

A Victory Garden for our Time

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Historically, Victory Gardens were popular during WWI & WWII. They were vegetable, fruit, and herb gardens planted at homes and public parks, meant to supplement wartime rations and boost public morale. These days, many families are looking at their backyards (or front yards!) for exercise, recreation, and food. The interest in home gardening is booming.

Growing your own food has several advantages—it gets you outside, gives you a healthy hobby, and provides a creative outlet as well as the obvious benefits of providing fresh, tasty food. Problems with limited shopping opportunities and disruption in the food supply chain become less urgent when you have fresh produce in your back yard, in pots or small raised beds on a patch of lawn.

Whether you are a beginning gardener or a seasoned veteran looking to try some new plants, many resources are available for you. On-line access to seed catalogs, how-to books, and other gardening know-how is virtually unlimited, and it can all be done without leaving your home. Home-grown food has a flavor that surpasses most grocery produce, and kids that have helped grow spinach may even be willing to try it!

Common spring crops that are usually direct seeded in the garden include lettuce, carrots, kale, spinach, radishes, onions, and peas. You should get started plants to grow peppers and tomatoes, setting them outside after all chance of frost. When it warms up more, squash, beans, cucumbers, and melons can be started directly as seeds. Many culinary herbs can be grown in containers on a sunny deck or even a windowsill.

Growing your own food also allows you to control what chemicals are used in its production. The “dirty dozen” for this year (foods with the highest pesticide residues when produced commercially) include: strawberries, spinach, kale, apples, cherries, peaches, grapes, tomatoes, celery, and potatoes. The vegetables are easy to grow at home; the fruits are a little more challenging requiring more space and time to develop a reliable crop.

If you end up with more food than you can use, you may branch into freezing, canning, or dehydrating produce. Food banks and neighbors may also appreciate

any excess. You may be surprised at how many on-line recipes you can find for zucchini.

Gardening has been shown to decrease stress and hypertension, strengthen your immune system, and even lower the risk of dementia! If you're not careful, you could catch the gardening bug and develop a lifetime addiction to green growing things. If you are already a gardener, consider trying a new crop or variety this year. You might also find a friend or neighbor that could use a little encouraging or mentoring.

If you are looking for a reliable on-line resource for vegetable gardening information, check out <https://u.osu.edu/growingfranklin/>. There are links to topics such as seed starting, potting up transplants, spring seed planting, and even one on backyard poultry production. Let's get out and enjoy spring in a safe and healthy way!