

How to Grow Your Own Food

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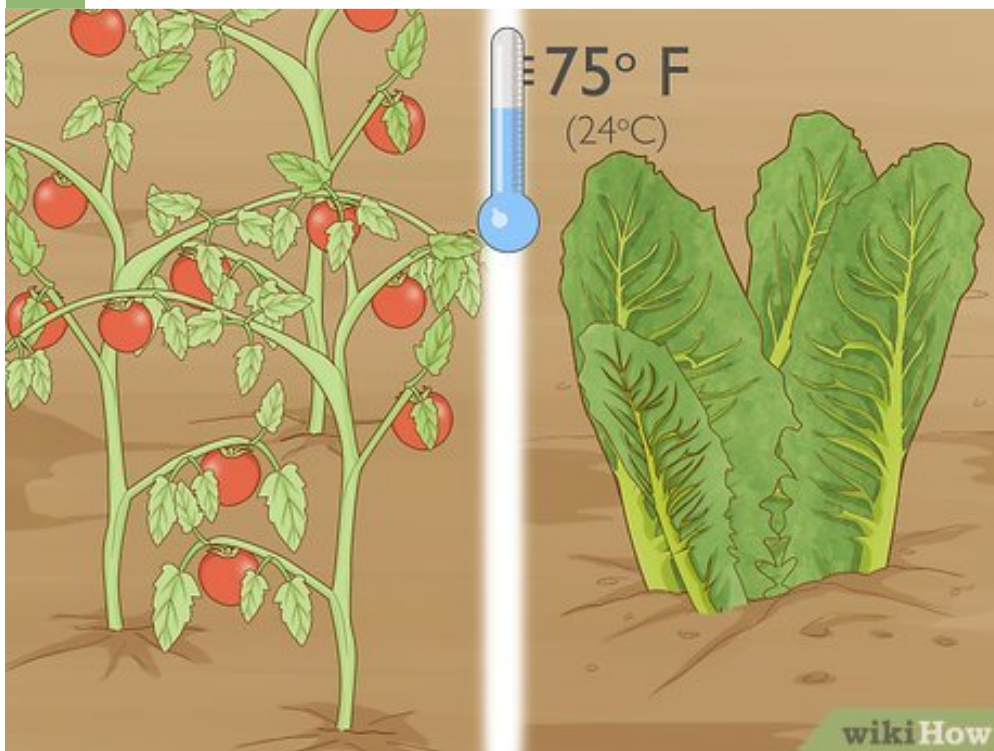
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For all of human history, people have managed to feed themselves, either by fishing, hunting, gathering, or subsistence farming. Nowadays, we can simply head to the grocery store to buy our meals. However, growing your own food is both rewarding and money-saving. If you'd like to grow your own food, make sure you research the climate in your region, create rows for your crops, and harvest when your food is ripe to enjoy the food from your garden.

Method 1

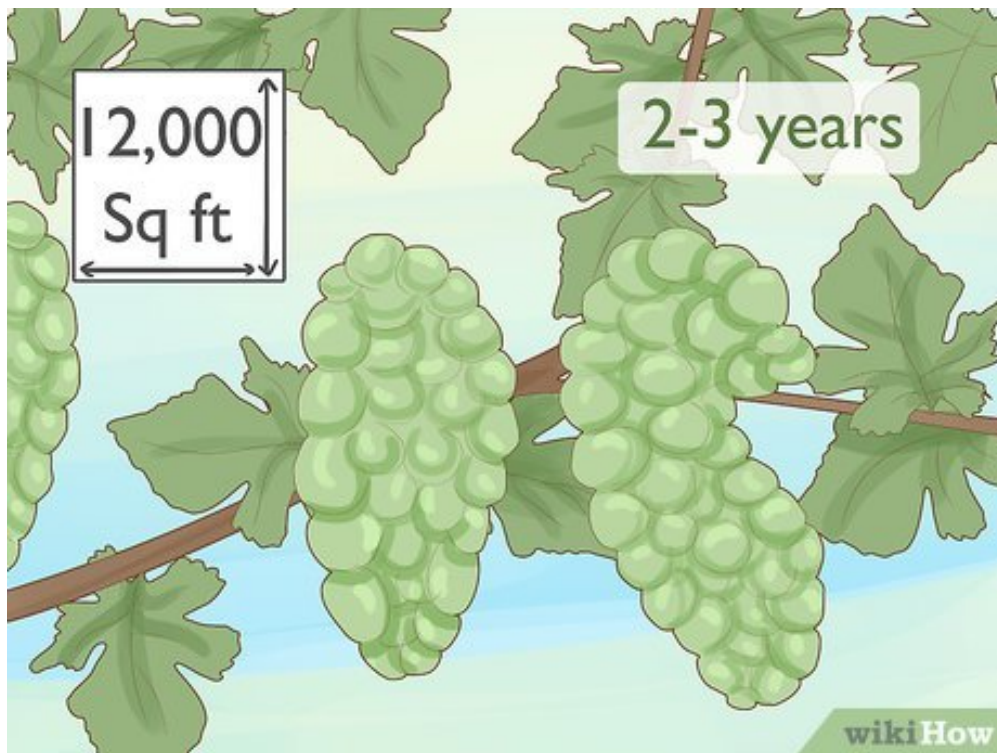
Method 1 of 3: Growing Food in Your Climate



1 **Grow most leafy greens and vegetables during a warm summer.** If you have temperatures above 75 °F (24 °C) during the summer, plant your vegetable crops in May or June. Make sure they are planted after the threat of frost is over.^[1]

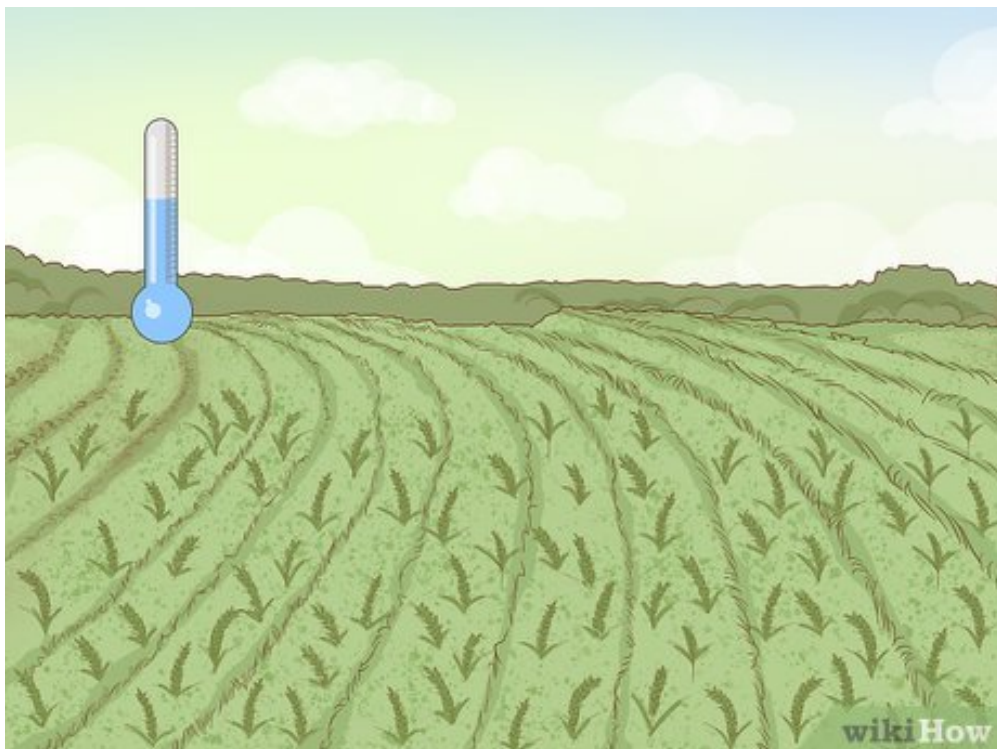
- Lettuce, cabbage, kale, and tomatoes are all great options to plant in the summer.

Tip: Legumes do well in a temperate rainforest and are a great source of protein.



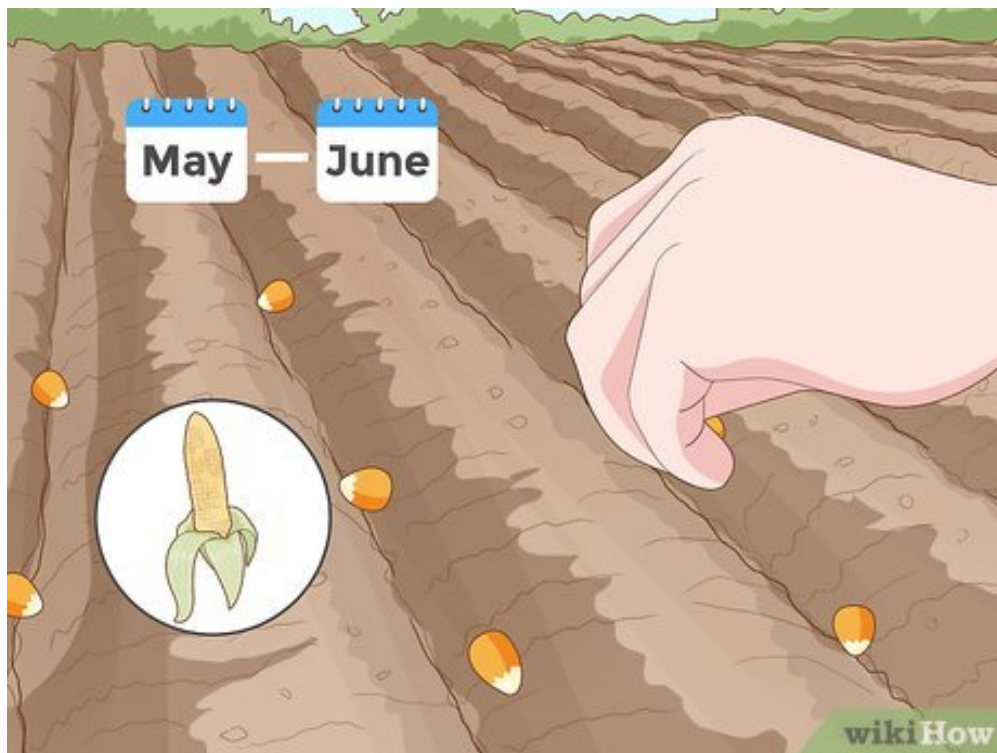
2 Plant fruit in the early spring in a moderate climate. Most fruit, like apples, oranges, lemons, and limes can be grown on trees in a 12,000 square feet (1,100 m²) area. Start with planting a fruit tree in a pot to monitor the soil and water intake, and then transfer it to the ground after 1 year during the early spring. Most fruit trees will not start bearing fruit until they are 2 to 3 years old.^[2]

- Vine fruits, like grapes, can be grown anywhere with a trellis that they can climb.



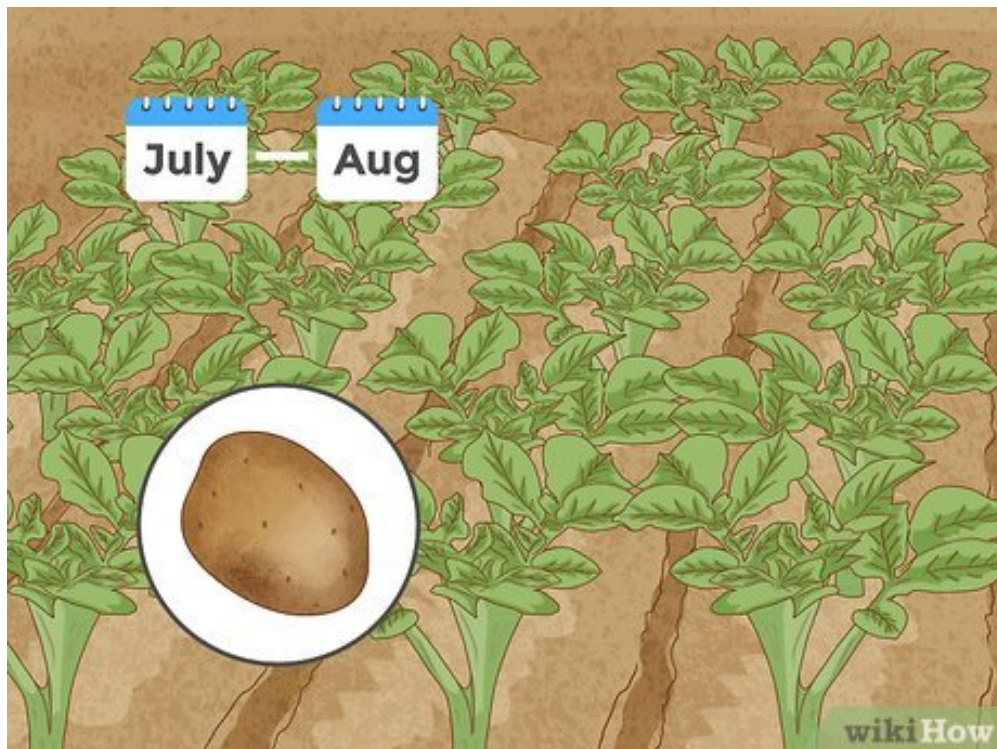
3 Grow winter grains in a cold, wet climate. If you live in an area that gets below freezing and has a lot of precipitation, plant grains like rye. Rye is able to withstand the cold temperatures and the heavy rainfall that will happen in many areas of the world. Plant your rye in the early fall before the first frost hits.^[3]

- Winter grains will usually give a higher crop yield than summer grains.



4 Farm summer grains in a warm, moderate climate. Summer grains, like corn, do best during warm weather. If your summers get hot, plant corn in May or June and let it grow over the summer months. Corn does especially well in the midwest area of the United States.[4]

- Rice needs a tropical climate to grow. Southeast Asia is the best climate for rice crops.



5 Let root vegetables mature during the fall. Potatoes, beets, radishes, and other vegetables that grow underground prefer to grow during the colder months. Plant root vegetables in July or August to prepare for a fall harvest. You can grow these even if the threat of frost is near, since they are hearty enough to withstand it.[5]



1 **Make sure your soil pH is between 5.5 and 7.0.** Test the pH of your soil by using a test probe or paper strips to determine the acidity or alkalinity of your soil. Most food grows at a pH of 5.5 and 7.0. If your soil is below 5.5, add dolomite, a type of crushed mineral, to make it more basic. If it is higher than 7.0, use pine needles or peat moss to make it more acidic.^[6]

- You can find a test probe or strips at most garden stores.
- You can buy dolomite at most garden stores.



2 Break the ground with a plow or a tiller. Clear away any large stones, roots and limbs, heavy accumulation of vegetation, and other debris before tilling. Use a rototiller or a plow to disrupt your soil and turn over the top layer. This will make the nutrients in your soil more readily available and allow the top layer of soil to refresh itself.[7]

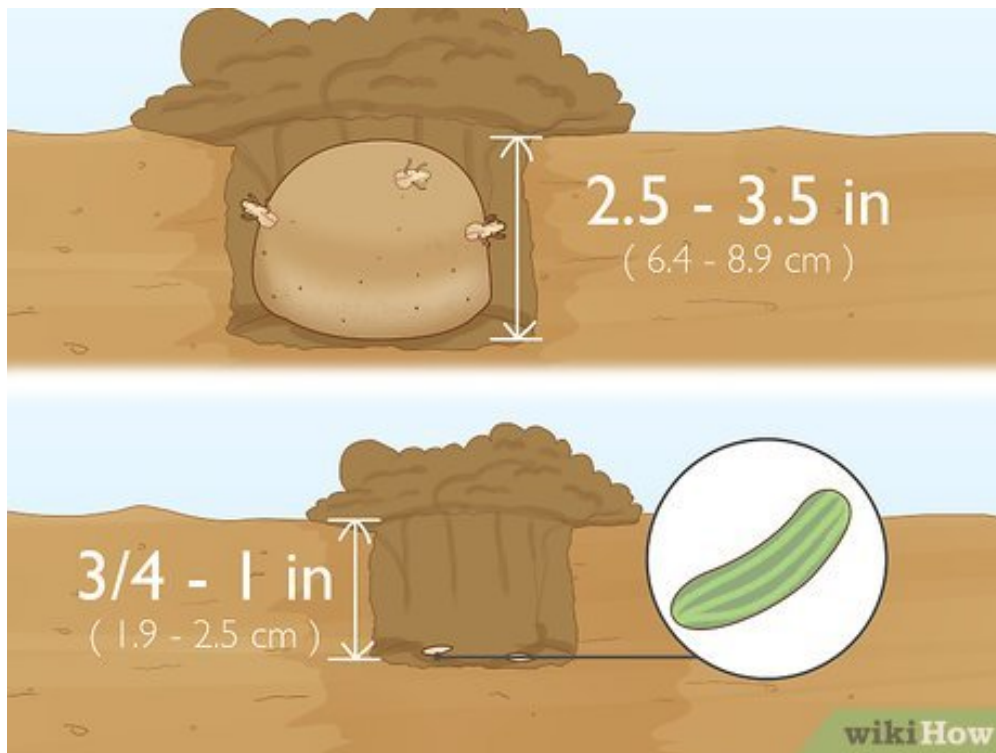
- To sustain a 4-person family, use 12,000 square feet (1,100 m²) of land to grow vegetables and grains.[8]

Tip: On a small plot of land, you can use a pick, shovel, and hoe to till your land instead.



3 Lay rows with a hoe or a plow. Mark out the area you intend to plant. Use a hoe or plow to create a slightly raised bed in the loose soil in a line across the length of the plot. Next, make a shallow groove cut in the soil with your rototiller and a furrow attachment. Do this until your growing area is covered in rows.[9]

- You can rent rototillers and their attachments at many hardware stores.



4 Place your seeds in the furrows at the depth they require. The depth of planting may vary according to your choice of plants. Check on the back of your seed packet to find out the best depth for your plant. Make a small hole with your fingers and place 2 to 3 seeds in each hole.^[10]

- Plants like legumes and melons, squash, cucumbers are planted between $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (1.9 cm) and 1 inch (2.5 cm) deep, and corn and potatoes may be planted 2.5 inches (6.4 cm) to 3.5 inches (8.9 cm) deep.
- You can also start seeds indoors and transplant them after they have sprouted.



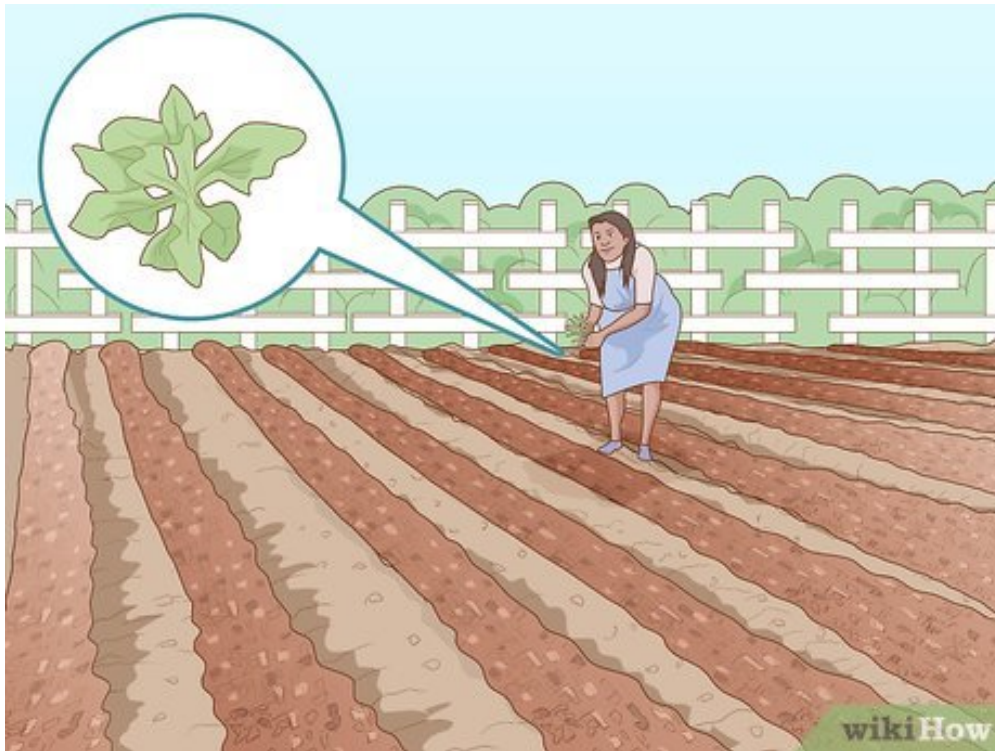
5 Cover the seeds in soil and gently pack down the dirt. This will prevent the seed bed from drying out in the sun. Use the palm of your hand to press down on top of the seeds you planted. Make sure they are covered all the way so they don't get eaten by animals. Continue this process until you have the number of rows you planned on planting.^[11]

Method 3 of 3: Managing and Harvesting Your Crops



1 **Water your garden every day during the summer.** The sun can dry out and kill your crops if they do not have enough water to replenish themselves. Use a garden hose or a sprinkler system to water your crops thoroughly every day from May to September. If the temperature reaches above 90 °F (32 °C), water your crops twice a day.^[12]

- Winter crops like rye do not need to be watered unless it is a particularly dry winter.



2 Weed your garden if it is getting overrun. Because you are planting this crop in rows, you will be able to walk the center area between rows. Remove any weeds by hand that sprout up during your growing season. Make sure you get the root of the weed when you pull it so that it doesn't grow back.^[13]

- Weeds are much easier to pull in loose or wet soil.
- Try not to disturb the roots of your crop as you weed.

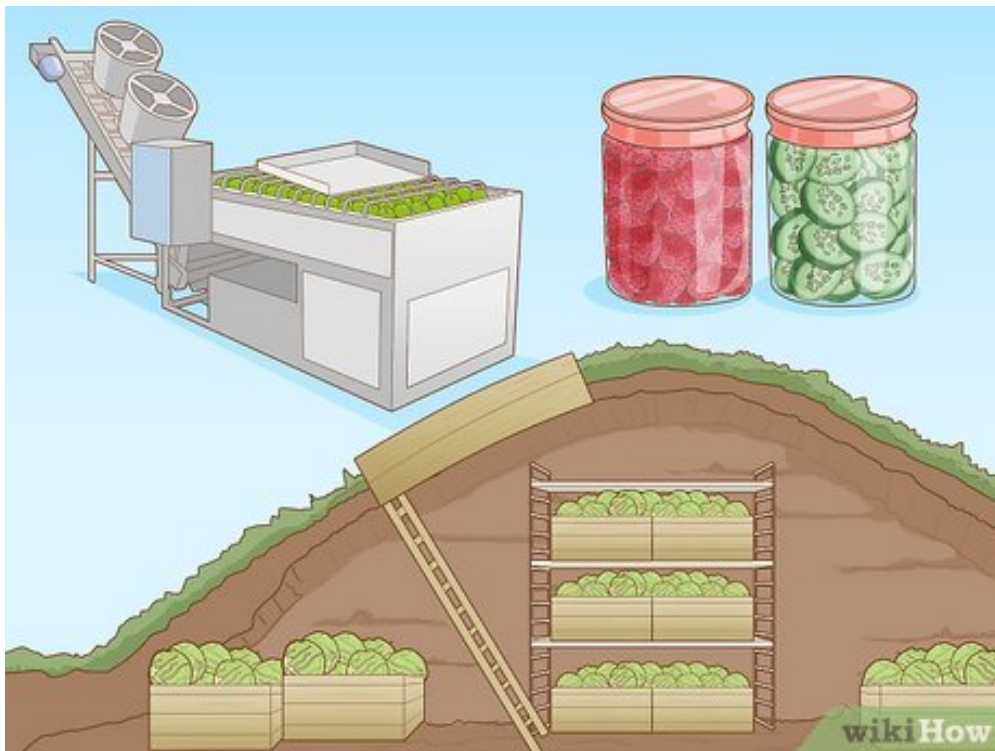


3 Deter pests with fences and natural sprays. If you see leaves that have been eaten, it could be a sign of insects or vermin. Use a chicken-wire fence to keep out small animals like mice and rabbits. Remove and kill insects as you find them, or use a natural deterrent like peppermint oil to keep pests away.^[14]

Tip: Make a peppermint spray by combining 2 drops of peppermint essential oil and 1 gallon (3,800 mL) of water. Mist the leaves of your crops once a day to keep common insects away.



4 Harvest your crops when they are ripe. Many common garden vegetables are harvested as they become ripe, and continue to produce throughout the growing season with proper care. Grains, on the other hand, are most often harvested when they are fully ripened and dry on the plant. Use sharp, clean gardening tools to pick or cut your crops so you don't damage the plants.^[15]



- 5 Preserve your food if you can't eat it all.** If you have grown grains, use barns which will keep your stored harvest dry and safe from insects and vermin. A combination of storage and preservation methods are the best way to reduce food waste. Drying, canning, freezing, and bedding are all viable options for storing food.^[16]
- Bedding is a method for storing root crops such as potatoes, rutabagas, and beets. Lay your root crops in a dry, cool location on a straw bed.



Community Q&A

Question

Where can I go to find out which groups grow best in my area?



Community Answer

You can talk to local horticulturalists, garden centers, or planting groups.

Helpful 18 Not Helpful 6

Question

How should I cultivate vining vegetables?



Community Answer

Vining vegetables can be cultivated with a trellis, which is an interconnecting structure of wood with holes all over so the vine can wrap around it. Single vining vegetables can also be staked with a pole so that the vine grows around the pole.

Helpful 22 Not Helpful 8

Question

Any ideas on how to keep animals out of the garden without building a fence?



Community Answer

My mom used to hang pie tins to shine as the wind blew to scare birds away. Also try collecting hair when anyone gets a trim and use it around the border of your garden. Animals don't like the smell of humans so they stay away. Save your egg shells and crush them to scatter around the bottoms of your plants to provide nutrients as well as protection from snails and slugs.

Helpful 14 Not Helpful 4

Question

When is the best month to start planting?



Donagan
Top Answerer

Each variety has its own requirements. Summer crops should be planted in late spring (or late winter, if started indoors). Spring crops in late winter; fall crops in late summer.

Helpful 13 Not Helpful 5

Question

What does "vining" mean?



Bigfoot Girl
Community Answer

"Growing as a vine with climbing or trailing woody stems." Plants that do this usually have sticks or wood planks placed into the ground next to them so the vines from the plant can grow around the sticks for support.

Helpful 17 Not Helpful 10

Question

What rainfall is required to grow food?



Donagan
Top Answerer

Each crop has its own requirements. In general, a garden needs about two inches of water per week. Use a rain gauge to see if you get enough rain, and then augment with hand- or sprinkler-watering if necessary.

Helpful 9 Not Helpful 6

Question

When should I let the land rest?



Donagan
Top Answerer

Some people let the land rest every seventh year. However, the land does not need to rest at all if every year you adequately replenish the soil with nutrients through fertilizer or compost and follow other good soil-building practices such as mulching, cover-cropping and erosion control.

Helpful 3 Not Helpful 1



Tips

- Talk with your neighbors about sharing your crops once they are harvested. It is easier to manage a smaller number of different crops, and you may be able to grow enough of some of your selection of food for two families.
- Look at outside sources of food to supplement your farming effort, like fishing, gathering wild berries and nuts, and edible plants growing wild in your region.



Warnings

- Make sure you clean your gardening tools before each use in order to keep the food clean.

References

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About This Article



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This article was co-authored by wikiHow staff writer, **Hannah Madden**. Hannah Madden is a writer, editor, and artist currently living in Portland, Oregon. In 2018, she graduated from Portland State University with a B.S. in Environmental Studies. Hannah enjoys writing articles about conservation, sustainability, and eco-friendly products. When she isn't writing, you can find Hannah working on hand embroidery projects and listening to music. This article has been viewed 507,164 times.

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