

Starting Your Own Home Garden



- ✓ **Select your location.**
 - Choose a spot that gets around 8 hours of direct sunlight per day - this is what most vegetable crops need to grow.
- ✓ **Design your garden and plan. Consider some of the following questions during planning:**
 - How much time and energy do you have to dedicate to your garden? It is ok to start small - you can always add more space later!
 - How will you irrigate? Hand watering is a great option for first time growers in small spaces, but alternative systems like drip irrigation or soaker hoses can be considered for larger gardens.
 - Where will you be growing - in ground, in raised beds, or in containers?
 - What are your resource needs? Do you need to invest in any tools, materials for trellising, or irrigation? Or do you already have what you need?
- ✓ **Choose your crops.**
 - Choose veggies and herbs that you and/or your family like to eat.
 - Source your seeds and transplants from a trusted source, such as a local farmer or seed company.
 - If you are just starting out:
 - Pick just a few easy to grow crops to focus on to set yourself up for success!
 - Consult your seed packets for information - learn which of the crops you've chosen can be direct seeded and which need to be transplanted, their spacing requirements, when to plant, and when to expect them to be ready to harvest.
- ✓ **Prepare your soil and care for it.**
 - There are many different methods and materials you can choose from to build raised beds and break new ground. Consider lab testing soil for general health and heavy metal presence before choosing between in-ground or raised bed options.
 - For raised beds:
 - Raised beds can be a good choice if you don't have the time or desire to work and amend your soil, and can allow you to safely garden if soil is contaminated.
 - Fill new beds with a blend of topsoil and compost. Look for products labeled 'raised bed' blend.
 - For in-ground gardens:
 - Urban soils are generally depleted of nutrients, but it is possible with time, patience, and amendments to build them back up.
 - Consider using a 'no till' method such as sheet mulching (layering organic materials like cardboard, compost, straw, etc... several inches thick) as an alternative to tillage, which damages soil structure and biology.
 - If choosing tillage, soil-working equipment is available for rental locally
 - For best results, make new in-ground beds in the fall so that they can go through a freeze/thaw cycle before planting in the spring.
- ✓ **Plant and care for your garden!** Regularly water, weed, harvest, and monitor for pests.

Gardening Resources and Tips



LOCAL SOURCES TRANSPLANTS, SEEDS, AND OTHER RESOURCES

Farmers Markets & Local Farmers

- Sunday Farmers Market (transplants)
- Hub Farmers Market (transplants)
- Haymarket Farmers Market (transplants)

Businesses

- Midwest Natives (native perennial transplants)
- Open Harvest Coop (seeds + transplants)
- Earl May Garden Center (seeds, transplants, supplies)
- Campbell's Nursery (seeds, transplants, supplies)

Organizations

- Nebraska Herbal Society (transplants)
- Spring Affair Sale (transplants)
- Community Crops (transplants)

Tool Rental and Soil Testing

- Home Depot (soil working and other garden tools)
- Salt Creek Coop Tool Library (<https://www.saltcreekcoop.com/tool-library>)
- AgSource & Midwest Labs (soil testing)

EASY TO GROW CROPS FOR FIRST TIME GROWERS

DIRECT SEED



TRANSPLANT



GARDENING TIPS AND BEST PRACTICES

- The **last expected frost for Lincoln is April 30th**. Wait to plant cold sensitive plants, like tomatoes, after this date! Cold tolerant crops, such as radishes, can be planted earlier than last frost.
- **Weed on a regular basis**. Remove weeds when they are small well before they go to seed. This will save you time in the future and can help prevent insect pests by reducing habitat.
- Our soils are essential to all life. **Care for your soil** by reducing or avoiding tillage, keeping bare spots covered with mulch, and applying compost in fall or spring. These actions preserve soil structure and biology, which is essential to growing successful, healthy crops.
- Don't rely on pesticides - **prevent pests** from becoming a problem by scouting on a regular basis. This means examining your plants for signs of insect pests and removing any adults or eggs by hand. Take pictures of pests or damage to use for ID later and notes to help make responsible decisions on when organic chemical intervention is appropriate.
- **Water only when necessary** - if you can feel moisture in the soil, you can wait! This helps prevent disease and nutrient issues and conserves water. Deliver water **directly at the base of the plant to the roots** to help plants uptake it more efficiently.

SOIL HEALTH PRINCIPLES



SEED STARTING



SOIL SCIENCE



SEEDING AND PLANTING DATES



COVER CROPPING



ORGANIC PEST MANAGEMENT

