

Gardening for Your Health

June 2017

Find out why you should grow your own produce with these health and cost saving benefits!

Stack Up the Savings

Pounds of Savings: A 250 square foot garden can produce over 100 pounds worth of food in just one growing season. This can provide one adult with 5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily for about nine months!

Preserve your produce: Enjoy in-season, home grown food year-round. Consider freezing, drying, or canning fresh fruits and vegetables. Preserving food for later use will save you money in the winter when fresh produce prices are higher.



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program (SNAP): Use your SNAP benefits to purchase seeds or plants for your garden at the store.

Physical activity

Did you know that adults should get at least 30 minutes of physical activity 5 days per week and children should aim for 60 minutes every day. Gardening is a great way to be more physically active! Increased physical activity and healthy eating can lead to a healthier you!

- ◇ Dig up weeds with a shovel or garden hoe instead of using a rototiller
- ◇ Carry buckets or watering cans of water to the plants in your garden instead of using a garden hose.
- ◇ Build muscle by squatting or stretching when weeding or harvesting produce from the garden.
- ◇ Work on building your core and leg muscles by lifting buckets, potted containers, or wheelbarrows with your legs, not your back.



Eating a Rainbow of Phytonutrients

What are Phytonutrients?

Phytonutrients are compounds that are naturally produced by plants. Fruits, vegetables, grains and beans all include phytonutrients that have a wide range of health benefits and effects on the body. The following is a list of some common phytonutrients, where they can be found, and their health benefits.

Beta-Carotene

- **Benefits:** Improved immune system, skin and bone health, and vision
- **Produce:** carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin, cantaloupe, spinach, broccoli, kale

Lycopene

- **Benefits:** May decrease risk of prostate cancer and can improve heart health
- **Produce:** tomatoes, watermelon, red peppers

Lutein

- **Benefits:** Can improve eye and heart health as well as decrease risk of cancer
- **Produce:** kale, Brussels sprouts, spinach, lettuce, broccoli

Resveratrol

- **Benefits:** Can decrease cancer risk, treat inflammation, and improve heart and lung health
- **Produce:** grapes

Anthocyanidins

- **Benefits:** Promotes good blood vessel health
- **Produce:** blueberries, red onions, strawberries, red potatoes, red radishes, raspberries

Isoflavones

- **Benefits:** May improve bone health, lower cholesterol, decrease joint inflammation, and decrease risk of breast cancer
- **Produce:** soybeans



Limited on garden space? Plant herbs and produce in containers!

Produce doesn't have to be planted in your yard. Try growing produce and herbs in potting containers.

Where to Plant: Find an area of your property that receives a minimum of six hours of sunlight daily. This could be on your deck or in your window sill.

Choosing a Container:

- Look for containers with small holes in the bottom. This helps with drainage. (Hint: Many small holes are better than one larger hole in the center of the container)
- Knowing if you plan on moving the potted containers around to various locations often will help you select what type of material your container should be made of. If you plan on moving containers select a material that is lighter weight, and therefore easier to move, such as resin or plastic. Heavier containers would include materials like clay or terracotta.
- Consider what plants you plan to grow when choosing the size of a container. Larger containers will also hold more moisture and won't need to be watered as often as plants in smaller containers.
- Purchase potting soil for container produce. You can also mix up your own potting soil by combining equal parts (volume) of peat moss and perlite. This will help improve drainage and root growth compared to field soil.



How and What to Plant

1. Add your potting mixture to the container you picked out. Depending on the depth of your container, you may want to add large pieces of Styrofoam to the bottom of the container to save money on potting mix.
2. Next, wet the soil with water.
3. Dig a hole and plant your produce or herbs in the container. A general rule is to plant one plant for every eight to twelve inches of container diameter. Over crowding plants will prevent them from growing as well, therefore decreasing produce yield.
4. Care for your plants by watering them well but be careful to not over water. Depending on the weather, plants may require watering once to two times per day.
5. Fertilizer will help your plants grow bigger and stronger. Fertilization methods vary so choose what suits your needs.

Vegetables well-suited for summer container gardening

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Cucumbers | Bush varieties are easier to manage, but vining varieties can be trellised. |
| Eggplant | Most varieties work well. |
| Peppers | Most bell and hot peppers grow well in most containers. |
| Squash | Summer squash do the best. |
| Tomatoes | Grape, cherry and other smaller varieties. Bush, "patio" or determinate varieties are good choices. |
| Herbs | Parsley, sage, cilantro, thyme, rosemary and oregano. Note: plant mints separately so they don't overtake a container. |

When to Harvest Vegetables

| Vegetable | Harvest | Tips |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| Asparagus | Harvest spears when the tips are tight | For 1-2 year old growth harvest for 3-4 weeks. Older plants can be harvested for 5-7 weeks |
| Lima Beans/Snap Beans | Pick when beans are tender | To continue growth of new pods, pick off old pods. |
| Broccoli | Cut when head ranges between 5-8 inches across. Side shoot can be harvested for 1 month. | |
| Carrots | Harvest when carrots are large enough to eat. | |
| Sweet Corn | Harvest corn when the kernels are full and when pressed they release a burst of milky colored juice. | |
| Cucumbers | Pick when the cucumber is dark green and slender. | Pick old or dead fruit off of the vine so that it will continue to produce fruit. |
| Eggplant | Outside skin should be glossy and mature when harvested. | |
| Kale | Pick the whole plant or just the outer leaves once they have matured. | Frost on the plant may improve the flavor of the leaves. |
| Onions | Harvest as soon as the stalks are brown and have fallen onto the ground. | When growing scallions or spring onions, harvest them when the stalk had grown to 1/2 inch. |
| Peas | Pick peas just before they have reached their full size. Snow peas should be picked when the pods contain small peas inside. | |
| Pepper | Grow peppers until their skin is slightly firm and mature. | Sweet peppers taste better once they turn red on the plant. |
| Potato | Once the vine is dead, it's time to dig up potatoes. New potatoes can be harvested prior to the vine dying. | Leave potatoes buried in the dirt for awhile after the vines have died to preserve them longer. |
| Radish | Harvest once the roots are large enough to eat. | |
| Tomato | Pick tomatoes when they are bright red and firm. | Green tomatoes will ripen if placed in the dark. |

Recipes from Your Garden to Your Table

Fresh Corn and Cherry Salad

Yield: 8 servings



Dressing Ingredients:

- 1/2 medium shallot, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 olive oil
- 1/4 balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper to taste

Salad Ingredients:

- 5 ounces baby arugula or spinach
- 3 cups corn
- 1/2 cup red onion
- 3/4 cup feta cheese
- 1 pound fresh cherries, pitted, sliced in half

Directions:

1. In a small mixing bowl combine the ingredients for the dressing and whisk well.
2. Then in a large salad bowl combine the arugula or spinach, corn, and onion.
3. Mix with the dressing and toss.
4. Top with feta and cherries.

Homemade Garden Salsa

Yield: 10 servings

Ingredients:

- 3 1/2 pounds of tomatoes
- 1/2 of a small red onion
- 2-3 jalapeno peppers
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup cilantro
- 1/2 teaspoon red wine vinegar
- 1/2 of a lemon or lime, juiced
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Roughly chop tomatoes, onions, and jalapeno peppers.
2. Add all of the ingredients to the food processor.
3. Next, pulse until desired consistency. Serve with chips or vegetables.



Vegetable Soup

Yield: 7, 2 cup servings

Ingredients:

- 2 ½ tbsp. olive oil
- 1 ½ cups chopped yellow onion
- 2 cups peeled and chopped carrots
- 1 ¼ cups chopped celery
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 14 ½ oz. low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1 ½ cups tomatoes, diced
- 3 cups potatoes, diced into 1/2 cubes
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 bay leaves
- ½ tsp dried thyme
- Ground black pepper to taste
- 1 ½ cups green beans
- 1 ¼ cups corn
- 1 cup peas

Directions:

1. In a large pot, heat olive oil on medium heat.
2. Add onions, carrots, and celery and sauté for 3-4 minutes.
3. Add garlic and cook for 30 seconds.
4. Next add vegetable broth, tomatoes, potatoes, parsley, bay leaves, thyme, pepper.
5. Bring soup to a boil.
6. Then add green beans and cook over medium-low heat with the lid on for 20 -30 minutes.
7. Add corn and peas and cook for an additional 5 minutes and serve.

Fresh Herb Facts

- Herbs can be a flavorful addition to your garden and your meals. Adding herbs like rosemary, thyme, or basil to food are great alternatives for salt and fat in recipes.
- Fresh herbs are full of antioxidants. Antioxidants help remove free radicals from the body which play a role in heart disease and cancer.
- Check with your doctor about potentially harmful herb and drug interactions. Herbs like lavender may increase drowsiness if you are taking a sedative. Parsley may increase high blood pressure in people taking antihypertensive or MAO inhibitor drugs. St. John's wort also has interactions with many drugs and may inhibit iron absorption.



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