

Healthy Home and Garden Tips

A Good Time to Grow Vegetables

Keeping close to home during the pandemic, many of us are growing vegetables to increase access to fresh food and to get kids outside for some fresh air. According to naturopathic physician Dr. Kurt Beil, gardening is one of the single most valuable activities we can do for our health.

“Vegetable gardening helps provide nourishing food right from our own neighborhoods and instills us with a sense of accomplishment and attachment to the land around us. Not only does digging in the earth provide us with plenty of physical activity to strengthen our muscles, support our hearts and burn calories, it exposes us to naturally-occurring soil bacteria that improves immune system function. Tending a garden is one of the best things we can do for our total well-being.”

The health benefits of vegetable gardening are available to everyone regardless of space or financial limitations. Vegetables don't need a large plot of land or fancy raised beds to grow well. An old bucket, pail or flower pot placed on a sunny porch or balcony will work just as well for most vegetables. For Portland residents with limited resources, Growing Gardens' Home Garden Program offers garden installation, plant seeds and starts, compost, tools, and educational workshops.

To learn more and to apply, visit:
growing-gardens.org/home-gardens

Dr. Kurt Beil completed his Master's of Public Health internship with Metro focusing on urban green space as a public health promotion and disease prevention strategy, as a precursor to the formation of the Intertwine Alliance for which he was founding co-chair of the Health and Nature subcommittee. He has written, researched and presented widely on these topics. www.drkurtbeil.com



Helpful Hints for Vegetable Gardening

1. Grow safe and healthy vegetables without chemicals by manually removing weeds, bugs or diseased leaves that might harm your plants and catch problems early.
2. Plant veggies in a sunny spot or in grow bags or pots that can be moved throughout the day with the sun.
3. Water deep and at soil level when needed. Look up recommended amounts and avoid watering during high heat or sun.
4. Use fertilizers for natural gardening, which will slowly add nutrients to the soil over time.
5. Follow the growing instructions on the label if you buy seeds or starts.
6. Collect and save seeds from your crop each year to save money.

Join a Metro natural gardening educator to learn how to: Build a simple raised garden bed

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBCmy6dm2Ac>

Don't Get Bugged by Mosquitoes



Reduce mosquito numbers this summer by properly disposing of pots and trays after planting. Left out, they can collect water and become an excellent breeding ground for mosquitoes. If you do find yourself bugged by these pesky insects, try a safer alternative to traditional mosquito repellents, many of which contain ingredients harmful to human health. See recipe for easy-to-make insect repellent that is safe for the whole family.

Homemade Bug Spray for the Skin

What you'll need:

- Glass spray bottle
- Oil of lemon eucalyptus or lavender essential oil
- Witch hazel

Directions:

1. Mix 1 teaspoon oil with 10 teaspoons of witch hazel in bottle
2. Shake gently to mix
3. Apply to skin

Know before you dispose

Some plastic pots are recyclable. Before disposing in the garbage, check with your local jurisdiction for more information about recycling options.



Family Fun Salsa Bowl

Create a mini-garden of ingredients for making salsa at home.

Materials: Large pot, potting soil, starts of tomato or tomatillo, cilantro, onions, garlic, and hot pepper

Directions: Fill pot with soil and starts. Place pot in a sunny spot and watch your garden grow.

Guide to Safer Sunscreens

Use these tips to protect your skin from harmful UV rays in the garden this summer by applying a safe and effective sunscreen.

1. Look at the active ingredients on the label; choose sunscreens that have titanium dioxide or zinc oxide when possible. These are the safest for the health of you, your family, and the ecosystems you spend time in.
2. Protect yourself from harmful UV rays by applying a thick coat of a "broad spectrum" sunscreen with at least SPF 30.
3. Avoid sunscreen for children less than 6 months old.
4. Shower to remove sunscreen off your skin once you are out of the sun.
5. Cover up your skin when sunscreen isn't available. Use hats and long sleeves to protect vulnerable parts of your body from burning.

Ask Metro

For more information on inexpensive tools to help you cultivate a healthy home and garden, visit:

<https://www.oregonmetro.gov/tools-living>

Community Connections

To learn more about gardening, visit:

- clackamascountymastergardeners.org/10-minute-university/videos/#growing-edibles
- extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/vegetables
- growing-gardens.org