

Unleash Your Inner Farmer

Toronto, Ont. (May 5, 2010) – Just because you don't live on a farm or have a large backyard doesn't mean you can't enjoy growing your own fruits and vegetables.

"There has been a large movement towards growing urban gardens this year," said Denis Flanagan, public relations manager for Landscape Ontario. "Growing your own fruits and vegetables provides many benefits and there are now a variety of easy and accessible options available for those interested in growing their own food but have minimal space," continued Flanagan.

Landscape Ontario has provided tips for Ontarians in all cities to help them begin growing their vegetable gardens, large or small. They recommend that the best way to start is by choosing which vegetables, fruits and/or herbs that you and/or your family enjoy on a regular basis. Once you choose your produce, you can then decide on the best planting method that fits your living style.

Have a balcony?

The best method for a balcony garden is to grow containers. It is recommended that you use pots between 12" and 18" in diameter. With container gardening, drainage is key. The more soil a container can hold, the more moisture it will retain. It is also important that you use quality potting soil, preferably organic. Don't use garden soil because it will compact in the container and water won't drain properly. There is a wide variety of your favourite vegetables that can be planted in containers, such as: tomatoes, eggplants, bell peppers, cucumbers, small lettuce, zucchini, peas and radishes.

Have a terrace or small patch of lawn?

Building a small raised garden bed provides ideal conditions for growing vegetables and also for growing your favourite fruits such as strawberries and rhubarb. Build your bed in a location that gets lots of sun and make sure it is no more than 1.2m wide, 30cm high and as long as you want. Vegetables that perform well in small raised garden beds are: tomatoes, lettuce, onions, cauliflower, cabbages and French beans.

Live in the city?

If you live in a large city such as Toronto and you want to grow a larger garden but don't have the space, consider renting garden space in a local community garden. Check your city's website to see where community gardens might be offered. Check your city's website to see where community gardens might be offered.

Have a large backyard?

Some Ontarians are fortunate enough to have a large backyard that allows them to plant a full vegetable garden. Landscape Ontario recommends these planting tips:

- Work the soil by spading it deeply. Loosen up heavy clay by adding peat moss and manure. Add 1 kg of garden fertilizer per 10 square meters and then turn the soil over again and rake smoothly.
- Before you begin planting, moisten the soil, allowing it to dry slightly until it's workable.

- Plant seeds about three times as deep as their diameter. Cover small seeds with finely sifted compost, soil or vermiculite.
- Plants not in individual containers should be gently separated to retain as much soil around the roots as possible.

Landscape Ontario also wants to ensure that once you have planted your vegetable garden, regardless of size, you take proper care of it. Here are some after-planting care tips:

- Vegetables are thirsty! Water them thoroughly with a mild fertilizer to give them a good start. Thereafter, water whenever the soil begins to dry. For best results water early in the day by soaking the soil.
- Vegetables need 6 hours of sunlight per day!
- Cultivate out weeds as soon as they appear. When removing weeds, be carefully not to disturb the root of the plants.
- Your vegetables may develop problems with insects or disease. If they do, bring a sample of the problem to your closest garden centre and let an experienced horticulturalist identify the problem.

Once your garden is planted and cared for, sit back, relax and enjoy watching your garden grow!

About Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association

Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association is one of the most vibrant associations of its kind, comprised of over 2,000 members, ten sector groups and nine local chapters. Its trade mission is to promote the horticulture industry in Ontario, and its public mission is to promote the joys and benefits of green spaces. For more information on the association and Green for Life, visit: www.landscapeontario.com.



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