



# PLANNING AND BUILDING A VEGETABLE GARDEN FOR SMALL SPACES

## 1. Choosing your location:

- Sunniest spot in your yard
- Good drainage and level
- Get a soil test: Get your soil tested by the Massachusetts State Cooperative Extension office: <http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/>

## 2. Choose the type of garden that is right for you:

**Raised beds:** Stake out your rectangle with string, till your soil and dig topsoil from paths into 4 foot wide beds. Pull out clay clumps. Mix in 50% compost or mushroom soil. Don't step in your beds once they have been dug!

**Raised beds with sides:** Your bed should be 8 to 12 inches deep and the frame should be sturdy enough to hold the soil that will be placed in it. Screw the planks of wood to 2"x2" or 4"x4" corner posts using 4 screws per board (2 at each end to attach the boards). For better stability sink the corner posts 6 inches into the ground before attaching the side boards.

Get creative in building your beds, but use caution in selecting materials. Used railroad ties, landscape timbers, or treated 4X4s can be laid on the ground and stacked in log cabin fashion to the desired height. Another fine option is to use old tires, large rocks, or even whole trees to create your borders.

**Tall raised beds:** Are great if you have no soil, it is contaminated or if you can't spend a lot of time bent over. Build them 2-3 feet high and line bottom with rocks for drainage and then put compost and soil in the top foot.

**Container gardening:** If you have a small amount of space, no soil, or little sun you can put your veggies in containers. Move your plants around so they get enough sun. Grow peas up a fence and plant flowers or herbs in the front of the pot.

## 3. Planning your planting: What kinds of vegetables are good in small spaces and how can you make the most of your space?

Think about how many tomatoes, beans and squash you can really eat when planning your garden.

How many hours of sun does your plant need? Tomatoes and other fruiting veggies need at least 6 hrs, but 8 is better.

Greens need less hours of direct sunlight.

**When to plant:** Pay attention to seed instructions! Radishes, greens, beets, herbs can be sown every other week to keep a constant supply ready for harvest. Peas must be planted in the spring around St. Patrick day. Tomatoes will die or be stunted if put in the ground before the risk of the last frost. Pay attention to the number of days it will take for your plants to mature and plan ahead for the last frost.

**Direct seed your:** Radishes, lettuce, string beans, beets, basil, cilantro, parley

**Start indoors or purchase starts for:** Tomatoes, peppers, cukes, squash, melons, broccoli, cabbage, onion, leeks, thyme, rosemary

**Companion planting, shade and good use of space:**

Tomatoes and lettuce: use the tall tomatoes to provide some shade for the lettuce.

## 4. Mulch: Use compost, straw, or coco shells to mulch around plants. DO NOT use wood or plastic mulch for anything other than pathways.

