

Learn to Grow 1: Community Garden

Outdoor Activities, Community Activities



ConnectABILITY.ca

WHAT MAKES IT MEANINGFUL

Gardening ... what a fantastic way to spend some time in the sun on a nice Spring afternoon ...

There are many benefits in learning how to garden. Starting on your gardening journey provides you with a new appreciation for the foods you prepare and eat. Creating your own small garden enables you to have an appreciation for how food is grown and cultivated. Not to mention the taste! You will be amazed by the sweet, juicy flavours and vibrant textures – think of all the tasty dishes you can make! This is all due to the care and effort you put into growing your garden. Gardening is an activity many people find peaceful and relaxing; it is also a great time to participate in some exercise. Why not provide yourself the opportunity to connect – connect with yourself, with nature and with others. Get involved in a community garden in your area today where you can meet new people and learn new things as you share in the same experience.

TIME

Approximate time to plant: Depending on the type of vegetable, seeds can be planted in early-to mid-Spring, between March 28 to May 16.

- Growing peas outdoors from seeds: Plant March 28 to April 18.
 - Mckenzie© Green Arrow pea seeds take 58 to 60 days (8 weeks) to harvest.
- Growing spinach outdoors from seeds: Plant March 28 to April 18.
 - Mckenzie© Bloomsdale Long Standing spinach seeds take 40 to 48 days (6 to 7 weeks) to harvest.
- Growing beets outdoors from seeds: Plant April 25 to May 16.
 - Mckenzie© Detroit Dark Red beet seeds take 50 to 60 days (7 to 9 weeks) to harvest.
- Growing carrots outdoors from seeds: Plant April 4 to 18.
 - Mckenzie© Scarlet Nantes carrot seeds take 68 days (10 weeks) to harvest.

Approximate time to harvest: Depending on when seeds are sowed (planted) into the ground, plants can begin to be harvested between mid-May to early July.



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MATERIALS

Gardening Tools and Supplies:

- A Bag of Pea Seeds – Green Arrow (Approx. \$5.49)
- A Bag of Spinach Seeds – Long Standing Bloomsdale (Approx. \$4.99)
- A Bag of Beet Seeds – Detroit Dark Red (Approx. \$1.89)
- A bag of Carrot Seeds – Scarlet Nantes (Approx. \$1.89)
- Hand Trowel (Approx. \$9.99 - &12.99)
- Hand Fork/ Hand Cultivator (Approx. \$9.99 - \$14.99)
- Long Handled Shovel or Spade (Approx. \$27.99 - \$34.99)
- Garden Rake (Approx. \$19.99 - \$49.99)
- Hand Pruners/ Pruning Shears (Approx. \$9.99 - \$39.99)
- Watering Cans (Approx. \$7.99 - \$29.99)
- Gardening Hoe (Approx. \$27.99 - \$39.99)
- Gardening Hose (Approx. \$21.99 - \$79.99)
- Watering Wand/ Spray Nozzle (Approx. \$7.99 - \$39.99)
- Miracle Gro® Organic Vegetable & Herb Soil (Approx. \$14.99)
- Soil Monitor (Approx. \$14.99)
- Gardening Gloves (Approx. \$1.99 - \$24.99)

Useful Extras:

- Knee Pad for kneeling (Approx. \$12.99 - \$29.99)
- Hand towel or Paper Towel (in case you sweat or get dirty)
- Hat
- Sunscreen
- Weather appropriate attire (including a long-sleeve shirt, sweater or jacket for sun exposure & jeans)
- A change of clothes (in case outfit gets dirty)

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- A change of shoes (to change out of boots)
- Rain boots or gardening boots (Approx. \$13.93 - \$79.99)
- Water bottle (to keep hydrated)
- Snacks (in case you get hungry)
- A box or bags to store materials during transportation

Note: Expenses are based off of Canadian Tire© pricing.

INSTRUCTIONS

- To get connected with a community garden, visit the SustainOntario website listed below for a map that illustrates community garden locations in Ontario. Find your region and pick the best location.
- When thinking about gardening, keep in mind the following tips:
 1. Location is important! Find a location that allows for lots of sun, will drain well, is stable and not windy, and has nutrient rich soil.
 2. Keep in mind plot size for your garden! Make a garden design that outlines where to position paths and where to plant vegetables, aim to have a small garden and only grow an amount that you think will be eaten. For a beginner, 2 to 4 plants per vegetable is enough to sow (plant).
 3. Be aware of the pH level in soil, as this determines how fertile the soil is and how well plants will grow. The growth of certain plants can occur within a specific range.
- Now it's time to begin gardening and preparing the soil before planting.
 1. Clear the area of rocks and debris. If there is grass, use a shovel or spade to cut the ground into squares or rectangles.
 2. Loosen and mix the ground using a spade or shovel to at least 12 inches deep, and till the ground using a cultivator, so that the roots can reach down.

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3. Apply Miracle Gro® Organic Vegetable & Herb soil to optimize growth of vegetables. Spread Miracle Gro® at least 2 to 3 inches on the top layer or work it into the ground if there is poor soil.
 4. Now that the soil is prepared, read instructions for how to space and sow vegetable seeds. Position seeds into the ground and water the soil.
- To grow peas outdoors from seeds:
 1. Plant seeds March 28 to April 18.
 2. To grow, peas require part- to full-sun exposure, with 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight.
 3. Use the soil monitor to measure the soil. Pea seeds require a pH level that is in the 6.0 to 7.5 range, meaning that the soil is slightly acidic to neutral.
 4. Read instructions on the peas package for how to space and sow seeds. Seeds should be sowed 1-2 inches deep, and about 2 inches apart; rows need to be positioned at least 7 inches apart.
 5. Depending on the type of peas planted, some peas (i.e. bush peas) can grow to be 18 to 30 inches tall; a stick or trellis should be put into the ground to support the growth of the plant.
 6. Water up to 1 inch deep sparsely, when necessary, to keep the ground moist.
 7. Carefully remove any weeds that can be growing either by hand, garden hoe or hand trowel.
 8. Watch plants for signs of stress or decay – leaves may turn yellow.
 9. When plants start to flower and bloom, check them more often, at least once a day or every other day if possible.
 10. Peas can begin to be harvested 58 to 70 days (8 to 10 weeks) approximately after planting. Plants can grow approximately 60 to 70 centimeters tall.
 - a. Pick peas when shells become glossy, but not waxy.
 - b. Harvest peas in the morning and use as soon as possible as they are crispier. They can be stored in the fridge for up to 5 days or frozen in sealed containers.
 - To grow spinach outdoors from seeds:

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1. Plant seeds March 28 to April 18.
 2. To grow, spinach requires full-sun exposure, with at least 6 hours of direct sunlight.
 3. Use the soil monitor to measure the soil. Spinach seeds require a pH level that is approximately 7.0, meaning that the soil is neutral.
 4. Read instructions on the spinach package for how to space and sow seeds. Sow seeds $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, every 2 inches and cover with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of soil; rows should be spaced 12 to 18 inches apart.
 5. Use row covers to keep the soil cool and deter pests.
 6. When seedlings sprout to about 2 inches, thin (separate) them to 3-4 inches apart.
 7. Water regularly to keep soil moist.
 8. Watch plants for signs of stress or decay – leaves may turn yellow, purple or bronze in color.
 9. Spinach can begin to be harvested 40 days (6 weeks) approximately when leaves become the desired size. Plants can grow approximately 61 centimeters tall.
 - a. Harvest a few outer leaves from each plant so that the inner leaves can develop. Pick leaves when they reach desired size or harvest the entire plant by cutting at the base of the stem.
 - b. Fresh leaves are good up to a week; store fresh spinach unwashed and only wash when ready to use. To freeze spinach, wash leaves, pat dry with a paper towel and put into a freezer bag with a towel to absorb moisture.
 - c. Don't wait too long to harvest or wait for larger leaves, as the leaves will become bitter. Also, leaves will become bitter if the plant is left in daylight for longer period of time (i.e 14 hours).
- To grow beets outside from seeds:
 1. Plant seeds April 25 to May 16.
 2. To grow, beets require part- to full-sun exposure, with at least 6 hours of direct sunlight.
 3. Use the soil monitor to measure the soil. Beet growth requires a soil pH of 6.0 to 7.0 and will not tolerate soil that is 6.0 and below, as it is acidic.
 4. Read instructions on the beets package for how to space and sow seeds. Sow seeds $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep and 1 to 2 inches apart in rows that are about 12 to 18 inches apart, then cover with a thin layer of soil.

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5. Thin (separate) plants to 3 to 4 inches apart once the greens get to be about 4 to 5 inches tall.
 6. Mulch and water regularly about 1 inch of water per square foot per week.
 7. Carefully remove any weeds that can be growing either by hand, garden hoe or hand trowel.
 8. Use row covers to keep the soil cool and deter pests.
 9. Beets can begin to be harvested 50 to 70 days (8 to 10 weeks) approximately after planting. Plants can grow 30 to 38 centimeters tall and spread 25 to 30 centimeters wide.
 - a. Harvest when beets are about the size of a golf ball to the size of a tennis ball for optimal use. Even the greens can be harvested along with the beets.
 - b. Don't wait and harvest when beets are larger as they can be tough and woody.
 - c. Fresh beets can be stored in the fridge 5 to 7 days; to keep fresh, clip the tops of the stem, leaving about 1 inch. Beets can also be stored in a cool, dry place, such as a basement. Also, beets can be frozen, canned or pickled.
- To grow carrots outdoors from seeds:
 1. Plant seeds April 4 to 18.
 2. To grow, carrots require full-sun exposure, with 6 to 10 hours of direct sunlight.
 3. Use the soil monitor to measure the soil. Spinach seeds require a pH level that is approximately 7.0, meaning that the soil is neutral.
 4. Read instructions on the carrots package for how to space and sow seeds. Sow $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch deep, 2 to 3 inches apart in rows 1 foot apart.
 5. Mulch and water regularly about 1 inch of water so that the soil can retain moisture.
 6. When seedlings are 1 inch tall and have 3 to 4 leaves, thin so they stand 3 to 4 inches apart.
 7. Carefully remove any weeds that can be growing either by hand, garden hoe or hand trowel.
 8. Carrots can begin to be harvested 60-80 days (8 to 10 weeks) approximately after planting. Plants grow approximately 15 to 20 inches tall.
 - a. Carrots are ready to be harvested when they are as wide as your thumb, or about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in diameter. Generally, the smaller the carrot, the better the taste.

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- b. Harvest carrots before daily temperatures become too hot, as heat can make carrots too fibrous.
- c. Freshly harvested carrots can be stored by twisting/ cutting off ½ inch of the tops, scrubbing dirt off with water, and air drying. To store in the fridge, seal in airtight plastic bags to refrigerate. Carrots can also be kept in the soil for temporary storage.

RESOURCES

- <https://www.canadiantire.ca/en.html> (Canadian Tire website)
- <https://www.almanac.com/gardening-tools-guide> (A Guide to Useful Gardening Tools)
- <https://www.almanac.com/vegetable-gardening-for-beginners> (Gardening Tips for Beginners)
- <https://www.almanac.com/learn-to-vegetable-garden> (A Step-by-Step Guide to Vegetable Gardening)
- https://www.amazon.ca/Farmers-Almanac-Vegetable-Gardeners-Handbook/dp/1571988459/ref=sr_1_3?crid=3OEQZ9FBILSJ1&keywords=THE+OLD+FARMER%27S+ALMANAC+Vegetable+Gardener%E2%80%99s+Handbook&qid=1678393866&srefix=the+old+farmer%27s+almanac+vegetable+garden+er+s+handbook%2Caps%2C84&sr=8-3 (The Old Farmer's Almanac Vegetable Gardener's Almanac paperback version)
- <https://www.almanac.com/soil-preparation-how-do-you-prepare-garden-soil-planting> (Preparing the Soil)
- <https://www.almanac.com/plant/peas> (About Peas, How to Plant, Grow & Harvest)
- <https://mckenzieseeds.com/products/pea-green-arrow-heritage> (Green Arrow Pea Seeds)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWb97D8kHyc> (Growing Peas from Sowing to Harvest)
- <https://www.almanac.com/plant/spinach> (About Spinach, How to Plant, Grow & Harvest)
- <https://mckenzieseeds.com/products/spinach-long-standing-bloomdale-organic> (Bloomdale Long Standing Spinach Seeds)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cvoesn22jfi> (How to Grow Spinach from Seed to Harvest)
- <https://www.almanac.com/plant/beets> (About Beets, How to Plant, Grow & Harvest)
- <https://mckenzieseeds.com/products/beet-detroit-dark-red> (Detroit Dark Red Beet Seeds)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1D1LLkLi8oM> (Growing Beets from Sowing to Harvest)
- <https://www.almanac.com/plant/carrots> (About Carrots, How to Plant, Grow & Harvest)

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- <https://mckenzieseeds.com/products/carrot-scarlet-nantes> (Scarlet Nantes Carrot Seeds)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvn_HHIB6tM (Growing Carrots from Sowing to Harvest)
- <https://sustainontario.com/initiatives/community-garden-network/> (A Map of Community Gardens in Ontario)
- <https://www.toronto.ca/explore-enjoy/parks-gardens-beaches/gardens-and-horticulture/urban-agriculture/community-gardens/> (A Map of Community Gardens in Toronto)

SUPPORTS NEEDED

- Individuals may need hands-on support in preparing the soil, sowing the seeds, maintaining the garden, and harvesting the vegetables.
- Individuals may also need motivational support via prompts to complete their garden.

OTHER THINGS TO NOTE

1. A brief note about materials: Listed above is a fairly comprehensive list of supplies including gardening tools. It should be noted that not all tools are utilized at the same time and do not always need to be kept on-hand for gardening. Please bring the necessary tools at the required gardening times only. Cost is based on Canadian Tire® pricing. For items that need to be purchased, use judgment in acquiring quality, yet cost-effective supplies. Tools can also be purchased in sets. Please support Canadian-based and local businesses if possible. Be mindful and careful of all tools and supplies, and pack them up when not in use to prevent any trips, falls or injuries.
2. The vegetables noted above are some examples to grow in your small garden. If you have an allergy to, or do not like any of those vegetables, there are plenty of other options of vegetables to grow from seed form. The following four examples – peas, spinach, beets, and carrots were chosen as they are very easy to plant, grow and maintain in the Springtime from seed form.
3. Gardening does require various activities of exercise including, but not limited to: standing stretching, bending and kneeling, among other movements. Be mindful of your body and limitations – do not go past your limits and potentially hurt yourself. Listen to your body!
4. Creating and maintaining your small community garden means that you will be outside. Be mindful of the weather, temperature and the sun at all times. Remember that even when it is cloudy, you can still get sun-burned; use sunscreen and wear weather appropriate attire,

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including a hat and long-sleeve shirt, sweater or jacket to protect your skin. Make sure to bring enough water to keep hydrated and a light snack in case you get hungry.

5. Other good items to bring include: rain boots/ gardening boots, a towel or paper towel to clean up in case you sweat or get dirty, as well as a change of comfortable clothes and a pair of shoes to change into.
6. Make gardening extra fun by:
 - a. Adding music to your experience
 - b. Bringing along some friends to socialize with
 - c. Reaching out and speaking to other gardeners – you might learn something new!
 - d. A sense of adventure to learn and try something new and exciting!