

# Intro To Veggie Gardening

With JP at Field's Farmstead - [fieldsfarmstead.com](http://fieldsfarmstead.com)

In this class, we will go over the very basics of growing veggies. Growing veggies is so easy! Seeds are just waiting to grow as soon as you put them in the dirt and water them. One packet of lettuce seeds is just \$2-\$3 and contains hundreds of lettuce seeds! So what is stopping you?

I grew up with no knowledge of gardening, and I really was never shown how to garden. I still see that many people are intimidated by the idea of starting a garden, by the idea that they will make so many mistakes and it will be really hard. Often people buy seedlings - already started plants - and that costs a lot more money.

This is just a very basic course to get you going, to help you avoid some of the mistakes that might deter you from continuing, and so you can just get going right away and save money and have a delicious harvest from the very first year.

## Planting Seeds Indoors:

Need:

- Potting soil
- Pots (any container will do, make sure it has a drainage hole)
- A sunny window and/or light (if plants are very long / leggy, then you need more light)
- Enough ventilation (if the soil stays wet day after day after day, and you see any mold on the soil surface, set up a fan or something)
- Watering every day or so

## Veggie Crops for your Garden

Plants can be grouped by plant family or by type (like, leafy greens, root veggies, fruiting veggies...). This will help you know what they are like without having to memorize every crop separately

### Leafy Greens

*Leafy greens are generally cold tolerant and can usually be planted out as of early May*

**Aster Family:** Lettuce

**Brassica Family:** Cabbage, Kale, Broccoli, Arugula, Asian Greens

**Amaranth Family:** Spinach, Chard (spinach is the most cold-tolerant crop and can often survive outside all winter!)

## Root Veggies

*Root veggies usually prefer to be direct-seeded, especially carrots! These are also generally cold tolerant, and can be planted out early. But, since you are likely to be direct-seeding them, it won't hurt to wait a little longer for the soil to warm up so that they germinate a bit faster.*

**Brassica Family:** Radishes, Turnips, Rutabaga

**Amaranth Family:** Beets - beets can handle being transplanted

**Carrot Family:** Carrots - carrots are slow to germinate. They need to be kept moist while germinating

**Nightshade Family:** Potatoes - plant these by burying potatoes around the start of May)

**Allium Family:**

Onions - plant seeds early in March, and transplant in early May. Or, my preferred method is to use onion sets and plant in early May.

Garlic - Plant in late October for the following year's harvest

## Fruiting Veggies

These need lots of sun and time to mature and make fruit. Plant these out after any risk of frost, in late May or early June. These are usually planted once in the year (zukes and cukes sometimes twice)

**Nightshade Family:** Tomatoes, Peppers, Eggplants (seed around late March/April, transplant after last frost)

**Squash Family:** Zucchini, Cucumber, Squash (These don't love being transplanted, but can be if you're careful with them. They germinate and grow quick, so start them 2-3 weeks before planting them out, or just direct seed them after risk of frost)

## Herbs

**Carrot Family:**

Parsley: slow to germinate and grow. Start it early! Usually planted just once.

Cilantro and Dill: These grow quicker. Direct seed or transplant.

**Mint Family:**

Mint, Sage, Thyme, Oregano: slow to germinate from seed (but totally possible). Easier to propagate from root cuttings, or just buy plants. Since these are perennial, You should only have to buy them once and then take cuttings from those plants.

Rosemary: Same as above, but they don't quite survive our winters. So plant it in a big pot and bring it inside before it gets too cold.

Basil: An annual that likes the heat. Seed them around Mid Apr to early May, and transplant them out next to your tomatoes at the same time.

## Setting Up A Garden Bed

How to clear the grass away in the ground for a backyard garden:

This is the simplest/cheapest option

1. You can dig with a shovel, till with a machine, put down a tarp for a long time to kill the grass, or make a lasagna style garden using cardboard and compost and stuff
2. I strongly recommend that you use mulch (grass clippings, leaves, straw, hay, woodchips, whatever you can get) and cover your garden beds with it generously.

### Making a raised bed:

Raised beds look sharp and are easier to work in (since you don't have to reach down so far). But they're more expensive since you have to buy the materials and put it together

1. Create a bed with wood, bricks, stones, whatever you like. Make it high enough to be comfortable for you and so it looks beautiful in your yard.
2. Fill it with soil. If your raised bed is really tall and you want to reduce the amount of soil needed to fill it, rotting wood makes a good filler that will help by holding water and slow-releasing fertility
3. Mulching is a good idea for raised beds, too.

### Growing in Pots/Buckets

If you don't have space for a garden, you can always grow crops in 5-gallon buckets! Make some holes in the bottom for drainage and grow tomatoes, peppers, etc.

## Gardening Tips

- Mulch is the best thing for your garden. It will keep the weeds down, keep the water from evaporating away in the hot sun, and slowly decompose to fertilize your plants. Never throw away your leaves or grass clippings! Add them to your garden every time, as soon as you get them.
- Plants in the same family are like relatives, they are similar. The nutrients they add to or take from the soil, the pests they are attacked by, are similar. So, if you want to do an easy crop rotation (to help keep the soil nutrition naturally balanced and the pests down) then plant crops from a different family each time in any given location.
- Brassica plants are particularly affected by various bugs. If you are struggling with these, consider using some kind of insect netting / row cover.
- Squash family plants also are often attacked by bugs, and you can protect them also with insect netting or row cover. But you must remove the netting when the plants start flowering, so that they can be pollinated (by this time, they should be old enough to resist the bugs anyway).