

Home Grown

IN SMALL SPACES

Eileen Schuhmann, Mission Specialist for International Hunger Concerns, PHP

» To get started:

Make space for your vegetables.

You want to make sure that you have an area near a window that receives plenty of natural sunlight, 5 hours a day or more during warmer months, where you can place your plants. While natural light is preferred, if your growing space is dark, you can use artificial lighting (which will of course entail the use of electricity).



Choose your vegetables.

Be sure to take into consideration the amount of space required by the vegetables. Choose vegetables that thrive inside such as herbs, carrots, loose-leaf lettuce, mustard greens, radishes, peas, pole beans, spinach and cherry tomatoes. Look for “dwarf,” “baby,” or “bush” varieties that flourish in containers.

Select containers.

You can purchase containers or get creative and recycle containers such as small trash cans, buckets, flower pots, plastic storage containers, wooden boxes, etc. The deeper and larger the container, the greater the variety of vegetables you will be able to grow and the easier it will be to maintain.



We are called to be in communion with the land and nature. Yet, so many of us, living in small enclosed spaces such as apartments and dorm rooms, feel distanced and disconnected from the Earth. But we can regain that connection through growing some of our own food, even if the only land we have access to is contained in a small pot.

All you need is a windowsill to grow fresh and organic vegetables. Some advantages to growing your own food are that it can be fresh, pesticide free, healthful, cost-saving and reduce your carbon footprint.

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Ensure proper drainage.

Drill a hole in the bottom of containers that do not already have drainage holes. Fill the bottom of the containers with a layer of gravel, stones, or broken pottery before adding potting compost. Place a water catchment tray beneath the container to catch draining water.



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Start or transplant seeds.

Use organic heirloom variety seeds whenever possible. Cardboard egg cartons are great for starting seeds. Fill the cartons with organic potting soil up to ¼ inch from the brim. Add seeds one at a time, gently pressing them into the soil, until you've added as many as you would like to start (plant more than you think you'll need). Cover seeds with more potting compost. Be sure to label the carton so you don't forget what you planted. Water the soil with a spray bottle. One option is to place carton in a plastic Ziploc bag (kept open) to maintain moisture and keep in a warm place. Make sure the soil surface always remains moist. You could have sprouts within 3-7 days. Once you have healthy seedlings, remove the carton from the plastic bag and place the carton in the windowsill for 3-4 days. You can then transplant seedlings into containers with potting compost.



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Feed & water the plants.

Be sure to keep the soil moist, but do not overwater. Feed the plants every two weeks with a compost tea or some other organic liquid fertilizer.



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Compost waste.

If living on a University campus, find out if your school composts and take your collection of organic and plant waste to the composting site. Or try and find a spot outdoors where you could have a small composting pile. Otherwise, if you're more adventurous, the best way to compost indoors is by starting a wormery, where you feed food scraps to red worms that break down the food into the best compost around (visit sustainableamerica.org/blog/how-to-compost-in-your-apartment for a how to guide).

