

But vegetables are so expensive, and prices are still on the rise.

Many wonderful bloggers and friends around the country are also eating healthy and they have a garden in their backyard to help feed their family frugally.



When preparing dinner, they can walk out back and pick some fresh vegetables, or they can them to enjoy them all year long.

I never thought this was possible because we live in the “city” in an apartment. We live on the second floor and have no way to grow a regular garden.

But the more I researched and read about eating healthy, the more I saw people mention that the best way to get more vegetables for a good price was to grow your own! Every once in a while someone

would mention that they had tomatoes in a container or herbs in their kitchen.

So I began wondering if I could maybe grow a few things. I thought I would grow a couple tomatoes and some herbs in my kitchen. To my surprise, I found out that I could grow an entire garden on my patio, and actually grow almost any vegetable that I wanted.

This is an introduction book to gardening. I didn't know anything about gardening before I began this journey and it was hard to find information on where to begin.



This book will cover everything you need to start gardening including:

- 🍅 *How to know what to plant where you live*
- 🍅 *When to plant*
- 🍅 *How to care for your plants and transplanting*
- 🍅 *When and how to harvest*
- 🍅 *Organic Gardening 101*
- 🍅 *How to grow an herb garden*
- 🍅 *Canning and keeping vegetables throughout the year*

I hope that you enjoy this journey as I have. I will never go back to all store bought vegetables again!

So as this journey begins, start to think about what you want to grow. For my family, in the beginning, tomatoes and herbs were our main focus and we have since branched out into cumpers, peppers, green onions and more!

Before we dig into the meat of how to start a garden, I ask that you take a few minutes to prepare your heart. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” This is just as applicable in the garden as it is in the pew on Sunday morning. My wonderful friend Alina Joy will help us to kick this book off by sharing a few Biblical truths that can be found in the garden.

# Chapter 1: Biblical Truths Found in the Garden

By Alina Joy~ Good Old Days Farm

So, you're considering starting a garden. You may be wondering if this is actually feasible or if it's just another crazy idea. How much time, effort and money should you invest in your little garden, anyway? Can you reap a harvest in such a small space? Will your investment be worth it in the end?

Friends, the benefits to gardening go far beyond being able to eat your own tomatoes and beans this summer. What if I told you that your little garden has an eternal importance to God? God has lessons for us in gardening. Think about it! When God created Adam and Eve and wanted to give them a perfect home, he didn't give them a big fancy house with a white picket fence and cable TV.

He gave them a garden to take care of and live in! Later, God chose to place His chosen people (the Israelites) in Canaan, a land "flowing with milk and honey," prime land for supporting the Israelite's agricultural lifestyle. As one His chosen people now, God is in Heaven preparing a place for you. Did you know that your Heavenly home will include a garden? Isaiah describes it like this:

*"And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." ~Isaiah 65:1-2*

As the wife of a fruit and vegetable farmer, I can tell you that there is nothing easy about gardening! I can also tell you that God wrote two books: The Bible, and the book of Nature. If you are looking for them, your garden can reveal many lessons about the character of its Creator and the Plan of Salvation.



Let's start with the soil. Although God created the earth to yield its bounty to us, once sin entered the world things changed. Sin became a curse to the soil (Genesis 4:21). In a similar way, sin is also a curse to the soil of our heart. Jeremiah 4:3 gives instructions to the repentant. "Break up your fallow ground" he says, "and sow not among thorns." Fallow ground is ground that has been used for agriculture in the past, but has been neglected for at least one season.

This is not ground that is ready for planting. This is ground that needs a lot of work! I've seen on our farm that it doesn't take long for weeds to take over! It's a big job to get fallow ground ready for seed. The fallow ground of our hearts can only be broken up by deep repentance.

Once the ground is ready, it is time to plant seeds. Have you ever watched a seed sprout? They'll sit in the ground for a week or more and suddenly sprout up over night! There is nothing you can do to make that seed sprout an hour or a day after you plant it. You can talk to it and wish for it to sprout all you want, but ultimately it needs God's power to sprout.

Similarly, we also need God's power to develop spiritually. You can say that you want to be a Christian and you want a changed heart, but the only way for either to happen is by acknowledging that the power is in God's hands and we cannot do this in our own strength.



As the plants in our gardens grow, we find ourselves in a constant battle against disease, pests and weeds. We planted 100 tomato transplants last week and the very next morning we noticed that worms had already attacked some of the plants and killed them. For a gardener, disease, pests and weeds are a real trial! What kind of trials do you have in your life? How are you bearing up under them? I love the way the Amplified Bible expresses James 1:12:

*“Blessed (happy, to be envied) is the man who is patient under trial and stands up under temptation, for when he has stood the test and been approved, he will receive [the victor’s] crown of life which God has promised to those who love him.”*

Whatever your trials might be, the Lord allows just the right trials to help us develop into sturdy little plants, fit for His Kingdom!

Once the seed has sprouted and the plant is growing, the gardener’s work is not over. The plants still need to be cared for. They need to receive nourishment from the sun and water every day. Without this, the plants will shrivel up and die. Similarly, we need to be nourished by Living Water every day. Without daily time in the scriptures, we will also shrivel up and die spiritually.

Another thing that the gardener must do during this growing stage is to fertilize the garden, especially weak plants that need the extra boost. Did you know that the Bible talks about fertilizing plants? In Luke 13:6-9 we find this parable:

*“...A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.”*

Now why would God include this story of a most un-promising fig tree in the Bible? How is your life? Is it bearing fruit? Are you going through a long, dry season of trial and tribulation? The gardener in

Luke 13 did not give up on this fig tree that was not bearing fruit. Instead he gave it extra care and attention. This is exactly what the Lord will do for us! When our lives seem unpromising is when He pours out extra grace and mercy on us!

This week, my farmer-husband has been spending a lot of time mulching his plants! Here in Texas, it gets to be 108 degrees Fahrenheit in the summer and even our established fruit trees need to be protected from that kind of heat! Mulching the vegetables and the fruit trees helps to maintain the soil temperature.

The soil can be kept 20 degrees cooler than the air if a plant is properly mulched! For the plant, that can make the difference between surviving 88 degree soil or being scorched in 108 degree soil! Can you think of examples in your own life of how the Lord has protected you?

Now comes my least favorite part of gardening! Weeding! Weeding is hard work! The only way to permanently get rid of a weed is to remove it completely by the roots. Weeds must be removed immediately or they will spread! A single weed can produce hundreds of seeds which can become plants and can each produce hundreds of more seeds in turn. They will take over your garden by increasing exponentially if you aren't diligent about removing them!

What weeds do you have in your life? Have you made mistakes? Failed? Do you have bad habits? These are all sin. We can't leave them in our lives without risking that they will spread and take over, choking out anything that is good! The only way to deal with these is to let the Master Gardener remove them completely!

Finally, if you have diligently prepared your soil, planted good seed, fertilized, nourished and protected your plants, your garden will produce fruit (or vegetables!) and you will reap a sweet harvest! From your little patio garden you can harvest tomatoes, peas and beans, but what will be the harvest of your soul?

You are looking forward to harvest time when you can taste the fruit and vegetables you have been working so hard to cultivate! You would be disappointed if all your plants withered and died of neglect. In the

same way, the Lord wants to reap a rich, bountiful harvest from the garden of your heart. What will He find when He examines your soul?

So go ahead! Start that garden and enjoy the fruit of your labor! But don't forget to keep your eyes open for spiritual lessons that the Lord has for us in each step along the way!

# Chapter 2: What to Plant

Growing a vegetable garden can be so rewarding and fun! Up until recently, I didn't think that it was possible for us since we live in an apartment.

But not only is it possible, it's fairly easy (once you get the hang of it), it's cheap and you can reap wonderful benefits all year long!

I am telling you up front that I am in no way an expert! I still have a lot of learning and growing to do when it comes to gardening.

But when I decided I wanted to garden, I didn't know anything so I had to start from scratch. I spent many hours researching and trying to figure out how to even start.



I felt overwhelmed by the language and what to do to first. So my goal in this eBook is to get you started. **I want to give you the tools you need to start gardening.** I didn't know where to start or even what questions to ask first.

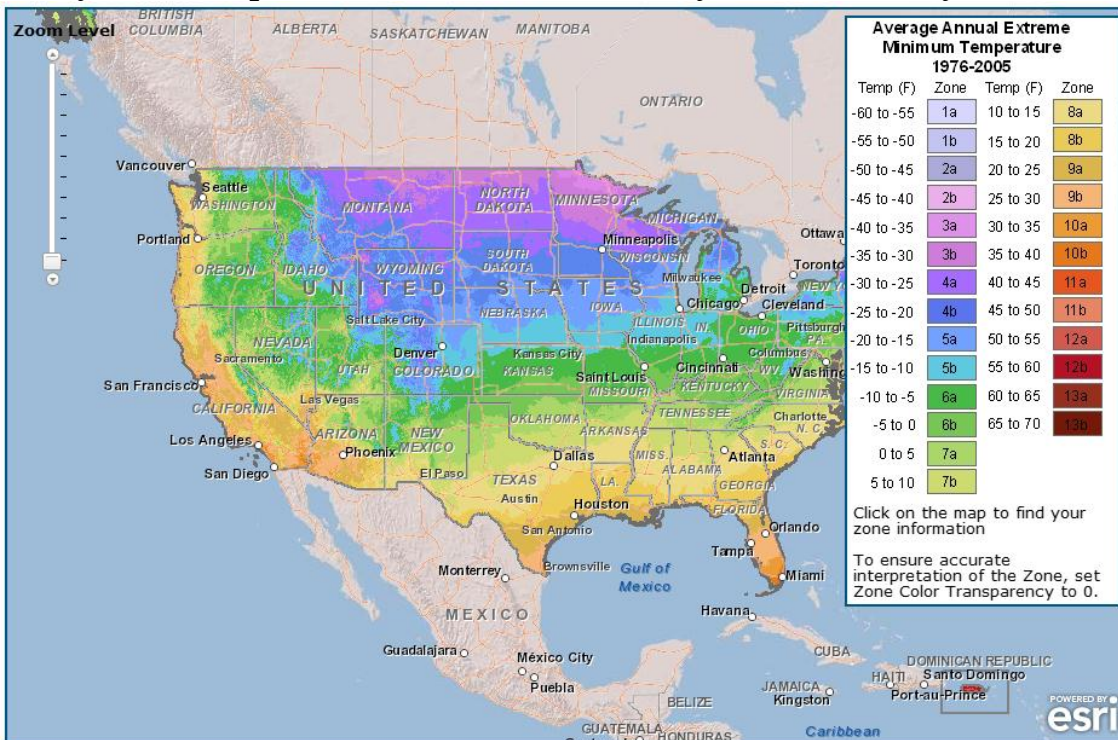
So the first thing I came to was finding out what I could grow in my area. Finding out what grows well in your area is essential. Once you know this, you can move on to finding out the best time of year to plant and then caring for the plants.

This was the hardest thing for me when I first started gardening. How do you know what to plant? Someone who lives in Maine cannot plant the same things as someone in California. So before talking about growing conditions, when to grow or harvest, you must first figure out what you can grow where you live.

## 1 DETERMINE WHAT ZONE YOU LIVE IN

The [USDA Plant Hardiness Zone](#) map is the standard by which gardeners and growers use to determine which plants are most likely to thrive at a specific location.

In this map, the United States is broken down into 13 zones. It was recently updated in January 2012, so check it out for any changes. Type in your zip code to find your zone. [This interactive map](#) will show you a complete breakdown of the city or area that you live in.



The updated zone map shows that, for example, I live in zone 10a. Now that I know my zone, I can better determine what plants will generally work well in my area or not without having to

## **2** FIND PLANTS THAT WORK WELL IN YOUR ZONE

Knowing your zone can help you determine what plants are probably best to plant in your area. Plant catalogs or seed packets often refer to zones. If you know your zone it is easy to determine whether that plant is likely to succeed in your area.

For example, if you live in Zone 3 and pick up seeds that recommend zones 8-10, then it's likely those seeds will not do well.

Another great source is the internet of course. Google "best plants to grow in zone 4", and you are bound to get MANY local gardeners who are happy to help or share their experience growing in your area.

## **3** SELECT PLANTS THAT DO WELL IN CONTAINERS

A surprising amount of vegetables do great in containers! I thought I would be really limited by what I could grow but so far I can grow just about anything I want (I live in a warm climate too, which helps).

Choose wisely, and your plants should do well. If you are still not sure ask your local nursery for advice, as they should be happy to help you select the best plants for containers.

### **Tomatoes**

Tomatoes are a great choice for container gardening! My goal this year is to grow so many tomatoes that I can freeze and can enough to live off of for the year.

Tomatoes work well in pretty much any container and also in all the new containers that hang them upside down.

### **Cucumbers**

I thought that cucumbers needed lots of room to grow (like a whole hill) but containers are great for cucumbers as long as they have some room to grow (or get ones that will grow up a trellis).

## Peppers

My husband is particularly happy about this one. We have three different kinds of peppers growing right now on our window sill. He loves fresh peppers, and they are fairly easy to grow!



## Herbs

There are too many herbs to list here, but many types of herbs make great candidates for containers as they don't often require deep roots. I will cover more about herbs later.

## Green Onions

These do well in containers as they do not have extensive root systems and do not require a lot of room, as they grow tall.

It's also important to know which plants do not do well in containers. Asparagus, pumpkins (obviously), and other vegetables that require a lot of space do not make good candidates for containers.

## 4 SHADE OR NO SHADE

Shade on your patio is another important factor in deciding what plants to grow. Most vegetables are sun lovers, so they are going to want a lot of time in the sun! Keep in mind that afternoon sun is hotter than morning sun, so plants do not need as much time in afternoon sun as morning sun or they may dry out.

Some vegetables, such as tomatoes and peppers, need at least 6 hours of sunlight per day. If your patio doesn't offer this much sun, then the sun loving vegetables may not work. But it is still possible to [grow with less sunlight](#).

But there are many you can grow in little sun and lots of shade including: broccoli, cauliflower, beets, peas, different types of lettuce, beans, radishes and other cold tempered vegetables. Here's a [handy guide](#) to help determine sunlight and your plants.

Finding these things out and determining the area you live in can help you to select what types of vegetables you can try to grow in your area. It's important to know what zone you live in, what plants work well in that zone, what vegetables grow well in containers, and how much shade your patio gets.



After figuring these first steps out it's time to figure out **when** you are to plant. Some parts of the US can begin planting in January while others have to wait until June.



# Chapter 3: Setting Gardening Goals

By Joanie ~Simple Living Mama

The first year that I ever tried to grow anything was a disaster. I knew that I wanted some tomatoes and peppers, but I did not have a clear picture of how I was going to help my plants grow and actually set fruit. The only vegetable I got from my pepper and tomato plants was a tiny, sad bell pepper.

I learned from this mistake. This year was going to be different. I wanted to grow things and actually be successful. The first thing I decided to do differently was set gardening goals. It is important to have a clear picture of what you want to achieve from your garden. I grow a lot in containers and I have to be realistic about what I can grow.



The first thing I do when I begin setting my gardening goals is get a planner together. I like to use a regular spiral notebook to keep track of

everything garden related. I started by writing down the things that I wanted to grow. When you are a beginner gardener, it is best to start small. I knew that I wanted to grow some herbs in pots, as well as tomatoes and peppers. My husband decided to plant blueberry bushes in containers, too.

Once you have a general idea of what you want to plant, you need to figure out when to plant it. I found the website, [www.sproutrobot.com](http://www.sproutrobot.com) through Pinterest. All you do is enter your zip code and it will tell you exactly when to plant your seeds or seedlings. I write all of this down in my notebook, too.

So, with my notes in hand I can decide when will be the best time to plant certain crops. If you're growing veggies in containers, I recommend buying seedlings rather than seeds. When you start seeds you usually end up with a lot of plants. If you only need one or two tomato plants, for instance, just buy the seedlings. You also will not have to worry about getting the seeds going or thinning them out.

You can use your notebook to keep track of everything that goes on during the growing season. How many peppers did your bell pepper plant yield? If you have it written down, it will be much harder to forget! You can use your notes to help you plan for the next season. If you decide that one of your goals is to produce enough food to not only feed you throughout the season, but to have enough to store for the winter, you will have a much better idea if you know how much a single plant usually yields you.

When you first start gardening there is a lot to learn. I know my gardening goals this year are pretty plain and simple. I just want to get something edible from my garden. As the season goes on I will be able to keep track of my yields and then use that information for next season when I feel more confident in my gardening and want to grow more to either can or freeze for later.

# Chapter 4: When to Plant

You have to first know what will grow well in your area and what you can grow on your patio before know **when to plant**.

## 1 SEEDS OR YOUNG PLANTS

The first thing that you must determine is if you want to start your garden from seeds or from young plants. Seeds are by far the cheapest option. You can get many containers of vegetables from just one \$1.25 packet of seeds. I buy seeds and then use only 1/4 – 1/2 of the seeds and keep the rest for next year.

I love doing seeds because they are cheap and it's fun to watch them grow. But they do take more work, and not all vegetables work as well from seeds.

Some vegetables can be very difficult to start from seeds and you are better off paying a little extra to buy a young plant. If you are very unsure of this whole planting thing, then just start off with young plants and worry about seeds next year!

**Vegetables that work well from seeds:** Beans, lettuce, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes and herbs

When in doubt, ask your local nursery for suggestions.

## 2 DETERMINE YOUR FROST FREE DATE

Most vegetables will not survive a frost. If you plant your vegetables outside too soon and there is a frost, they could die. So gardeners plan as best they can to plant after the last frost.

However, seeds need to be started weeks before the last frost, so some guessing is necessary at this point.



Thankfully, based on past data, we can fairly accurately predict the frosts. The [NCDC has a list by state](#) and city of first and last probable frost dates. Check out this list to get a good general idea of when your last frost will happen in your city or nearby. This will give you a good starting point.

See the website for more details on how to read the list. But basically,

*“This product contains station freeze/frost probability tables for each state. Given are the dates of probable first and last occurrence, during the year beginning August 1 and ending July 31 of freeze related temperatures, probable duration where the temperature exceeds certain freeze related values; and the probability of experiencing a given temperature, or less, during the year period August 1 through July 31.”*

**Freeze / Frost Occurrence Data**

All probabilities in whole percent. See notes for probability level description.  
- Indicates the probability of occurrence of threshold temperature is less than indicated probability.

| State And Station Name | T<br>h<br>r<br>e<br>s<br>h<br>o<br>l<br>d<br>(°F) | Spring<br>(Date)      |       |       | Fall<br>(Date)        |       |        | Freeze Free<br>Period (Days) |      |      | P<br>r<br>o<br>b<br>a<br>b<br>i<br>l<br>i<br>t<br>y<br>(%) |
|------------------------|---|-----------------------|-------|-------|-----------------------|-------|--------|------------------------------|------|------|--|
|                        |   | Probability Level (1) |       |       | Probability Level (2) |       |        | Probability Level (3)        |      |      |  |
|                        |   | 90                    | 50    | 10    | 10                    | 50    | 90     | 10                           | 50   | 90   |  |
| California             |   |                       |       |       |                       |       |        |                              |      |      |  |
| ADIRHS                 | 36  | Jan05                 | Jun27 | Jul18 | Aug15                 | Sep02 | Sep19  | 100                          | 66   | 32   | 89   |
|                        | 32  | Mar11                 | Jun08 | Jun08 | Aug17                 | Oct06 | Oct11  | 126                          | 100  | 72   | 47   |
|                        | 28  | Apr24                 | May15 | Jun05 | Sep14                 | Oct02 | Oct21  | 171                          | 140  | 108  | 33   |
| ALPINE                 | 36  | Jan24                 | Mar09 | Apr27 | Nov04                 | Dec08 | Jan07  | >365                         | 286  | 212  | 4  |
|                        | 32  | Jan14                 | Mar03 | Mar28 | Nov18                 | Dec11 | -      | >365                         | >365 | 227  | 1  |
|                        | 28  | -                     | -     | -     | Dec17                 | -     | -      | >365                         | >365 | 335  | 0  |
| ALTURAS                | 36  | Jan01                 | Jul17 | Jan11 | Aug17                 | Aug13 | Aug01  | 89                           | 27   | 8    | 79   |
|                        | 32  | Jan12                 | Jun30 | Jul18 | Aug14                 | Aug30 | Sep14  | 83                           | 65   | 27   | 56   |
|                        | 28  | Mar10                 | Jan02 | Jan06 | Aug16                 | Sep14 | Sept01 | 133                          | 153  | 72   | 44   |
| ANDWIN FAC UNINH-COL   | 36  | Apr12                 | May29 | Jun08 | Oct11                 | Nov10 | Nov30  | 217                          | 184  | 151  | 16   |
|                        | 32  | Mar10                 | Apr15 | May28 | Oct08                 | Nov30 | Jan02  | 288                          | 229  | 188  | 7  |
|                        | 28  | -                     | Feb11 | Apr06 | Nov06                 | Dec27 | -      | >365                         | 352  | 244  | 2  |
| ANTIOCH PUMP PLANT #3  | 36  | Jan26                 | Mar15 | May02 | Oct30                 | Nov02 | Dec14  | 310                          | 251  | 191  | 11   |
|                        | 32  | Dec29                 | Feb08 | Mar12 | Nov03                 | Dec01 | Dec25  | 266                          | 206  | 206  | 5  |
|                        | 28  | -                     | Jan10 | Feb03 | Nov23                 | Dec27 | -      | >365                         | 351  | 296  | 1  |
| ASHMOUNTAIN            | 36  | Mar11                 | Apr09 | May08 | Nov02                 | Nov18 | Dec04  | 254                          | 222  | 191  | 14   |
|                        | 32  | Jan05                 | Mar05 | Apr13 | Nov03                 | Dec01 | Dec22  | 315                          | 270  | 226  | 6  |
|                        | 28  | -                     | Jan14 | Mar13 | Dec02                 | Jan01 | -      | >365                         | >365 | 262  | 1  |
| AUBERRY 2 NW           | 36  | Mar22                 | Apr23 | May24 | Oct25                 | Nov12 | Nov29  | 238                          | 202  | 168  | 16   |
|                        | 32  | Feb24                 | Mar31 | May05 | Nov12                 | Nov29 | Dec10  | 277                          | 238  | 199  | 7  |
|                        | 28  | Nov30                 | Feb05 | Mar29 | Nov11                 | Dec17 | -      | >365                         | 316  | 252  | 2  |
| AUBURN                 | 36  | Mar08                 | Apr09 | May07 | Oct20                 | Nov14 | Nov30  | 256                          | 222  | 189  | 14   |
|                        | 32  | Jan08                 | Feb18 | Apr02 | Nov04                 | Dec01 | Dec23  | 338                          | 285  | 232  | 6  |
|                        | 28  | Jan06                 | Feb07 | Feb27 | Dec09                 | Dec21 | -      | >365                         | >365 | 312  | 1  |
| BAKERSFIELD KERN CO AP | 36  | Jan25                 | Mar01 | Apr01 | Nov08                 | Nov21 | Dec05  | 302                          | 265  | 227  | 9  |
|                        | 32  | Dec27                 | Jan25 | Feb24 | Dec04                 | Nov16 | Jan06  | >365                         | 316  | 277  | 3  |
|                        | 28  | -                     | Dec08 | Jan27 | Oct06                 | Jan01 | -      | >365                         | >365 | 321  | 1  |
| BALCH POWER HOUSE      | 36  | Mar08                 | Apr09 | May11 | Oct28                 | Nov18 | Dec08  | 262                          | 222  | 182  | 13   |
|                        | 32  | Jan10                 | Mar04 | Apr18 | Nov05                 | Dec05 | Dec21  | 227                          | 222  | 222  | 4  |
|                        | 28  | -                     | Jan11 | Feb27 | Nov30                 | Jan04 | -      | >365                         | >365 | 307  | 1  |
| BEAUMONT 1 E           | 36  | Mar21                 | Apr13 | May03 | Oct20                 | Nov09 | Nov30  | 238                          | 206  | 178  | 12   |
|                        | 32  | Feb11                 | Mar19 | Apr21 | Nov03                 | Nov29 | Dec22  | 252                          | 202  | 218  | 5  |
|                        | 28  | Dec14                 | Feb02 | Mar18 | Nov18                 | Dec17 | Jan24  | >365                         | 314  | 269  | 1  |
| BERKELEY               | 36  | -                     | Jan08 | Feb27 | Dec04                 | Jan10 | -      | >365                         | >365 | 303  | 1  |
|                        | 32  | -                     | -     | -     | Dec25                 | -     | -      | >365                         | >365 | >365 | 0  |
|                        | 28  | -                     | -     | -     | -                     | -     | -      | >365                         | >365 | >365 | 0  |
| BIG BAR 4 E            | 36  | Apr07                 | May18 | Jan02 | Sep20                 | Oct03 | Oct27  | 172                          | 148  | 119  | 32   |
|                        | 32  | Mar23                 | Apr21 | May19 | Oct08                 | Oct27 | Nov17  | 221                          | 189  | 157  | 18   |
|                        | 28  | Jan18                 | Mar12 | Apr18 | Oct14                 | Nov17 | Dec04  | 254                          | 201  | 169  | 7  |
| BIG BEAR LAKE          | 36  | Jan09                 | Jan26 | Apr14 | Aug11                 | Sep01 | Sep22  | 93                           | 66   | 40   | 64   |
|                        | 32  | May24                 | Jan07 | Jan22 | Sep10                 | Sep24 | Oct12  | 126                          | 106  | 89   | 53   |
|                        | 28  | Mar06                 | Mar23 | Jan02 | Sep10                 | Oct27 | Oct25  | 161                          | 136  | 111  | 42   |

### 3 READ SEED PACKETS FOR PLANTING TIMES

After you know when your last expected frost date is, it's time to check out some seed packets. Each seed packet should give you guidelines of when to plant it, but you usually need to know your expected last frost first.

I will walk you through how to figure out when to plant with these cucumbers that I started from seed.



The last expected frost date where I live is somewhere around the end of January to beginning of February. This is very early, and undoubtedly many of your last frost dates will be closer to May.

So let's take a look at the back of the seed packet.



The first thing to notice is the small map of the United States. It is loosely color coded by area. Locate what color you are in (I'm in green) and then look at the legend right above it.

For these cucumbers, the legend suggests that these should be planted February-June. If you are in the Northern part of the United States, you wouldn't plant these until at least late May (cucumbers are sun lovers).

Also, under suggestions they warn to only plant these seeds after ALL danger of frost is past. You want to make sure they won't freeze.

Because of this, you want to start the seeds indoors 4-6 weeks before your last frost. For example, if your last frost is predicted to be at the end of May, then you want to start these seeds mid-March to April.

### **Not all seed packets are the same**

Different seed packets will read differently. Some will suggest planting seeds 6 weeks before warm weather. Simply start seeds indoors 6 weeks before your last expected frost.

Or they might simply say start 6 weeks before transplanting into the ground. In that case, again you want to start the seeds 6 weeks before the last frost as after the last frost you can bring them outdoors.

### **What you need to know: The Bottom Line**

Basically, if you can determine your frost free date from the link above then you want to start your seeds indoors about 4-6 weeks before that date. Refer to specific seed packets for more detailed information.

# Chapter 5: Start Your Seeds

Planting seeds can be so much fun. It's cheaper than buying baby plants and you have the fun of growing these plants from little seeds. It can be very rewarding and not nearly as much work as I first thought.

Before planting your seeds, you will of course need to figure out what you want to plant after you have determined what will grow well in your area according to your zone. You will want to determine your frost free date so that you can figure out when it is safe to plant outside. After that you simply have to read your seed packets and start your seeds indoors typically 4-6 weeks before your frost free date.



So to recap, you have picked the plants you want to grow and you know when you need to start your seeds, so now comes the planting.

I was overwhelmed at this stage because I had no idea where to begin. So I called up my brother-in-law (a gardening expert) and headed out to Home Depot. If you have a local nursery this is great too, but Home Depot or Lowes is a good alternative.

Here's a quick guide to get you started



## 1 PICK YOUR SEEDS

Bring your list of vegetables that will grow well in your area (per your zone) and pick which seeds you want. Don't get overwhelmed at this point; there are many seeds to pick from. If you want to grow tomatoes, then just know that there are going to be MANY varieties to choose from.

Plan to spend a little while at Home Depot and spend time looking through the seed packets. Read the backs, as they will often contain a LOT of great information. For example, some varieties of the vegetables are bred to do better in containers; the seed packet will tell you this!

Some plants, such as cucumbers, generally need a lot of room to grow. Browse the different varieties of cucumbers and you will see that some need many feet of room in the ground, which you probably cannot do on a patio. However, others are bred to grow up a trellis. This definitely can be done on a patio!

When in doubt, ask the nursery workers (this is where going to an actual nursery over Home Depot may be beneficial!).

## 2 POTS OR JIFFY PELLETS

Now that you have selected your seeds, it's time to select what you are going to plant. There are two main ways to get seeds started: the traditional way and the jiffy pellet way.

**Traditional:** The traditional way is simply to use little pots, or "jiffy pots", and fill them with soil. There are certain soils that are meant for planting seeds that supposedly help the germination process.

This way is a little messier, but you are going to have to buy soil in the end anyway for transplanting. [About.com](http://About.com) has a great tutorial with pictures on starting from regular pots.



**Jiffy Pellets:** I love this method! It is so simple and easy, as you will see in the video below. A flat of jiffy pellets is inexpensive and has everything you need but the seeds. You simply follow the directions and fill the pellets with water and let them soak. When ready, you take a couple seeds and bury them loosely in the top soil. Place the lid on top and a week later you will have sprouts!



This is the [jiffy pellet greenhouse](#) that I used this year. It has great instructions and is super easy to use. I have a [video](#) showing how I planted my seeds this year with the jiffy pellet greenhouse.

### **3** WHERE TO BUY

An alternative to Home Depot or your local nursery is to buy seeds online or via a catalog. It's a great way to pick seeds and items that your local store doesn't carry. The only downside is that, because you can buy anything you want, you may not be buying seeds that will grow well in your area, so be a smart shopper before buying!

Amazon has a whole [garden section](#) full of seeds ([organic seeds](#) included!), tools, pellets, pots and more! It is a great (and cheap) resource at your fingertips!

Catalogs: This has been a classic and favorite way to order seeds and young plants since long before the internet. Many of these catalogs are online now of course, but they are still a great resource. Try [Burpee Seeds and Plants](#) for a great selection or check out this list of [48 Free Seed and Plant catalogs](#).

Starting seeds is actually a very simple process and is a cheap alternative to buying all young plants. Your seeds will need to grow and eventually be transplanted into larger pots and then set outside.

# Chapter 6: Quick & Easy Seed Starting Method

Tiffany ~[No Ordinary Homestead](#)

Growing your own seedlings from seeds you buy or collect is an easy and fun way to get your garden started. A few seeds cost a fraction of the price of individual store-bought seedlings. And you'll have access to a much larger array of plants as well as heirloom varieties of everything you grow. If you can get seeds from your local area (or which were grown in the same climate zone), your success rate will also be higher.

If you live in a cooler climate or one with drastic weather changes from season-to-season, chances are that you are going to need to extend your



growing season. One of the easiest ways to do this is by starting your seeds indoors, whether you've got them on your windowsill or in a heated greenhouse.

In past years, I've used all sorts of methods for starting seeds. I've bought the little soil pods and folded my own [newspaper pots](#). And I've used even bigger plastic pots to get things going. But one of the easiest methods I've used is one that large plant nurseries and growers also often use. It's quite simple and allows you to plant as many or as few plants as you like, at a very low cost. The

method is using shallow plastic containers filled with seed starter soil.

First you'll want to get all of your materials together. You can either use your own soil mixture with compost, or just buy some at the store.

You'll need about 20 liters of soil for a container that is 15x24inches big and filled to a depth of about 3 inches.

If you end up with containers with holes in the sides (like we did) you'll want to line the containers with a few sheets of newspaper. This will keep all your soil inside and absorb excess water as well, which will later go into your plants.

Then pour in the soil and level it out.



The size of your containers will determine the number of seeds you can plant. In most cases, you'll want to give each plant about 1 square inch of space to sprout in. Fast growing plants like beans will need to be transplanted out of the bins into an in-between pot or into its final container if you have room for them somewhere warm. Or you can give larger plants a bigger area of the flat so you don't have to transplant them as quickly.

Within each of my flats, I was able to get 35 plants in 1x1-inch sections. When you're growing in containers, you may not have enough space for all of those; but if you also incorporate a few square foot gardening techniques, you'll be surprised just how much you can fit into a square foot. For example, two cucumber plants can be grown in one square foot of space!




Once the seedlings are ready to be transplanted, either use a dull knife to cut apart the seedlings and remove them from the flats, or use your hands to scoop them out. You want to be sure to maintain as much of the root system of the plant as you can and keep a nice clump of soil around the seedling to keep it from going into shock once it's been put into its new pot.


Now you're ready to start your growing your own seedlings instead of spending a fortune on them from local stores or garden sites.


### **Important things to remember for starting seedlings:**

- 🍎 ***Get a 6-8 week head start.*** Double check your seed packets before you get started (at least a few days before you plan to start planting) to make sure how long they need. In most cases, your seeds should be started 6-8 weeks before the last frost date for your area. Starting earlier means you'll have larger plants to start with, but you also need a place to raise them in until the danger of frost has passed.
- 🍎 ***Use fertilizer-rich soil.*** Starting your seeds in soil containing fertilizer (whether you buy it or create your own) allows them to get an additional boost when they start growing. But do

remember not to fertilize them again until you put them in a new container.

 **Select an area that stays above 50°F or more during the day.** This might be somewhere near a window or heater...or even on a heating mat that you use or purchase for this purpose. Some seeds, like peppers, need even warmer temperatures to sprout, and usually take a lot longer to open up than others.

 **Don't over water!** It's quite simple to give your seeds way too much water when you are starting out. Using an old spray bottle to mist them is far more effective. Otherwise you may end up with moldy seeds and soil (which you definitely don't want).

 **Plant 2-3 seeds in each hole and thin out the weakest plants.** Planting a few of each seed will increase your rate of success because you've got more seeds to germinate. I really dislike clearing out the weaker plants, but if you keep the strong, healthy plants, you'll also end up with the best produce from them.

 **Remember to acclimate your plants to harsher weather.**

About two weeks before you're ready to transplant your seedlings out in the world, you should set the flats outside during the day. This way they'll get used to changes in temperatures, wind, rain and so on. Just don't let them freeze or get too cold early on in the process.

## Chapter 7: Transplanting Your Seedlings

Now that you have got your seeds going, you should notice sprouts within 5-7 days. If you missed my [video on planting seeds](#), after you plant the seeds you want to put them indoors in a warm dark location (on top of a fridge is the perfect place) and let them sit. You shouldn't need to water or even touch your [jiffy pellets](#) for a good week or more.

Now you want to watch for when they get their first real leaves. After the initial leaves form, you want to prop open your lid and let some air in but don't take it off all the way yet.

Soon (another week or so) your plants will be touching the roof of your lid. Now it is time to take the lid off and move the plants in front of a window sill. You want them to start getting light! Now is the time to watch that their soil doesn't dry out. You want the soil to stay moist (though not soaking), so add water when you notice the tops are getting dry.

### TRANSPLANTING

As your frost free date approaches, it's time to start thinking about transplanting and taking your seedlings outdoors.

Generally, once a seedling plant has 3-4 true leaves, it's time to take them outdoors and transplant them.

If you live in a cooler climate especially, then you want to make sure to [harden off](#) your plants before leaving them outdoors full time.

#### **1** Get your Containers

Vegetable gardens can be planted in nearly any container. You just want to be sure that your containers have holes in the bottom for water to drain out. Otherwise your plants will sit in the water, rot, and die.

The only thing to really be aware of when picking your containers is which type of plants will be planted in them. For



instance, cucumbers often need a lot of room to grow, so you may want to pick a long rectangular container. But other varieties of cucumbers do really well growing up a trellis, so you only need a medium round container.

Know what you are planting before buying your containers and just make sure they have holes in the bottom (or be ready to put your own holes in).

## **2 Pick Your Soil**

Picking your soil is easier in containers than when planting in the ground. When planting in the ground it can be very difficult if your soil isn't just right. With container gardening, you can pick the exact right soil for what you are planting.

Asking at your local nursery or Home Depot, and also reading the soil bag can help you to pick out the perfect soil for your plants.

## **3 Transplant your seedlings into containers**

This last step might take a little bit of practice. You want to be very careful when transplanting seedlings. Many vegetables have very delicate root systems and you don't want to damage their roots when transplanting. Be very gentle with them.

Every plant has different room requirements. Some plants love being packed in together, and others need room to grow. Study your seed packets for instructions or ask your local nursery.

Your patio garden should now be starting to take shape.

# Chapter 8: Growing from Young Plants

While a bit more expensive than planting seeds, it is quicker, easier, and great for the beginner who doesn't want to deal with growing seeds.

## 1 What plants to get

The first thing you want to do before heading out to buy your plants is to determine what will grow well in your area (this process is the same as selecting seeds that will grow well). You want to make sure that you are not trying to grow something that will die in your climate.

Many plants can be great and rewarding to grow from seeds, but the following are great to start from young plants as well: tomatoes, most types of herbs, cucumbers, and peppers (although I currently have all of these growing from seeds indoors right now, but this is up to you!).

## 2 When to get your plants

Next, you will want to determine when you should plant or bring your young plants outdoors. This will depend on your zone and what you are trying to plant. Many plants like cucumbers are sun lovers, so make sure that you are out of the danger zone of frost before taking these plants outdoors.

You can get your young plants a little while before taking outdoors, but don't buy them too early. Plan well when buying your young plants.



### **3 Transplant Outside into Larger Pots**

You will want to make sure to harden off your plants before shocking them outdoors full time. Eventually you will need to transplant them into larger pots (this is the same process as seeds).

See also some great tips on [transplanting young plants](#).

By this time you should have a nice patio vegetable garden coming along with either vegetable plants grown from seedlings, young plants or both. Next up we will discuss how to care for your mini garden out on your patio. You are well on your way to a delicious home grown vegetable garden!

# Chapter 9: Caring for Your Vegetables

Now the months of waiting begin until you will have fresh tomatoes, herbs, green onions, cucumbers, and more!

But you must constantly watch your plants for signs of disease, water often (but not too often), prune and care for your plants.

## **1** Watch for disease and pests

Thankfully, being on a patio and not planted in the ground makes your plants less susceptible to pests such as slugs. But the threat is still there for other pests and diseases.

Keep a watchful eye out for any changes in your plant's color, look, and leaves. Sometimes your plant might look stunted and not as tall or full as it should. Other times the leaves have holes or off colors.

Check for signs of fungus around the root or obvious signs of insects. If you see something abnormal, search the internet for the vegetable with the problem and describe the problem, i.e. "Fungus on tomato plant's roots". Often very helpful images of the problem will come up in Google and you can easily distinguish what your plant has.

Another helpful option is to head to your local nursery and ask them. **Take a picture of your plant before you leave so you can show them the problem.**

About.com also has a [helpful picture gallery of insects and diseases](#) that can plague plants.



## **2** Water Your Plants

The right amount of water is key to growing vegetable plants. Too much and you will kill them; too little and you will kill them! In addition, over watering in cool weather can cause roots to rot and can draw in insects.

Basically you want to water the plant enough to wet the soil, but you don't want the plant sitting in water either, as this can cause the roots to rot. Spraying the leaves can also help the plant to absorb more water.

If you are in a climate with little rain water, then you want to water about once a week. If you have a very rainy spring and summer, then regularly check your plants. If their soil does not dry out then you likely don't need to water them.

The rule of thumb is to water each plant about 1 inch, or 1-2 inches in really dry, hot weather.

If your plants are wilting, then this is a good sign that they need water!



### **3 Prune Your Plants**

Pruning your plants helps to thin out dead or dying branches, provides more sunlight and nutrients to get to the plant, and provides fuller and tastier vegetables because the plants are not working as hard.

There is a lot to say on pruning and different techniques, so here is a [helpful photo guide on pruning](#).



### **4 Caring for Your Plants Until Harvest Time**

In order to get to the end of the growing season and have full and tasty vegetables you need to constantly monitor them to ensure proper care, growth, and watering.

You can also add fertilizer to your soil if you want to give your plants a boost. Visit your local nursery to find good fertilizers for container vegetables.

# Chapter 10: Benefits of Growing Herbs

Herbs are easy to grow and are so yummy to add to your cooking.

Even if you are not ready for a full scale patio vegetable garden, having a small herb garden can be a great alternative.

## **1 Herbs taste great!**

When you are on a low sodium diet like my husband is, spicing up food can be a hassle. He loves hot sauces and anything FULL of flavor. Unfortunately, most of these added flavors are chock full of salt.

So I have to be creative in my cooking, and one way I accomplish that is with lots and lots of herbs. Adding fresh or ground basil, oregano, parsley, chives, cilantro and any other herb can be such a great way to add natural flavor to your cooking.

Unfortunately, fresh herbs are often very expensive if you plan to use them in every meal.



## **2 Herbs are cheaper to grow than to buy**

I often end up resorting to ground herbs such as basil and oregano because I use it in everything. For us, buying fresh herbs all the time is just out of the question because it is too expensive. So by starting herbs from seeds or by heading to home depot and shelling out a few bucks for some young starter plants, you can have fresh herbs all year round.

### **3 Herbs are easy to grow**

Because herbs are super easy to grow, they are also cheap! Depending on the herb that you are growing you might be snipping whole stalks, and others (such as mint plants) you will be snipping just the leaves.

My favorite thing about herbs is that you are going to frequently be harvesting them. When cooking and you need a dash of fresh Basil, snip some off and then the plant starts to *regrow* what you have snipped. This means that you can buy one plant for a couple bucks and enjoy it for many meals.

You can continually use bits of the herbs and it will replenish the plant. In fact, many herbs actually need this constant pruning to stay healthy. So use your herbs often and they will flourish!



### **4 Herbs make great presents**

Because herbs are easy to start growing and are a wonderful benefit in the kitchen, they also make terrific presents. A great gift idea is to put together an herb container with different kinds of herbs and give it to a new bride as a shower present.

You can make it a theme garden such as a “pizza herb garden” and include basil, oregano and whatever other herbs you like on your pizza! Add in a pizza cutter and homemade pizza sauce, and you have a perfect gift for a new bride or a birthday present.

Herb Gardening can be such a simple introduction to gardening. I know many who don’t want to hassle with growing a full garden and yet they love having an herb garden because it’s so simple and easy.



# Chapter 11: Herb Gardening 101

Growing herbs is very similar to growing other types of vegetables. But there are a few important things you should know.

## YOUNG PLANTS OR SEEDS

With herbs, you can grow from seeds or grow from young plants in a very similar way you would with vegetables. With a full vegetable garden, I like to start most plants from seeds because it is much cheaper in the end.

But if you plan to only have a few herb plants, then it might be easier to just purchase the young herb plants and be ready to start using them in your cooking right away.



## GROW INDOOR OR OUTDOOR

Herbs, like vegetables, love sunlight. Whether you are growing herbs indoors or outdoors you want to make sure to provide the plants with enough sunlight (generally 6-8 hours of good sunlight per day).

So whether you plant to grow your plants indoor on a window will

or outdoors on your patio you want to make sure that the plant is receiving as much sun as vegetable plants.

## PLANTING IN POTS

A general rule of thumb with herbs is that you want about a 6 inch pot per plant for them to grow. And you want it at least 6 inches deep to allow for root growth.

You are also welcome to plant multiple herb plants in the same container. A garden of herbs in a large container can be a great accessory to a window sill so it's within easy reach when cooking.



## WATERING

Do not water herbs too much. They do not like to sit in water, it will kill them. Water herbs when the soil is noticeably dry to the touch and keep it watered enough to maintain moisture. You do not want plants **sitting** in the water.

## HARVESTING HERBS

This is what is so great about herbs - you don't have to wait months and months to start reaping benefits from the herbs. Once the herbs are producing enough foliage to support themselves (meaning you don't want to snip all the baby stalks), you can begin harvesting from the plant.

Snip off some basil when you need it for your cooking but leave enough for the plant to continue growing. Soon the plant will regrow what you have cut.



## USING HERBS

Once you snip them, you want to wash them in cold water and dry carefully before adding to your dinner.

Basically, growing herbs is very easy, cheap, and fun to harvest for cooking. Anyone (even if you have a black thumb and kill most plants) can grow herbs and not have the pressure of a full vegetable garden.

Herbs are a favorite of many to grow because they flourish under little care and time. Plus they taste yummy ;)

# Chapter 12: Why Grow Organically

Organic is all the rage right now. Organic food, drinks, clothing, beauty products, things for our home and more. Organic is everywhere. With “organic” slapped on every label it seems these days it’s hard to sort out what organic is, especially when it comes to gardening.

You might think that since you are gardening and growing your own vegetables that it must be “organic”. But even growing at home may not be organic.

## WHY GARDEN ORGANICALLY?

Making sure to eat organic vegetables is especially important when purchasing your vegetables from your local grocery store, but it’s important when growing from home too!



Essentially, to garden organically means to grow your vegetables in a way that you use things only found in nature. This means no chemicals or other additives that are not natural compounds or made naturally.

So for now, why garden organically?

## **NATURE DOES THE WORK FOR YOU**

Up until the last hundred years or so, gardening didn't change very much. Plants were planted and nature took its course. God made our earth to be able to grow food. Nature is designed to sustain itself and grow food.

In this way, Nature does the work for you. Gardening organically doesn't need to be a hassle. Really, its gardening and letting nature take its course.

## **IT'S OFTEN CHEAPER**

By using natural compounds and things found in nature you can often recycle old scraps to help garden organically. If you are intentional about gardening organically, then you don't have to go out and buy lots of chemicals, additives, special soils and more. You can use things you already have and save money while growing vegetables organically.

One example of this is making your own compost. By saving old food scraps, you can make your own compost that is extremely nutritious for your plants, safe for you and your family, and frugal because you are reusing what you already have.



## IT'S HEALTHIER

This is hands down my number one reason for gardening organically. I used to think that the only reason to grow and buy organic products was because of the environment. I thought people just did it so there were a little less “chemicals” in the air...or something. I never understood it, until now.

Big time farmers often add all kinds of chemicals and additives, not only to keep pests away, but also to plump up vegetables and to make them look more attractive. They add cancer causing chemicals to these “healthy” vegetables to make them look more appealing in the grocery store, but at the cost of having to ingest more and more harmful chemicals.

You may think you are being healthy by eating more vegetables, but in reality you are just upping your chemical intake. And although these chemicals are supposed to be making the vegetables better, often they are adding chemicals that you will be ingesting **and** they are stripping the vegetables of important nutrients your body needs so that the end vegetable you eat is not as nutritious as you may think. By growing your own vegetables, you can avoid all of these chemicals all together.

# Chapter 13: Making Your Own Worm Compost

By Kate ~Teaching What is Good

Two winters ago I decided to try my hand at worm composting. It was a very interesting endeavor but gave me a chance to try composting on a small scale in my basement. And besides, having 2000 worms in a bucket in your basement is really cool (at least if you have 8 children)! I have to say, it has been fun.

I ordered 2000 red wigglers from <http://unclejimswormfarm.com/>. They came very quickly in a box filled with compost and feed. While I was waiting for my worms to come I got my bucket ready for them. I used a long and low bucket with a lid I got from Walmart, the kind that fits under beds. A tight fitting lid is important because worms love the dark and can escape. I placed mine in the basement where it is cool, but it can be placed in any cool dark area – so long as it doesn't freeze. They can survive a freeze if they have good bedding, but I didn't want to take the chance.



## The Container

A bucket that is 12-18 inches deep is best. Red Wigglers (particularly) like to be closer to the surface so they can breathe. Your bucket must have drain holes drilled into the bottom of it (for fluid to drain and for

air) and something under it to catch the liquid that will drain out. This liquid is very rich fertilizer. **DO NOT THROW IT AWAY!**

### **The Bedding**

You'll need to prepare the bedding for your worms. Shred newspapers into 1 inch strips and soak it in water. Be sure and wring them out really well. If they are too wet the worms will drown. Then fluff the newspapers up so they are not a matted clump. The worms need to be able to move in and around it. Add some soil or sand to just barely cover the top of this. Worms need soil or sand to help them digest their food.

### **The Worms**

Now you are ready to add the worms. I moved sections of the bedding aside and put worms into and under it, then covered them gently over. Once they are all in the bucket, cover them with a lid. Do not feed them food scraps for 7 days after they are added to the new bedding.

### **The Scraps**

Worms like to eat most vegetables or fruit scraps. Do not give meat, dairy or cooked food to the worms. I would add grass clippings from the summer and sometimes a bit of leaves in the fall. They like coffee grounds (I had friends who would give me theirs). If I had really large rinds, I'd chop it small and put it in the food processor to get it really small. This helps them to eat it quicker. If you use egg shells, **PULVERIZE THEM**. I learned this the hard way!

- When you add the scraps, spread them around and mix into the bedding, don't just leave it all on top.
- Keep the bed moist but not wet, fluffy not compacted.
- In the first few weeks, they may try to escape – I had to keep the light on in the basement for the first 4 weeks until they learned to stay inside the bucket.

When all the bedding has been composted, shove the compost to one side of the bucket, and re-do the bedding phase on the other side. The worms will migrate over to where the food is and then you can remove the compost and use it in the garden.



This is a really fun project and one that the children can do on their own. Your worm colony will grow or shrink according to the amount of food scraps they get. The more scraps, the faster they will multiply.

Happy composting!







# Chapter 14: What are GMOs?

By Bethany ~Pursuing the Heart of Womanhood

Tis well into the season for planning gardens and drooling over seed catalogs. I would like to point something out to you in case you didn't already know. While you're seed-shopping, you may want to keep your eyes open for something called the "Safe Seed Pledge".

It is a pledge that some seed companies take to let you know that they do not support, nor sell GMO seeds. This stands for "genetically modified organisms". And that is what they are: seeds with organisms that have been genetically modified or added in by scientists. Some people think this is great, and that they produce stronger and more productive plants with the ability to feed more people per acre. But some people are quite adamant against GMOs - in more reasons than one.

Reasons include (but aren't limited to):

-  Lack of testing GMOs' safety before release
-  Self-destructing seeds (the seed grows one plant, but any seeds you save are sterile and will never produce)
-  Potential health hazards, including cancer and mysterious headaches
-  Monsanto (a mega creator of GMO seeds) sues any farms who save non-GMO seeds when Monsanto's GMO seeds cross-pollinate with the farmers' non-GMO seeds (which the non-GMO farmer can't really stop from happening)
-  Cross-pollination ruining heirloom (and open-pollinated) crops owned by seed-savers and non-GMO growers
-  Lower nutrient levels in GMO crops

- 🍎 Recent rumor that GMO produce alters DNA in the body (because DNA is altered/added in GMO products)
- 🍎 Common use of toxic chemicals to control weeds and other pests for GMO seeds
- 🍎 GMO seeds not growing any better than heirloom, contrary to popular belief (belief and truth are not always the same thing, are they?)

These are some common reasons why people like to avoid GMOs. I won't hide my opinion. Personally these reasons are plenty enough for me to run the other way. God gave me this body and I intend to try to honor it and take good care of it. How can I know these things and then look the other way, knowing that I'm hurting this vessel that God created for His glory? Likewise, how could I feed this to my kids some day with a clear conscience? And besides these, it's also obvious that I would like to take care of my body so I can feel healthy and not droggy. That's always a bonus to good eating habits!

So all this aside, it is now your turn to make your own decision. If you want to know more about GMOs, do a search for it online, or watch "Food Inc." or "The Future of Food". They are both interesting and great documentaries - not at all boring in my opinion. Note that they are both anti-GMO documentaries.

If you so choose and need a point in the right direction, my favorite seed company for GMO-free, chemical-free seeds is [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#). From what I can recall they haven't "signed" the safe seed pledge, but they still sell great seed without having to sign a pledge to prove it. They pretty much still make the same promise, only without the "Safe Seed Pledge". I LOVE their stuff! A second favorite is Seed Savers Exchange. I'm sure there are others out there too, but these are my go-to companies that I really like and would suggest to others.

I also want to just add a quick note for those of you who are wondering,

"What about hybrids?" Well, there is a bit of confusion about them. A hybrid is often just two different types of, let's say tomatoes, that they cross-pollinated. By doing this, the resulting next generation of plants will be different - and in the creator's desire, hopefully better.

But some people say that hybrid plants are often forced to pollinate with things that they naturally wouldn't pollinate with. Another downfall to this is that you have to rely on the supplier who breeds your favorite tomato to give you your seed. And guess what? That supplier can often be Monsanto or a friend of theirs. So if you're trying to boycott GMOs, but still buy hybrids, there's a chance that you're still putting the money into the same pocket.



Do your research on who owns it before you buy it. But the worst part is that sometimes people even use the names "hybrid" and "GMO" interchangeably without realizing they're talking about the opposite thing. So be SUPER careful if you do chose to buy hybrid seeds, if you're trying to avoid GMOs. Just think of Mr. Hybrid as the little brother of Mr. GMO and you should get the picture. Perhaps not quite as threatening to you, but still a threat. Here's a [great link](#) I found the other day that explains it and is very interesting.

In closing I want to add a little bit of motivation for you. Sometimes we can read an article like this and get overwhelmed, or brush it off as "just some paranoid people". But we need to not ignore such things just because it's easier. We need to at least make an educated decision.

Sometimes we can get so caught up in the here-and-now that we're like a young child: we want the candy now, regardless of how many times our parents told us that we'll get cavities if we eat too much.

And those kids WILL get cavities some day if they gorge themselves on candy. We all know that now from the experience of past generations. Will these things listed above happen to us if we continue with GMOs? I'm sorry to say it, but they probably will. We cannot afford to be short-sighted. For the sake of our own future, but also for the sake of our children, our grandchildren, and our great-grandchildren.

We need to show them that they matter deeply to us by leaving them a legacy that they can be proud of. Really, this is a good reality check for anything we do in life - and perhaps you've even done it before. Oftentimes thinking about the legacy that we are leaving behind makes us realize what the outcome of our actions really are.

But now it's your turn. It's time to do your research and make your own choice! What do YOU think about GMO seeds?

# Chapter 15: How to Garden Organically

When you head to your local nursery, buy some seeds and plant them, you may feel like you are gardening organically, but there is so much more to it than that. Gardening organically means buying organic seeds, soil, and using the right materials to ward off pesticides and grow healthy vegetables. Thankfully, once you understand a few principles gardening organically is really very simple.

## 1 ORGANIC SEEDS

Gardening organically starts with the seeds. Basically the first thing you want to look for is the USDA Organic stamp. To have this stamp the products must follow these guidelines.



*“Organic is a labeling term that indicates that the food or other agricultural product has been produced through approved methods that integrate cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity. Synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, and genetic engineering may not be used.”*

So when looking for seeds, you want to find ones that are labeled Organic. Why does this matter for seeds? Basically, it is because many seeds are Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's). This means that genes or cells from plants were modified or altered in some way. This could mean that plants are more resistant against pesticides or extends the vegetables shelf life.

It boils down to genetically altering these plants to something other than nature designed them for. In the end this means more chemicals and other harmful materials being ingested into the

body. So look for organic and non-GMO seeds when planting. Most nurseries carry organic sections now or you can order your seeds online.

Amazon offers a great selection.

### Ferry-Morse Organic Salad Seed Collection

Here is a perfect organic seed collection perfect if you have growing your own salads in mind!

They also have a Greens Collection and Herb Collection. Notice the USDA Organic stamp on these??



### Ferry-Morse Vegetable Garden Collection

If you want to get some organic seeds for your entire garden without any hassle, then get their entire vegetable garden seed pack to get started right away!



## 2 ORGANIC POTTING SOIL

This is a very important step in gardening organically. Most potting soils and fertilizers have great claims of helping to protect your plants and help them grow, unfortunately they are also usually packed full of harmful chemicals that will end up being ingested once the plants are harvested and eaten.

Thankfully, getting organic potting soil is easy and often cheap! The best thing to do is to make your own potting soil. Not only will this produce the most nutritious plants, it is also the most frugal way! Or you can skip the hassle and buy some for a few dollars more.

This potting soil by [Espoma](#) is designed for potted plants!



If you plan to start seeds in jiffy pots like I do, then this [jiffy organic seed starting mix](#) is perfect!



## 3 ORGANIC CARE

A major difference between gardening organically and regular gardening is in how you care for your plants. If you



buy your vegetables at a regular grocery store then you are getting genetically modified vegetables that have been sprayed with pesticides that are designed to kill living organisms that attack vegetables.

These pesticides and chemicals are designed to protect the vegetables, but then we, the consumers, are ingesting all of those chemicals! The same thing can happen when we spray chemicals and pesticides on our vegetables at home.

So if you have a pest problem, invest some time in finding organic and non-harmful aids to help rid you plants of pests. Here is one to get you started.

### [Safer Brand Tomato & Vegetable Insect Killer](#)



I hope that this helps point you in the right direction when it comes to gardening organically! The main thing to keep in mind is all of the chemicals involved even in home gardening.

Be aware and on guard for chemicals and additives that can be harmful to the human body, especially kids. By buying organic seeds, soil, and other helpers organically, you can avoid having your family ingesting these harmful chemicals, and ultimately your vegetables will taste better, be more nutritious for your body, and are cheaper in the long run.

Another thing to look for is that while there are some safe ways to deal with pests, not all bugs are bad and/or harmful to your garden. Bethany shares with us how we can better understand the role of “good bugs” in the garden.

# Chapter 16: The Story of the “Good” Bug

From Bethany ~Pursuing the Heart of Womanhood

Mary Jo is showing her gardening friend, Jane, her new pots of tomatoes and green beans. She displays them proudly and her friend tells her they look great.

Suddenly a green, lacy-winged bug crawls out from under a leaf and reveals itself to the onlookers.



Mary Jo gasps in disgust and quickly reaches down to swat it away.

*"Don't!!!"* shouts Jane. *"It's a good bug!"*

*"A WHAT?!?"* she shrieks. *"A good BUG?"*

*"Yes, it's a good bug."*

*"How can a bug be good? Bugs eat tomato plants so I don't want it around my plants,"* states Mary Jo, glaring down at the green, lacy-winged creature.

*"Some bugs ARE bad, but some bugs are actually good. And they don't eat your tomato plants at all."*

*"Really? Tell me more about these good bugs. What do they do?"*

*"Well, you see," begins Jane. "Different good bugs have different kinds of jobs. Some good bugs help pollinate your plants. Without pollination, you won't get as much fruit on your plants, or worse, not any at all. Of course you know that bees help do this because people talk about them all the time. Take good care of your bees. Remember the other day when I was telling you about GMOs?"*

*"Yes," responds Mary Jo curiously.*

*"Well, some people say that the GMO soybeans are bad for the bees, and are actually causing them to die!"*

*"That's terrible!"*

*"We do need to take care of our good bugs. They're more important than people realize."*

*"What other kinds of good bugs pollinate plants?" asks Mary Jo, as she glances back at the lacy bug on her plant.*

*"Well I have a chart here that I put together the other day, and I think I stuck it in my bag..." Jane starts rummaging through her things. "There are other things that good bugs do too. Some good bugs even eat weeds."*

*"Are you serious?! How in the world is it supposed to tell what's a weed and what isn't?"*

*"Well, they were made to eat certain things. But remember, a weed is only something that people don't know what it's good for yet." Jane laughs. "I remember the first time someone told me that.... But anyway, you have to watch out though. We already know that some BAD bugs eat our gardens up, so as you can guess, many of them eat weeds too. In fact, sometimes people will leave a couple of certain types of weeds in their garden because the bad bugs will eat the weeds instead of their plants."*

*"Now that is cool," Mary Jo ponders. "I always learn so much when you come over!"*

*Jane laughs. "Well, I'm glad I can help. There are so many basic things about gardening that we've lost touch with and people need to know it to really grow a garden that is in harmony with nature."*

*As she continues to look through the things in her bag she continues. "Some good bugs' diets consist of the bad bugs. It's the way nature's cycle was created. They lay their eggs on the bad bugs who are trying to take bites out of your veggies or spread diseases to them, and the good bug babies feed on the bad bugs when they hatch. It*

*sort of sounds gross, but it's just how God made them."*

*"It's a little gross, but not really when you think about it. I guess every animal has it's own type of food they were created to eat."*

Jane nods. *"That's the way I look at it."*

*"So do good bugs only do one thing, or do some of them pollinate plants, eat weeds, AND have larvae that feeds off of the bad bugs?"* inquires Mary Jo.

*"Yup, some of them do a bunch of things to help us out. It varies depending on their bug. They've each got their own personality I guess you could say! Some only lay their larvae on certain bugs too, or only at certain stages. It's different from bug to bug."*

Jane's face brightens as she finally pulls out a thin stack of papers that are stapled together. *"Here it is!"*

Mary Jo leans over to look as Jane unfolds the paper. *"See?"* says Jane. *"This shows just a couple of the good bugs that are native to the US. With this you can tell what they look like."*

*"Hey! That's my bug!"* Mary Jo exclaimed. *"It's got the same lacy wings....so it's a Lacewing?"*

*"Yup."* Jane smiles and nods her head.



*"That is so cool. Is there a way that I can get more good bugs to be by my plants?"*

*"Well some of them like to live in mulch, or dead leaves, or compost. Stuff like that."*

*And of course they need bad bugs to feed on or else they'll go elsewhere. But besides those things, see? Look at this other page. There are lots of plants that attract good bugs, but here is a list of a couple of them. Each plant attracts their personal variety of beneficial insects, so it would be good to look that sort of thing up,"* says Jane.

Mary Jo looks over the list of plants that attract good bugs. It says things like: alfalfa, anise hyssop, caraway, clover, dandelion, dill, dwarf alpine aster, English lavender, fennel, gloriosa daisy, goldenrod, hairy vetch, lemon balm, marigold, parsley, Queen Anne's lace, spearmint, sweet alyssum, tansy, yarrow, and zinia.

*"That is so cool. Can I get a copy of these papers?"* she asks. *"I've got a copy machine in the office."*

"Sure."

Mary Jo looks back at her new lacy-winged friend, just in time to see it slip away on its mission towards another plant. She gives a little grin and heads into the house.

~~The End~~

Below are the good bugs that Jane showed to Mary Jo. Use this as a guide and look at it often so you can remember these little guys when you're tending your own plants. Keep in mind that this **is by no means and extensive list of all good bugs everywhere**, but just a little something to get you started with a couple common bugs.

For great additional reading on the topic I suggest you read the bug section in the book *Gaia's Garden*, by Toby Hemenway. It has a really neat chart in it that shows you a couple plants that will attract certain types of good bugs. *Good Bugs, Bad Bugs* by Jessica Walliser is also a great book to read which includes pictures and short descriptions of some good bugs and some bad bugs.

Lady bugs (red)  
Bees  
Tachinid fly  
Minute pirate bug  
Hoverfly  
Parasitic wasp  
Big-eyed bug  
Lacewings



# Chapter 17: Harvesting Your Garden

The long months of waiting have finally paid off. You have planted your seeds, started from some young plants, cared for your container vegetable plants, and have waited long and patiently, not it's time to enjoy all your efforts!

But it can be difficult to know when or how to harvest your vegetable plants. Keep in mind that harvesting vegetables is more of an art than a science. Through some trial and error you will figure out what works best for your vegetables depending on the area you live, how much water they get, and the amount of sunlight they receive.

## HARVESTING DEPENDS ON THE VEGETABLE

Start your research. Each vegetable is going to have its own criteria for harvesting. Here are some pointers for the more popular vegetables you will likely be growing in a container garden.

### *Tomatoes*

Knowing when to harvest tomatoes is all about the color. Wait until your tomatoes have a nice red color to them and are slightly soft to the touch. Then do the taste test and you should be good to go. Gently twist the tomatoes and they should pull easily off the vine. Don't force them or pull too hard, they are not ready yet if this is the case.

### *Green Onions*

When green onions reach their ideal size, it's time to harvest. These are easy to tell when they are ready to harvest. Cut off the roots and the very top and they are ready to eat!

### *Cucumbers*

Cucumbers can be a little tricky as harvesting varies largely depending on the variety. Generally, wait until the cucumbers are 5-8 inches long and then do the taste test.

## *Peppers*

Peppers also vary depending on the variety. But you want to watch for the right color of the pepper, pick and do the taste test.

### **KEEP PICKING**

If you want to extend the time when your plants produce vegetables, then you need to keep regularly picking. Some plants produce one crop and they are done. Others, like zucchini and peppers, need you to keep picking the ripe vegetables or they will stop producing.

So make sure to pick as soon as you see ripe vegetables on the vine or bush.

### **SOME THOUGHTS TO KEEP IN MIND**

Overall, harvesting is pretty simple. Watch for when the vegetables look normal, pick, and taste them. If they taste good then they are ready! Pretty simple. But here are a couple things to keep in mind.

- 1) Be gentle when harvesting. You don't want to break vines or stems while harvesting because this can create a weak plant that is more susceptible to diseases.
- 2) Immediately bring your harvest vegetables into a cool environment. Usually putting them in the fridge will extend their life.
- 3) Get rid of damaged or rotting vegetables. If you see any rotting or damaged vegetables cut them off right away so that they don't spread their diseases or rottenness to the other vegetables.

# Chapter 18: Enjoy Your Harvest~Juicing

By Erin ~ Pennies for Pearls

A common question among those unfamiliar with juicing is, “Why juice veggies when you can just eat them?” Although fiber and roughage is lost when fruits and vegetables are juiced, we get an incredible amount of all the benefits live, raw, straight-from-the-earth-food can offer! On average, most Americans do not consume enough fruits and vegetables. When they do, the portions are too small and over-cooked, delivering a drastically insufficient amount of vitamins and antioxidants.



In our home, we are pretty good about using any fresh thing we can find. For example, if we pick broccoli from the garden we may eat the florets for dinner and use the stalks and leaves in our juice the following morning. There is no better way to get every last drop out of your garden than juicing!

So what are the best fruits and veggies to juice? First, I suggest you assess your diet. What do you and your family lack on a regular basis? Then, I suggest focusing on all things green. Chlorophyll is what



makes a plant green and is essentially the energy of the sun harnessed in plant form!

Some of the health benefits of chlorophyll are:

- 🍏 Detoxifies the liver
- 🍏 Removes unfriendly bacteria
- 🍏 Increases red blood cell count
- 🍏 Increases circulation of oxygen in the blood

One popular green juice recipe is **The Mean Green Juice**:

- 4 stalks of celery
- 1 cucumber
- 1 ginger root (thumb size)
- ½ lemon (remove peel)
- 2 green apples
- 6 kale/cabbage leaves



## Chapter 19: Enjoy Your Plants Year Round

The nature of a vegetable garden is that for a short period of time you are going to be overwhelmed with tomatoes, and then the next week it's over. So a great part of having a vegetable garden is planning a bit to allow you to enjoy your vegetables and herbs all year long.

Plan this before your plants are ready to harvest. You want to be able to plan this long before your kitchen is overrun with tomatoes and cucumbers!

### CAN AND JAR TOMATOES

We love Italian food and anything with tomatoes or tomato sauce. We add stewed tomatoes and sauce to everything! But we are also on a low sodium low sugar diet. So adding canned tomatoes to everything isn't a healthy option. But by planting a lot of tomato bushes and canning and jarring the left overs ourselves, we can have fresh tomato sauce all year long.

100 Days of Real Food {One of my favorite Real Food Blogs}  
[Homemade Spaghetti Sauce](#)

Pick Your Own has an excellent, detailed picture post on [how to can your Spaghetti Sauce](#)

### HERBS

Herbs do best when you regularly harvest them. It allows the plants to continuously grow and sprout new stalks. But often this can leave you with an overabundance of herbs. You have a couple options for herbs.

#### *Dry Herbs:*

Drying herbs help to preserve their flavor so that you can use them for months to come. Vegetable Gardener has an excellent [step by step photo guide detailing how to do this](#).

After they have been dried you can store these for months or package them and give them as gifts.

### *Freeze Herbs*

Freezing herbs is another great option for store herbs. It's a simple and easy process.

Chop your herbs, add a little bit to each cavity in an ice cube tray, add water and freeze. Once frozen, take out and place in a freezer bag to keep fresh. When ready to use, pop out and add to sauces and meals.

I hope this gets you on the right track to preserving many of your favorite vegetables and herbs all year long, without unnatural preservatives and chemicals! I hope you are one step closer to eating healthy.

Growing a vegetable garden can be such an excellent way to jump start your family eating healthy and can drastically reduce the amount of salt and chemicals you ingest along the way.

## Chapter 20: Preserving ~ Spring Berries

By Michele ~ Simple Scaife Family Farm



The glorious arrival of spring brings with it the wondrous joy of fresh berries. Plump berries filled with drippy sweet juices dangle from leafy green stocks and thorny vines. No matter the type, spring berries are a true delight to the farm kitchen.

When berries start to produce there are often very few at the start; one here and one there, generally nibbled by the surprised harvester. Then, with no warning at all the bushes bust forth with a heavy load filling our baskets to the brim.

Freezing is our first and foremost method for berry preserving. Washed and well dried, berries are first scattered in a single layer on trays and placed in the freezer. This keeps them from sticking together later. The frozen berries are bagged and labeled for later use. I bag in 2 cup portions, just the right size for muffins and crisps.



Larger berries are sliced before freezing.

The other excellent method of preserving is jam! Jelly is nice, but the wonderful lumps of fruit in jam gives us a heartier taste of those delightful berries long after the season ends. Cleaned and crushed ever so wonderfully, mixed with sugar and lemon then cooked slowly until thick and bubbly. I love cute little pint jars with the 'quilted' glass lending a rustic, homey look. Nothing satisfies a harvester's soul quite like the pop of canning lids fresh from the canner.



Marmalade from an earlier spring.

### **Spring Jam Flex-recipe**

For every 2 cups of berries:

½ apple, chopped and peeled

1 ½ cups sugar

Mash the berries in a heavy bottom sauce pan. Add the chopped apple and sugar. Cook fruit over medium low heat until the sugar dissolves; stir frequently. Simmer and stir approximately twenty minutes. Test jam by dropping a spoonful onto a chilled plate; if it gels the jam is ready for jars. This jam freezes well and is excellent when processed in a water bath canner for seven minutes

# Chapter 21: Preserving ~ Swiss Chard

By Michele ~ Simple Scaife Family Farm



As each garden season comes to an end we find ourselves with a need to preserve. Recent heavy rains have brought parts of our garden to become water-logged driving us to harvest one last time before the water destroys it. Today we are preserving the remnants of our Swiss chard.



After harvesting the chard, I like to give it a nice soak in the sink to clear out bugs, dirt and other not-so-nice's that may be lurking in the little crevices. As you can see from the picture, we also harvested the kale beds.



After a nice bath, the chard is placed between two towels; rolled up and given a nice squeeze. I do have a salad spinner, but for some reason I just like to do the chard (and kale) this way. To me, it gets them dryer faster.





Once the chard is clean and dry they are placed in freezer storage bags with as much air as possible pressed out. I have read several recommendations to blanch the chard before freezing, but I didn't like the texture of it once it thawed (kind of slimy... ew).

Frozen chard is similar to frozen spinach when it comes to texture and use. We add it to stir fries, soups and dips...or, often it is tossed with light vinaigrette and baked in the oven for a crisp side dish.

# Chapter 22: Preserving ~ Tomatoes

By Michele ~ Simple Scaife Family Farm



We love homegrown tomatoes! It is no secret that I have a tendency to grow rows and rows of various tomato varieties year after year...but, I have my reasons. Aside from the delicious fresh tomatoes eaten straight off the vine or as a compliment to sandwiches and salads, tomato sauce is a staple we can't live without.

## **Tomato Sauce Flex-recipe**

For every 20 tomatoes:

6 cloves garlic

Drizzle of olive oil

Salt/sugar

Herbs such as basil, rosemary, oregano (optional)

So here's the process. For every 20 tomatoes use: 6 garlic cloves and a 9x13 dish. Turn the oven on 375 and wash the tomatoes. Core the tomatoes and basically tear them into pieces (skin on, seeds in, you

can rough chop them if it makes more sense) and place them in the dish. Clean the garlic adding it to the tomatoes.

Drizzle olive oil over the whole thing... salt it good and add a light dash of sugar (cuts the acidity of the tomato). Sometimes I stop here, stir it up and cook it - leaving herbs to be added when I use the sauce; not always. My herbs are generally fresh from the garden: rosemary, oregano, thyme- one or all or a mix.



The baking is 375 for about 30 minutes... if you like a "fresh sauce". I often cook for a full hour to reduce the juice a bit giving us a bolder flavor and color. The key is to give it a stir every 20 minutes or so to keep the edges from getting over done. From here I run the sauce through a food mill to get a smooth sauce and to remove the tomato skins. This recipe freezes well in re-sealable freezer bags or processed in a pressure canner.



Now, what I love about my flex-recipe is it adjusts to "on hand". If I have ten tomatoes, adjust to three garlic...drizzle with oil and salt/sugar... cook. Five tomatoes... yep, just adjust. When the garden goes crazy and I harvest a bucket load...you guessed it... just adjust! I can make one batch or several... a 9x13 or a big old roaster pan full.

# Chapter 23: Canning, Freezing, Dehydrating

By Michele ~ Simple Scaife Family Farm

When I think about preserving my mind always wonders back to the big farm kitchen; grandmothers and aunts gathered around, each one with busy hands and lively conversation. Breeze from the open window carried the fragrant aromas of bubbling sauces and sizzling canners. In my own little farm kitchen preserving the harvest still invites family of all ages to come together with the promise of good foods throughout the seasons.

In order to make preservation fit my small farm kitchen, the kids and I have developed a station set up. Each method has no more than three stations, has the most basic supplies needed, and creates closeness without crowding.

## Canning Efficiently: Three Station Set Up

Station 1: Wash & Prep



The wash and prep station handles the washing of jars. Once the jars are washed I place them into a 115 degree oven to keep them warm

and sterile. I place clean jars upside down on a towel lined baking sheet. This keeps water from collecting in the bottom of the jar.



After the jars are prepped, this station takes charge of cleaning and preparing veggies for canning. This station is equipped with a cutting board, knife, bowl for scraps and a bowl for cleaned produce. Generally this station is near the sink for quick rinse and work efficiency.

## **Station 2: Pack & Seal**



This station packs the jars with items to be canned; veggies, sauces, pickles or jams. It is set with a cutting board to protect surfaces, funnel, measuring cup (for scooping liquids), pan of hot water with sealing lids, tongs to lift them with, rings, and jars (warm from the oven).

### **Station 3: Can and Cool**



This station is where the action finally happens; sealing those jars. I set my station with a towel lined baking sheet and tongs right next to my canner. As jars are removed from the hot canner, they are placed on the towel to cool and set.

## **Freezing Efficiently: Three Station Set Up**

---

### **Station 1: Wash & Prep**



This station takes charge of cleaning and preparing veggies for the blanching process and is equipped with a cutting board, knife, bowl for scraps and a bowl for cleaned produce. Generally this station is near the sink for quick rinse and work efficiency.

### **Station 2: Blanch & Set**



This station is set on the stove top; water maintains a rolling boil over medium high heat while ice water is on hand for a quick stop to the



cooking process. Tongs and ladles are on hand to retrieve food from the elements while a towel lined baking sheet waits to hold the vegetables once the blanching process is complete.

### **Station 3: Dry & Seal**



Here the vegetables are patted dry and packed in airtight bags before heading to the freezer. We like to place the filled bags on baking sheets in the freezer. Once fully frozen, the bags will stack nicely on freezer shelves.

## Dehydrating: Two Stations, Two Ways

---

### **Station 1: Wash & Prep**



This station takes charge of cleaning and preparing veggies for dehydrating and is equipped with a cutting board, knife, bowl for scraps and a bowl for cleaned produce. Generally this station is near the sink for quick rinse and work efficiency. Whether I use the open air drying method or an electric dehydrator, the first station stays the same.

### **Station 2: Set & Stuff**

Electric Dehydrating Method



At this station prepared produce is set out in a single layer on the dehydrator racks then placed in the dehydrator. I prefer this method for dehydrating cut vegetables and fruits.

## **Station 2: String & Hang**

### **Open Air Method**



I only use the open air drying method for whole veggies or herbs; mainly hot peppers and herbs. For this station you simple need a needle and thread. For herbs, I make small bundles, tie the stems, and hang them in a well ventilated place with no direct sunlight.



For whole peppers I string the needle through the stem part of the pepper and hang the long strand in a cool area away from direct sunlight.

Often the method of preservation is dependent upon amount of space and amount of food to be preserved. In the end, it doesn't matter how you preserve it as much as it matters that you enjoyed it and made good use of your harvest.

## Chapter 24: All About Sunlight

During this journey, one question I received was about sunlight. I know this has to be a question on other's minds so I decided to share. Jennifer asks,

*"I did have a question for you about gardening. (Loving this series, by the way!) I have a very small backyard so my space is valuable. I'd really like to try to plant a small veggie garden, but I don't think I get much sunlight. I'm trying to monitor it right now but today was overcast so I couldn't see. But we're thinking our best shot is only 6 hours. So bummed. Would you recommend anything to grow in smaller amounts of sunlight? Any tips?"*

Great question. This was one of my biggest concerns as well when I began looking into patio gardening. Being on a patio we have zero control over position or sunlight. Fortunately we get a lot of afternoon light.

But if you are in an area where you don't get much sunlight, growing vegetables can be a problem. You must consider first how much sunlight you actually get, and second, determine which plants are best to grow.

### **DETERMINE YOUR SUN LEVEL**

Not all sunlight is equal. 4 hours of morning sun is not as hot as 4 hours of afternoon sun. If your patio or planting area is in direct morning sun for 4-6 hours this is going to be very cold compared to 4-6 hours of direct afternoon sun.

For our patio, we get a lot of afternoon sun. It's not 8 hours' worth of sun, but because we get a lot of hot afternoon sun, we are able to still grow sun loving vegetables.



## **SUN LOVERS**

Flowering vegetables are sun lovers. This would include tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and peas. These vegetables typically require anywhere from 6-12 hours of direct sunlight a day. You can still grow these with 6 hours of sunlight but they won't produce as many vegetables and they probably won't taste as good.

While we do not get 12 hours of sunlight, we do get a lot of hot afternoon sun.

## **CAN TOLERATE SHADE**

Most vegetables are sun lovers and DO not do well in shade during the day. However there are a few that will do okay with partial sun and shade. This means that most leafy vegetables require only about 4 hours of sunlight per day. Growing these will be your best shot in less sunny areas.

Most leafy vegetables can tolerate shade. Plants such as spinach and lettuce do well with less sunlight than other vegetables.

Most herbs can also do well without too much sunlight. While they are sun lovers, if you are restricted in sun light you could probably still grow a whole crop of herbs.



### **SO YOU DON'T GET VERY MUCH SUN, WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

Really, your plants survival also depends on how warm or cold your climate is as well. We live in a very temperate climate and our plants never get very cold. ***Try a couple young plants out and see how they do.*** Buy 1 tomato plant and test out your sunlight and then reevaluate next year as to if you should plant a full patio garden or not.

***Swap with a friend.*** Get together with a friend who has full sunlight. Ask her to grow (or help her) tomatoes and other sun lovers and in turn you will grow spinach and lettuce. Then once harvest time comes you share your vegetables. You then each get a little of both!

If you absolutely must have some vegetables, you can try growing herbs indoors under heat lamps. However, this can cost energy and precious space inside.

# Suggested Resources

[\*All New Square Foot Gardening\*](#) by Mel Bartholomew

[\*The New Organic Grower\*](#) by Eliot Coleman

[\*The Winter Harvest Handbook\*](#) by Eliot Coleman

[\*Gaia's Garden: A Guide To Home-Scale Permaculture\*](#) by Toby Hemenway

[\*Permaculture\*](#) by Sepp Holzer

Suggested videos:

[The Future of Food](#)

[Food, Inc.](#)

Suggested seed resources:

[Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)

[Seed Savers Exchange](#)

[Bountiful Gardens](#)

[Johnny's Selected Seeds](#)

[Sand Hill Preservation](#)



# About the Author

## Jami Leigh ~ Young Wife's Guide



*Jami is the proud young wife of awesome Hubby Jason. She dreams of the day that they start their family and welcome little ones into their home. In the meantime she is busy learning as many things as she can while she has the time. Jami has a heart for hospitality and making her home an inviting place that reflects Christ. She loves homemaking, sewing, scrapbooking, cooking, baking, reading, and taking bike rides with her hubby. You can find her blogging about her passions, her journey trying to emulate the life of the Proverbs 31 wife, and her life as a young wife at [Young Wife's Guide](#).*

You can also connect with Jami on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Pinterest](#)

# About the Contributors

This eBook was born out a desire to learn how to better feed my family healthy food on a tight budget. Along the way I have learned a lot, but I am still far from a gardening expert. I am so thankful that these ladies came along for the journey and added their expertise.

## Alina Joy ~ Good Old Days Farm



*Alina Joy Dubois is wife to her Farmer and mother to 3 little Farmhands! The family moved out into the country and her husband recently quit a career in software to open the "Good Old Days Farm" in Blue Ridge, Texas. They grow fruit, vegetables and herbs, raise honeybees and make handcrafted soap. To follow the goings-on of the farm, please visit the [Good Old Days Farm Blog](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)! She also blogs at [Outdoor Schoolhouse](#).*

## Bethany ~ Pursuing The Heart of Womanhood



*Bethany is a stay-at-home daughter trying to use her time well during this "young adult" stage in her life, before her and a handsome-hearted young m the -home mom in a little country house. Her daily activities vary greatly with her many hobbies and loves - which include organic gardening, being involved in music vocally and instrumentally, sharing information with others, growing closer to God, creativity, learning, healthy foods, and creating jewelry with used guitar strings at her new, small home-business. [Fret Knot Jewelry](#). She also blogs at [Pursuing The Art Of Womanhood](#).*

## Erin ~ Pennies for Pearls



*Erin is the wife of one and the mother of two! In addition to gardening and photography, she enjoys the daily, ever-evolving, challenge of building a home for her family. She blogs at [Pennies for Pearls](#) where she discusses all things home, family, and faith: the pearls of life.*

## Joanie ~ Simple Living Mama



Joanie Boeckman is a country mama who loves Jesus. Her husband is her American hero and her two children are her world. She loves watching her backyard chickens peck the ground, learning about real food, and finding creative ways to organize her house. You can find her blogging about homemaking, baby raising, and money saving at [Simple Living Mama](#). Also check her out on [Facebook](#) for fun updates!

## Kate ~ Teaching What is Good



Kate Megill is a follower of Jesus, first and foremost. She is also a wife and homeschooling mom of 8 with a passion for older women teaching younger women in the manner of [Titus 2:3-5](#). She blogs at [Teaching What Is Good](#) and shares her life, her faith, her family and encouragement to other women seeking to walk with God.

## Michele ~ Simple Scaife Family Farm



Michele grew up in the wide open prairie where her grandparents' beef and grain farm taught her to be a keeper of all God placed in her care. Now a Christian home educator, she makes her home in southeast Texas with her husband of twenty years and their three teenagers. She is often found roaming about her large garden or sitting at the old quilt frame with a cup of coffee in hand. Her farm life and hand quilted works are found on her blog and her online shop.

## Tiffany ~ No Ordinary Homestead



You can learn more about Tiffany at her blog, [No Ordinary Homestead](#), where she talks about life in Germany and living a more natural lifestyle with her husband, daughter, 120 pound Newfie and two silly cats. If you blog about getting your garden started, don't forget to stop by on Fridays to join the Garden Life weekly link up.

# Image Credits

Introduction: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2986](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2986),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=862](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=862).

Chapter 1: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=987](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=987)

Chapter 2: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=1970](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=1970),  
<http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/InteractiveMap.aspx>,  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=82](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=82),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2125](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2125),

Chapter 3: [Simple Living Mama](#)

Chapter 4: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=1970](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=1970), [http://cdo.ncdc.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/climatenormals/climatenormals.pl?directive=prod\\_select2&prodtype=CLIM2001&subnum](http://cdo.ncdc.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/climatenormals/climatenormals.pl?directive=prod_select2&prodtype=CLIM2001&subnum), [Young Wife's Guide](#).

Chapter 5: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=1750](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=1750),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=404](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=404),  
[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00318RL46/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00318RL46](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00318RL46/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B00318RL46).

Chapter 6: All photos from: <http://www.noordinaryhomestead.com/>

Chapter 8: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=404](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=404).

Chapter 9: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2821](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2821),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=404](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=404),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=1983](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=1983)

Chapter 10: <http://www.freedigitalphotos.net>, <http://www.freedigitalphotos.net>

Chapter 11: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2365](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2365),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=404](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=404),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=915](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=915)

Chapter 12: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2280](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2280),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=901](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=901),

Chapter 13: <http://teachingwhatisgood.com/>

Chapter 14: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2023](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2023),

Chapter 15: <http://www.assoc-amazon.com/e/ir?t=youwifsgui-20&l=as2&o=1&a=B003V1WTA4>,  
[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0071J95BJ/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0071J95BJ](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0071J95BJ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B0071J95BJ),  
[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002Y04TK6/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B002Y04TK6](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B002Y04TK6/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B002Y04TK6),  
[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000OWF97S/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000OWF97S](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000OWF97S/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000OWF97S),  
[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000BQNBXQ/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000BQNBXQ](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000BQNBXQ/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=youwifsgui-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000BQNBXQ)

[20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B000BQNBXQ](#),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2821](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2821),

Chapter 16: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=659](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=659),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=1023](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=1023)

Chapter 17: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=901](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=901)

Chapter 18: All photos from: <http://www.pennies4pearls.com/>

Chapter 20-23: All photos from: <http://simplyscaife.blogspot.com/>

Chapter 24: [http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=2280](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=2280),  
[http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view\\_photog.php?photogid=1750](http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/view_photog.php?photogid=1750),