

Flora & Fauna

Starting A Vegetable Garden

With the weather warming up, it's prime time for starting vegetable garden. If you've never grown a vegetable garden before, you may be surprised by how easy and rewarding it can be. Here are some basic tips on how to get started:

First, determine what zone you're in; this will help you figure out the best time to plant your garden. Typically, it's just after the last frost date. In the United States, there are 11 zones, with zone 11 running through Hawaii and the southern tip of Florida. Zone 11 is the hottest zone, Zone 1 is the coldest. You can visit www.burpee.com to find your zone.

Second, figure out how much growing space you have available. This will also determine how many of each type of plant you'll be able to sustain. Zucchini plants, for example, require 3-4 feet of space all around them. Peppers, chives, lettuce, and many herbs, however, require far less.

Third, prepare your garden plot. Choose an area that receives a lot of sunlight. Sunlight is needed to heat the soil to help seeds germinate, and for helping mature plants grow. Break up and turn the soil, and add a bit of compost to give it some extra nutrients.

Fourth, figure out what you want to grow! Grow only what you're interested in eating. Also, grow only as much as you have time to cultivate. Some fruits and vegetables are a bit trickier to grow than others and require more attention. If you don't have time to frequently water cucumbers, there's no point in planting them.

Lastly, start planting! Check the backside of seed packets to see how deep and how far apart seeds should be planted. The same information is available on nursery tags, too.

Here are three vegetables that are really easy to grow, even for the most clueless gardener:

1. **Zucchini.** You'll be amazed at how fast this plant grows. Plant seeds about six inches apart. As they begin to sprout leaves, keep only the ones that look strongest and pull out the others. Space the remaining plants about a foot apart. Repeat the process again as they continue to grow until you have a few strong plants spread about 3 feet apart. Water frequently. Harvest the zucchini when they're about 6-8 inches long. The more fruit you harvest, the more the plant will produce. To slow down fruit production, leave a couple on the plant.

2. **Cucumbers.** Like the zucchini, cucumbers can be easily started from seeds. They grow fast and need a lot of space. You can train them to grow on tomato cages or trellises to conserve space. Just loosely tie the vines to the cage with some twine. This also makes it easier to find the fruit once they start growing. Harvest cucumbers when they're about 5-7 inches long. If you leave them on too long, they're not too tasty.

3. **Tomatoes.** It's best to buy tomato plants from a nursery. They take a while to get started from seeds and can be quite delicate in their seedling stage. Most stores have a variety of tomatoes you can choose from. Water frequently. Harvest the tomatoes when they turn red.

GUARANTEE SYSTEM.

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Cleaning Corner

Vodka – It's not just for cocktails any more!

Painlessly remove a bandage by saturating it with vodka. It will dissolve the adhesive.

Clean the caulking around bathtubs and showers by filling a trigger-spray bottle with vodka and spraying the caulking. Let it set for five minutes, then rinse clean.

Clean your eyeglasses by simply wiping the lenses with a soft, clean cloth dampened with vodka.

Prolong the life of razors by filling a cup with vodka and letting your safety razor blade soak after shaving. This disinfects the blade and prevents rusting

Cure foot odor by soaking your feet in vodka.

Remove smoke odors from clothing by spraying them with a mixture of 1 part vodka to 3 parts water then laundering as usual.

May

- 1310 Shoes were made for both right and left feet
- 1497 Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci leaves for his first voyage to the New World
- 1786 Wolfgang Mozart premieres his opera, *The Marriage of Figaro*, in Vienna
- 1884 John Harvey Kellogg patents corn flakes
- 1916 The small town of Codell, Kansas is struck by a tornado. Incredibly, the same town was also hit in 1917 and 1918 on the exact same date
- 1919 First wedding held in an aircraft (over Houston, TX)
- 1926 Thomas Edison says Americans prefer silent movies to "talkies"
- 1961 The Prime Minister of Cuba, Fidel Castro, proclaims Cuba a socialist nation and abolishes elections
- 1967 Elvis Presley & Pricilla Beaulieu wed in Las Vegas

Health Tips: Health Advice: Stop Making Excuses!

For many Americans, making time for daily physical activity simply isn't a priority. Although we all know that we should workout at least an hour a day, we often find ourselves making excuse after excuse as to why our health just isn't that important. So here are some excuse-busting solutions to help you get off that couch and get moving!

Excuse-Buster 1: Set realistic goals for yourself.

Ok, while you may need to work out 6-7 times a week to get that dream body you've always wanted, there's no way you're going to stay committed to that routine right away. Start out small. Try doing one 30-minute workout 2-3 times a week. Start out with low-impact activities like walking, riding a bike or swimming. You can increase intensity and frequency from there.

Excuse-Buster 2: Make it an appointment.

People often tell themselves that they'll work out in their "free time," and then decide they'd rather watch TV, read a book, or take a nap instead. Instead of considering working out a free-time activity, make it an appointment you have to keep. Write it down in your planner and don't schedule any other appointments during that time.

Excuse-Buster 3: Exercise first thing in the morning.

It's true. After work, you're tired and the last thing you want to do is hit the gym. So bust this excuse by working out in the morning. Get up 30 minutes earlier, put on your gym shoes and go for a walk. Then you'll have it out of the way for the day!

Excuse-Buster 4: Get an exercise partner.

An exercise partner can give you motivation and accountability. It's much harder to skip out on a workout when you have a partner waiting for you to show up. A good place to find a partner is at an exercise club, or you can walk with someone in your neighborhood. You can even partner up with your spouse and kids and make it a daily, post-dinner ritual.

Excuse-Buster 5: Give yourself small rewards.

Each time you complete a workout or reach an exercise goal, give yourself a small treat. This can be anything from a manicure, a soak in the bathtub, or a new pair of tennis shoes. Or, reward a full week of hard workouts with a relaxing yoga session on Friday. Small rewards can be very effective in reducing the frequency of workout excuses. Just don't make high calorie foods a reward – you'll cancel out all your progress!

Step 5: Don't let yourself get bored with your workout.

Make small changes in your workout to help maintain motivation. You can do this by walking a different route every other day or trying a new exercise DVD (you can check them out for free at your local library). Try different activities like biking, swimming, or rock wall climbing. Not only are they a great workout, but they're tons of fun, too!

Kid Corner: Taking the Kids to a Restaurant

We've all been in a restaurant when someone's screaming kids ruin the meal. Before you had children of your own, you probably cringed, turned to your dinner-mate and made an oath never to bring your future kids to a restaurant. But now that you *are* a parent, you're dreading the idea of limiting your family outings to McDonalds or pizza joints. Have no fear, you can go out to dinner with your children and everyone – you, your kids, and other restaurant goers – will enjoy the evening.

Here are a few tips for a successful evening out:

- **Choose the location carefully.** With smoking bans being placed on more and more restaurants, families are venturing out to more places, even pubs. However, keep in mind that not all restaurants are equipped with booster seats and high chairs. It's a good idea to call ahead to check and see if they can accommodate your family.
- **Make sure there's kid-friendly menu.** As much as you would enjoy going to your favorite sushi restaurant, it's probably a better idea to save it for a special date-night with your spouse when you can leave the kids at home. Instead, choose restaurants that offer meals your kids will enjoy like spaghetti, macaroni and cheese, or boneless chicken.
- **Be time conscious.** If your family normally eats at 5:00pm, then that's when you should arrive at the restaurant. It just doesn't make sense to have dinner at 8:00pm if that's your toddler's bedtime. Also, don't stay at a restaurant too long. If you're catching up with friends, make plans to enjoy coffee at one or the other's home once dinner is over. Asking kids to sit quietly at the table for three hours while you talk to someone else is just asking for trouble.
- **Bring boredom supplies!** Before you leave your home, help each child pack a small backpack with some crayons, small coloring pages, and one or two small toys that don't encourage rough play. While you're finishing your meal (or waiting for it to arrive), they can be coloring quietly.
- **Be strategically seated.** Ask to sit in a booth or in a table in a corner. Better yet, find a table near the kitchen. If your kids start to act up, you'll be less noticeable and they'll bother fewer people.
- **Clear away any distractions.** As your hostess is seating you, immediately hand her any candles or centerpieces that are on the table. Ask her to set them aside and put them back on the table when you're gone.
- **Plan for potty breaks.** Tell your waiter to bring drinks with dinner, not before. Kids tend to drink up whatever is in front of them and then need a bathroom break in the middle of the meal. You could also take your kids to the bathroom after you order your meal so you'll be guaranteed one less mid-meal interruption.
- **Take a time out.** If your kids start throwing a tantrum, take them outside the restaurant until they can calm down and behave. While you might be able to tune out your 4-year-old's screaming, other patrons certainly cannot.

Ingredients:

- 1 10-oz package of frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 10-oz can of cream of celery soup
- 2 tablespoons milk
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 8-oz bag of frozen tater tots
- 4 mushrooms, sliced
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- A few pinches of dried basil and oregano
- Dash of salt and pepper

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a baking dish, mix together the vegetables, mushrooms, garlic, herbs, and salt and pepper.
3. In a small bowl, mix the soup and milk until smooth. Pour over the vegetable mixture. Sprinkle cheese over the vegetables.
4. Place the tater tots on top of the cheese with sides touching.
5. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until the tater tots are crisp and brown on top.

Benefits of Eating Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins, minerals, and fiber that may help protect you from chronic diseases. Compared with people who consume a diet with only small amounts of fruits and vegetables, those who eat more generous amounts as part of a healthful diet are likely to have reduced risk of chronic diseases, including stroke, other cardiovascular diseases, and even certain cancers.

Finding the Right Trashcan

When you think of the décor in your kitchen, you probably think about appliances, cabinetry, a small table, even hand towels and curtains. What you probably don't think about is your kitchen trashcan. Next to the fridge, the trashcan is one of the most used items in the kitchen. With that in mind, doesn't it make sense to choose a trashcan that adds style and compliments the overall design of your kitchen?

Trashcan Size

Finding the right size of trashcan depends on two things: how much trash you have, and how much kitchen space you have. If you sort your trash for recycling or composting, you probably don't need a large trashcan. However, if you don't do any recycling whatsoever, you'll need a much larger container – or you'll need to frequently empty the trashcan into a larger receptacle somewhere else, such as a garage.

Recycling

With today's recycling technologies, just about anything can be recycled – aluminum cans, glass bottles, newspaper, cardboard, and more. If your city offers a recycling program, you can greatly reduce the amount of trash you throw out each week, and do something beneficial for the environment. Perhaps one of the most helpful innovations is the trashcan that has more than one receptacle, allowing you to easily separate the paper, plastic, and trash in one place. If you don't want a trash-sorting center in your kitchen, consider keeping a receptacle in the garage just for recyclables.

Trashcan Placement

If you have a small kitchen, you may want to hide the trashcan beneath a sink or in a cabinet. There are models that attach to doors or even slide out on rollers. These, of course, can be the best space-savers and have very little decorating impact.

For the kitchen where you have no choice but to have the trash can out in the open, stainless steel remains the most popular material. They are available in round, square, or oblong models, depending on the shape needed to suit the space.

For a more rustic look, you can find trash baskets made of woven straw. These take a little more care, and must be lined with a plastic trash bag in order to preserve their look, but they can enhance the mood of a country-casual kitchen.

The Importance of Upholstery Cleaning

It's funny how fastidious some of us are about cleanliness in our homes. We work hard to scrub the bathroom, we keep the kitchen clean, we vacuum the floors every week and call Guarantee System to schedule a cleaning every year. But for some reason, we always forget about cleaning the upholstery in our homes.

Think about it – when is the last time you had your couch professionally cleaned? Last year? Five years ago? Never? Most families spend a great deal of time on the couch, eating, watching TV, playing, sleeping, reading... just how much dirt and grime have you left behind? Is your yellow couch supposed to be white?

Though it's not nice to think about, it's a fact that our favorite couches and chairs accumulate a great deal of dirt, body oils, sweat, food spills, dust mites, pet dander and who knows what else. What's worse, the sweat and body oil that is left behind on your couch cushions acts like a glue that binds dirt to the fabric, making it difficult to remove.

Upholstery requires special methods to clean both because it attracts different types of dirt than your carpet, and because it is made from different materials. Some fabrics can be easily damaged (resulting in color loss or frayed fibers) if not cared for properly.

Don't worry! Guarantee System has the products and tools necessary to clean your favorite pieces of furniture. We've got what it takes to break down the worst dirt and grime and make your furniture look like new. **Give us a call today at 616-451-0878!**



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