

TIPS FOR NEW GARDENERS

There are many gardeners who have been planting vegetables, herbs, and flowers for years and really enjoy it. New gardeners are also hoping to have the same enjoyment but may not be sure on how and where to begin. You do not need a large area to start a brand new garden, it is better to start small to see how well it is going to work and then progress to something larger.

You may even want to start out with a small container garden instead of a plot in the ground.

You can check to see if there are any classes being offered with regards to gardening; some nurseries, garden centers, or master gardeners in your area may offer some suggestions. You may also have neighbors that do some gardening and would be willing to show you how

to begin. Some cities have public gardens for you to visit so you can see what will grow well in your environment. In order to make your gardening experience enjoyable start out small so it will fit into your schedule. A new garden should not be so large that you are going to wonder what you got yourself into.

You are going to need a few basic gardening supplies regardless of whether you are planning on growing vegetables, flowers, or herbs. Compost, which is composed of decaying organic material, will greatly improve your soil by adding back nutrients that will improve growth. Compost can be made at home by using kitchen scraps and natural yard and garden waste or it is available in bags from home improvement centers and garden nurseries. If you add mulch to your garden in the spring it will cut down on your weeding time and it will retain moisture for the plants especially during the warmer summer months. Organic mulch is probably the best to use because it will eventually break down over time and help feed the soil. Other types of mulch can be wood chips or straw.

The basic set of gardening tools generally includes a dibbler or trowel for digging holes for seedlings and to





plant seeds and a three-prong cultivator for weeding a small garden and establishing troughs for planting seeds. A garden hose with a spray attachment for releasing gentle sprays for those delicate seedlings is a must. A good investment is a garden hat with a wide brim to protect your head and face from the sun along with a good sunblock. If you do not want to use sunblock on your arms and legs some old clothing with long sleeves and long pants can be worn for protection. A pair of gardening gloves that is going to last awhile during gardening tasks is a must. There are gardeners that spend a lot of time on their knees while gardening and have purchased gardening mats or kneelers that help protect those knees.

Wherever you decide to have your garden be sure the area is going to get the right amount of sunlight for what you are going to grow. Most herbs, vegetables, and fruit will need six hours, at least, of full sunlight daily; some of them may need more time. Flowers are going to be different; some need partial sun; full sun; or even shade. You can have an in-ground flower garden in full sun and a container flower garden for partial sun or shade; remember a container garden can be moved around as needed. If your garden is not going to be near the water spigot just make sure your garden hose is going to be long enough to reach. Your in-ground garden soil needs

preparation as soon as the ground is pliable with plenty of compost or organic material. Good garden soil needs to have organic material added every year to keep it healthy. If you feed garden soil every year it will grow and produce everything your plants need for producing a good healthy crop or beautiful plants and flowers.

There are a few plants that are difficult to grow from seeds such as tomatoes, peppers, and petunias, so you may want to plant their seedlings instead. If you prefer growing from seed, try planting indoors early and transplant them as seedlings, when they are strong, to your outside garden. If you plant any seedlings outside too early you may run the risk of another frost and your plants will die. It is probably best to check with a gardening neighbor or your local garden nursery for best times for planting in your area.

As new gardeners you may find your first year of gardening may not give the best crop of vegetables or the most beautiful flowers; do not get discouraged, if you enjoyed the gardening experience your following years will always be better than the last. Just remember to grow the plants that will do well in your environment, keep the garden small at first and grow the plants that you and your family will enjoy.