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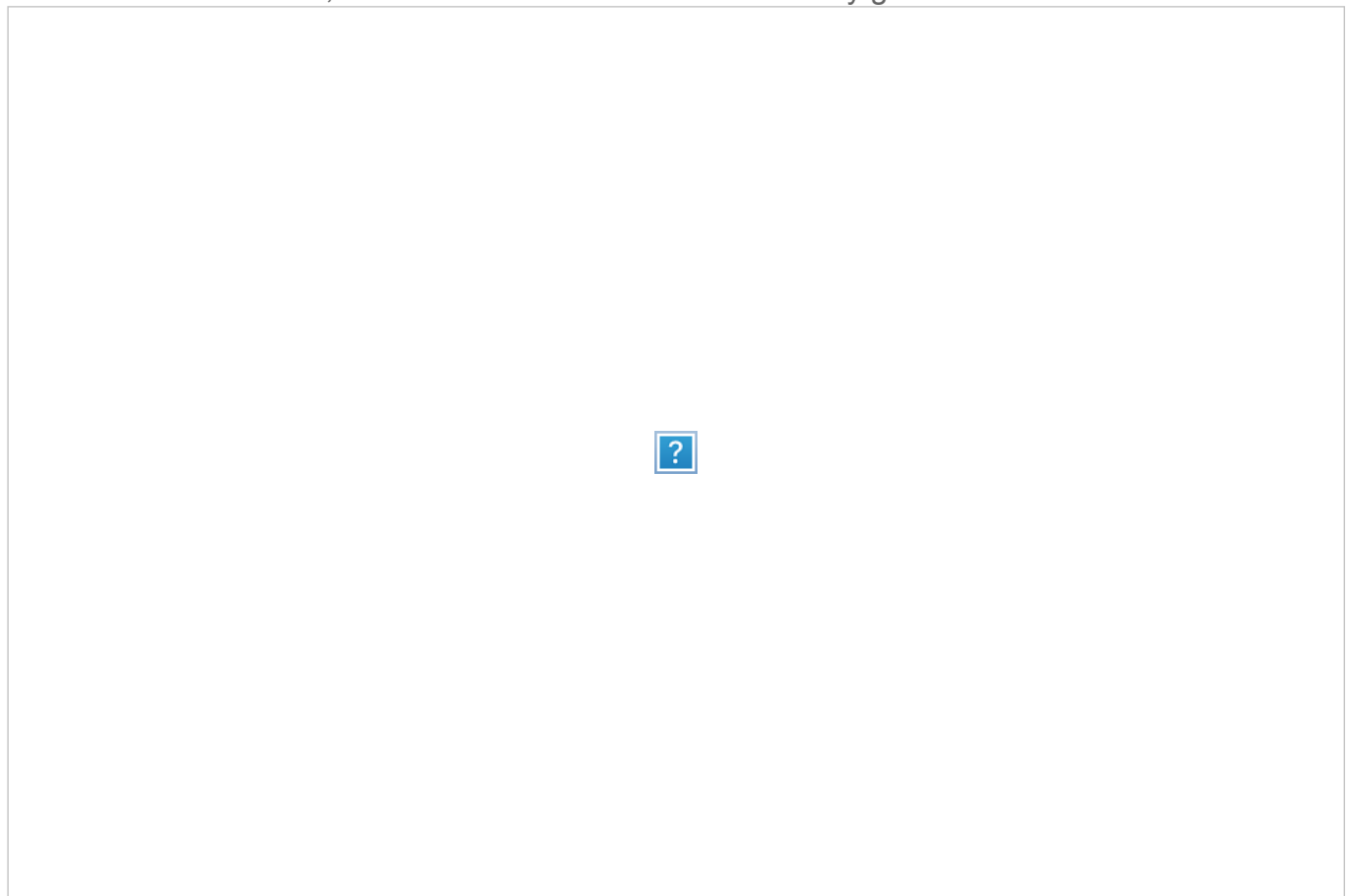


How to Build Your Own Vegetable Garden

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Growing vegetables at home as a way of saving money isn't a modern invention. Victory gardens of the 1940s were a very popular tool used by home makers to lower food costs and save the country's resources in order to get through tough economic times. In fact, in 1944, there was a call for people to "Plant More in '44", which made it possible for Americans to produce 40% of the vegetables they consumed as a nation!^[i]

Today, more and more people are converting their landscapes into back or front yard gardens in order to save money and feed their families with **healthier foods**. In 2009, 20% more American households were growing their own vegetables than the year before!^[ii] This is the kind of local, eco food movement Hearts can really get behind.



Quick Guide: Benefits of Planting a Vegetable Garden

- **Number of home gardens in America:** In recent years, 43 million households in America planted food gardens ranging in size from 96 square feet to 600 square feet.^[iii]
- **Most popular vegetables grown in home gardens:** Americans love to grow things like tomatoes, sweet peppers, cucumbers, carrots, summer squash, beans, peas, onions, sweet corn, lettuce, and hot peppers.
- **Costs of home gardening:** The costs of gardening are not large on average. In fact, the typical household spends about \$70 per year on vegetable gardening and receives \$600 in benefits. The return on investment is excellent, resulting in a \$530 return on investment. Across the country, USA receives a \$21 billion return on investment through food gardening.^[iv]
- **Time commitment for gardening:** Time is also a factor, but most gardeners spend no more than 5 hours weekly working with their plants. Since many people enjoy the work of gardening, this type of work is more a joy than a burden.^[v]
- **Environmental benefits of home gardening:** Growing your own vegetables is as local as it gets – just step outside of your house! That means you can prepare meals without making trips to the grocery store, which could reduce your fuel consumption. Moreover, if you cultivate an organic garden, you'll really reduce your energy consumption. That's because everything from fertilizers to additives require energy to produce and ship. When you use organic gardening methods like composting, you'll really reduce these energy costs.^[vi]

Take Action! Build a Vegetable Garden

1. **Learn the basics of gardening:** The National Gardening Association has a whole library of high quality **How-To Videos** that cover everything from starting vegetable seeds to how to use organic weed control. Go further by checking out the Kitchen Gardeners International **Garden Planner software**. It's filled with built-in tutorial videos, lists of what you need to get started, and more (free for first 30 days, then \$25/year).
2. **Grow an organic garden:** Not only is **organic food more nutritious**, it's also even better for the planet than a conventional home vegetable garden. Many online resources will fill your mind with all the knowledge you need to cultivate an organic home garden: [OrganicGardening.com](#), [EarthEasy](#), and the [Rodale Institute](#).
3. **Support food, not lawns:** If you have a hard time convincing your neighbors of the benefits of a front yard veggie garden, get involved with the **Food Not Lawns** movement.



Dig Deeper: Vegetable Garden Planning

- Get all of your gardening questions answered with [The New York Times 1000 Gardening Questions and Answers](#).
- Read the UN FAO's take on the [Benefits of viable home gardens for family health and sustainable livelihoods](#).

Images by [jbolles](#), [Paul Stainthorp](#) and [Scrap Pile](#)

References

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