

# How to ... start a veggie garden

Plant a veggie garden and eat fresh, delicious food that doesn't cost the earth.

How?

OK, while you're probably not planning on subsistence farming for an entire continent, the more space you can get, the better. Anything around 4 or 5 square metres will be ok. If space is a bit of an issue consider planter boxes and pots.

You can buy planter boxes or create your own. (Planter boxes should be at least 1 metre long and ½ metre deep. Boxes can be on wheels to move around your yard).



As your garden is likely to be outside you will need to consider whether the site is shaded (ideally you want something with moderate shade, so that the plants aren't exposed to full sun or completely shaded).

You will also need to make sure you have water nearby to water your new garden – you don't want to be lugging watering cans from one side of the yard to the other.

Will your garden be planted directly into the ground or would you prefer raised garden beds? Raised beds have the advantage of you not having to bend over to get to the garden, but they will require more materials, such as extra soil and wood to surround the raised beds. A garden prepared directly into the ground requires fewer materials but also means you'll all have to spend your time closer to the ground...think crook back issues here!

What sorts of vegetables will you plant? A trip to the nursery for some advice will help you decide on what's best for the site you have chosen, the climate you live in and the time of year you want to start planting. Obviously it is a good idea to plant what you love eating or at the very least, foods you're not allergic too. If you really want to aim high, choose organic or heirloom seeds and plants. Good for the garden, good for you.

Think about your soil. Is the soil in your yard already churning with happy worms and a good earthy aroma? Or is it a bit on the dry and gravelly side? Will your soil support the happy and healthy growing of veggies? If you're not sure, you may need to think about adding compost (here's where a compost bin or worm farm comes in handy) or some other sort of soil conditioner. If you have to buy some, try and stick with something organic that's not going to upset any life that is in your soil.



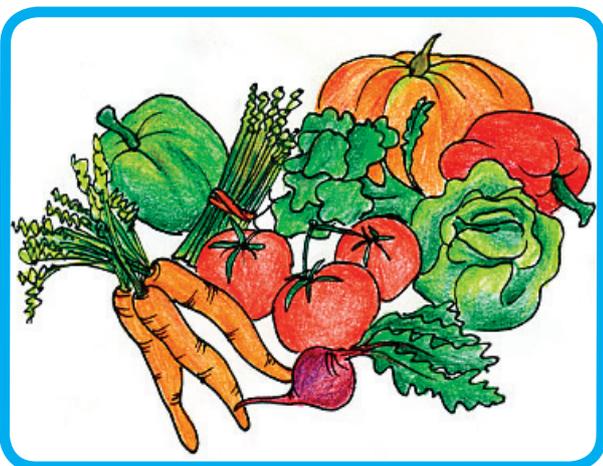
Check the next page for a step by step on how to plant your garden.

For more information on how you can help our environment, or to make some suggestions of your own, please go to [www.coolaustralia.org](http://www.coolaustralia.org)

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## Planting the garden:

1. Use shovels, spades, hoes and hand tillers to break up the earth. Pull out any grass and weeds with your hands. Till the soil at least 6 inches deep.
2. Place a border around the perimeter of the garden to keep grass from growing into the garden bed and choking vegetable plants to death. Use the water hose to moisten soil in the garden bed.
3. Sow seeds or plant seedlings in the garden bed. Follow the instructions on the seed packets or plant inserts regarding spacing of seeds and plants. Place seeds 30cms apart really means 30cms apart - not 10 or 15cms. If you plant too close to each other the plants will just shoot up as high as possible fighting for sunlight and have little energy to produce what you want them to.
4. You'll need to water regularly (keeping in mind any water restrictions) and according to the needs of the plants. You should consider watering from your own water tank or using grey water, although grey water shouldn't be used all the time on your veggies – grey water might be better saved for the lawn or the fruit trees.
5. Strongly consider mulching your new garden to help it retain water. Bear in mind however, that some common mulching materials (e.g. pea straw) can contain the eggs of snails or other garden munching critters so choose mulch with this in mind.
6. You'll also need to weed regularly and watch for pests. Ditch the chemical pesticides and insecticides and go natural. Download our Green Garden Pest Control tips to find out how you can keep the pests away the green way.
7. Harvest your veggies and eat – so satisfying and yummy too!



**For more information on veggie gardens, please visit the following sites:**

Diggers Club - Seeds and stuff  
<http://www.diggers.com.au/>

Sustainable Gardening Australia  
<http://www.sgaonline.org.au/>

Gardening Australia - Fruits, Vegetables and Herbs  
[http://www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets/fruit\\_vegetables\\_herbs.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/gardening/factsheets/fruit_vegetables_herbs.htm)

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