



be as elaborate as having a series of separate beds, or as simple as changing the soil in a pot or container.

- There are now safe options for controlling most common garden pests, so if you get tired of squashing insects just ask your local garden centre for a certified organic pest control agent.

### Crops

Examples of vegetable varieties to plant in each season for Perth are:

- Summer (Dec-Feb): Tomato, Egg Plant, Capsicum, Watermelon, Cucumber;
- Autumn (Mar-May): Silver Beet, Beetroot, Garlic, Pak Choy, Celery;
- Winter (June-Aug): Potatoes, Broccoli, Cabbage, Broad Beans, Leek;
- Spring (Sept-Nov): Climbing beans, Peas, Zucchini, Lettuce, Spring Onions.

You and your family will soon be enjoying the rewards of your veggie garden efforts with wonderfully fresh and tasty produce. Enjoy!

### WHY?

There are many good reasons to grow your own food - you get access to cheap,

great tasting, fresh ingredients right at your doorstep... and it's lots of fun! It can save you money - you'll be surprised at how productive a home vegetable patch can be. There are health benefits if you grow your vegetables organically. By growing organic food you and your family get to eat food that is free from chemical residues. The environmental benefits are important as well - growing your own vegetables reduces the huge quantities of artificial fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides used in largescale farming, also reducing the pollution caused by having to transport food over long distances. Establishing a vegetable garden is very rewarding - and you can share surplus produce with friends and neighbours, which is a great way to build community spirit.

Grow half of your vegetables at home and save each year.



## How to start a vegetable garden

### WHAT CAN I DO?

Plant some vegetables at home in the garden to create your own supply of fresh and nutritious produce – once you've tasted home-grown vegetables there will be no looking back! There are a number of simple options for growing vegetables at home to suit different needs, ranging from a large plot in the garden to pots on the balcony.

### HOW DO I DO IT?

#### Planning and Site Selection

You can start a vegetable garden any time because different varieties of vegetables are suitable for planting at different times of the year.

An important first step is selecting a suitable site for your garden bed. Choose a location that gets plenty of sun – as a general rule vegetables need at least six hours of direct sunlight each day. Your vegetable garden should also be sheltered from strong winds and not too close to trees (the roots of trees will compete with your vegetables for water and nutrients).

If you are unsure about where to start, sketch a basic plan of your proposed patch and visit your local garden centre for some advice.

### Different Ways to Grow

There are many different types of veggie gardens. Here are some popular and easy methods of creating your own garden:

#### Container Gardening:

This is the quickest and easiest way to start producing your own food, and is ideal for people with limited space (and for renters). Tubs or containers (e.g. old eskies) can be moved around throughout the year to follow the sun.

Containers should be at least 30cm deep and wide enough to accommodate the plants you want to grow. It's vital that there



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sustainable gardening specialist and popular media personality provides advice on starting a vegetable garden.

Based on *The Green Gardener* by Josh Byrne, illustration by John Burgess, based on a sketch by Josh Byrne © Penguin Group (Australia). The Living Smart brand has been developed by The Meeting Place Community Centre, the City of Fremantle, Murdoch University and Southern Metropolitan Regional Council to support a suite of programs developing capacity in community sustainability. Published by the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, Perth, Western Australia. February 2008. The information provided in this brochure is provided in good faith. However the accuracy or appropriateness of the information is not guaranteed.



are drainage holes in the bottom. Unglazed clay pots are porous and dry out quickly, so you should coat these with a sealing agent prior to planting (but make sure the drainage holes are clear). Fill pots with premium grade potting mix (it has a higher water holding capacity so you will not need to water as often) and combine with 10% compost and a handful of blood and bone.

Pots can dry out quickly so daily hand watering is usually necessary. Mulching with fine feeding mulch (such as shredded lupins) will help to retain moisture during hot months.

### No-Dig Gardening:

Growing vegetables in Western Australia's sandy soils can be difficult. An effective and easy way to grow a quality crop with minimal effort is a 'no-dig' garden. These raised beds are easy to access and are perfect for people with bad backs or who use a wheelchair:

- No-dig gardens consist of layers of organic material such as straw, leaves, grass clippings, weeds and manure.
- Layers of material are stacked up to form a garden bed without any soil. The bed will be extremely fertile, with organic materials being broken down to provide

nutrient rich matter for your plants. No-dig gardens have excellent moisture retention and are easy to develop.

- The beds can be contained on the sides (using wooden sleepers or corrugated steel roof sheeting) or they can be a free standing 'pile'. No-dig garden beds can be set up anywhere – even over lawn or concreted areas.
- *Figure 1* illustrates the layered materials which will form your no-dig garden. Layers should be approximately 10cm in depth for all materials except for layers of manure, which should be 5cm in depth. Each layer should be watered in as you add it.
- Allow the bed to settle for a few weeks prior to planting (the bed will end up around half of its original height).
- When planting into a new bed it's a good idea to create small planting pockets of soil to get your vegetables off to a good start. Three to four handfuls of potting mix is ideal.

### Veggie Bed Gardening:

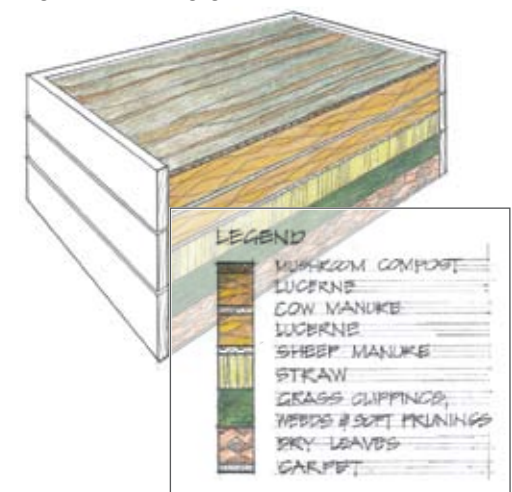
To create a simple vegetable garden, clear an area of garden. A patch of 3m by 1.5m is a good starting size and will make a real contribution to your household vegetable needs.

The area should be thoroughly weeded and the soil cultivated to a depth of about 30cm. Spread a thick 10cm layer of aged animal manure or commercial compost over the garden, add blood and bone (one handful per m<sup>2</sup>), dig in thoroughly and water in. Adding home-made compost and worm castings is also perfect for a veggie bed. Finally, add a fine layer of 'feeding mulch' such as shredded lupins, pea straw or lucerne hay to retain moisture.

### Planting and Maintenance Tips

- Start by planting those veggies that you like to eat, and if space is limited, focus on quick growing, compact or multiple cropping varieties.
- Speak to your local nursery staff to find out more about which vegetables are best to grow from seedlings or from seeds. Seeds are cheaper and more rewarding but some varieties can be tricky to start from scratch. As your confidence grows you can expand your range.
- Select seedlings that are compact but not crowded, with good colour – avoid stock with roots growing out of the bottom of the punnet as they are getting too old to plant and will be stunted.
- A handy tip (if you choose seeds or seedlings) is to ask about organic, non-

Figure 1: No dig garden



- hybrid varieties that allow you to save seed from the mature plants to use again the following season.
- Veggie gardens should be watered on a daily basis during hot weather, and young seedlings may need several light waterings a day until established. Again, using a light feeding mulch will help to retain soil moisture.
  - Feed fortnightly with organic liquid fertiliser for best results.
  - Rotating your vegetable crop families each season will help reduce the build up of pests and diseases. This can