

# Fresh Connections in Urban Agriculture

## Planning Your Garden

*Location selection, space availability, choosing types and varieties to plant, and how much to plant all contribute to a successful harvest.*

### CHOOSING A LOCATION

Mark out an area that drains well, is relatively level, has access to sunlight and clean water with healthy soil. A garden space that is nearer to your home is more convenient for you and your family to manage weed control and harvest fresh and on time.



### GARDEN GOALS

Now that you have a location chosen, it's time to think about what to plant. Keep your gardening goals and how much time you have in mind. What do you want to plant? Choose vegetables that you will enjoy, are easily grown in your climate (recommendations can be readily found on the back of seed packets), will fit in your available space, and will meet your needs. An important thing to remember is to start small and manageable. You have plenty of time to add more later after you get started.



### WHAT TO PLANT

Soil types and conditions vary from place to place. This is why soil sampling and soil health are so important to the gardening experience. Some plants and seeds thrive in lighter, fluffier soil while some prefer a denser medium. A middle of the road version of this is a more practical approach when you're just getting started. Considering available space when choosing what to plant as well. For example, members of the squash and melon family require more space than carrots and other root vegetables. Some vegetables can be purchased already started (though they are a little more expensive than starting with seeds) and will save time if you get a late start or prefer to not plant seeds. Choose vegetables and herbs that will inspire you to eat healthier and save money doing it.



### CALCULATING AREA

Measure the length and width of your garden and then multiply the two numbers together (LxW) to get your square footage/area. Take the area of your garden and divide it by 43,560. This number is the area in acres to use when going to your local garden store in search of the necessary products needed to amend your soil as well as obtain the correct amount of said products. This information will also be useful when planning your layout to plant.

## HOW MUCH TO PLANT

Available space impacts how much you plant, but ultimately you have control of deciding how many plants or seeds that you grow. Cost may also drive this decision. Seed packets are approximately one quarter of the cost of pre-started plants. Seeds are sold in packets containing many seeds and typically cost less than a couple dollars. Plants that are already started are most likely sold in packs of 6 for around \$3.50 for a pack. Sometimes larger individual plants are available for a few dollars each.

Finally, how much will you or your family need?

Vegetable plants like cucumbers and summer squash yield multiples at a time. Just a couple plants in your garden can easily produce dozens of cucumbers and summer squash. A small garden or raised garden bed would do well with just one or two larger plants. Some root vegetables like onions, carrots, beets, and radishes only produce one single vegetable per seed. These types of plants do not take up much space and are hearty as well. Single plants that yield a lot are potatoes, beans, yams and tomatoes to name a few. For example, one potato plant can produce upwards of 6 or 7 potatoes at a time. Tomatoes are a single plant that have a large yield and are common in home gardens of all sizes. Leafy plants like spinach, lettuce, and kale will mature quickly and can be harvested multiple times in one season. This also applies to herbs.

Plant yields are also influenced by soil health, planting techniques, water, sunlight availability and care given to them. These are important things to keep in mind while trying to determine how much you need to plant to sufficiently meet your needs.

## WHERE TO PLANT WHAT

Recall the dimensions of your garden, and on a piece of paper draw a representation of your garden or raised bed sizes. Draw lines to identify areas or rows of what you are planning on planting and label. Keep in mind that different plants grow to be different sizes and you do not want to crowd naturally smaller plants with larger plants. Plants that have vines will spread out and could tangle into other plants nearby if not given adequate space. Some plants grow tall, so try to keep them on either a north or south end to prevent them from casting a shadow and blocking the sunlight on other plants. Refer to recommended row widths and plant spacing on seed packets or plant tags, or consult your local garden store for more specific mature plant sizes guidelines.



## OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Be sure to water your garden immediately after planting and daily as needed. Pull weeds often to ensure that the water and nutrients are being used by the vegetables. Rotate location of plants in your garden from year to year to discourage diseases and pests. A raised garden bed might be better suited to locations with space limitations. It is all about trial and error when you first get started. Don't get discouraged.



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