

Grow Your Food

The benefits of starting your own garden are plentiful, just like your harvest! Know where your produce is coming from, use less chemicals, save money and enjoy the final product! Gardening is a fun way to add fresh ingredients to your recipes. Whether you live in the city or the suburbs, you plant in a pot or in the ground, you can bring fresh fruits, vegetables and herbs to your family's meals.

Grow Pittsburgh

If you are interested in starting your own garden but you don't have all the right tools, visit Grow Pittsburgh's website. "Grow Pittsburgh" is a nonprofit that serves as a resource and guide for backyard, school and community gardeners, as well as urban farmers across the Greater Pittsburgh region. Our mission is to teach people how to grow food and to promote the benefits that gardens bring to our neighborhoods." Check out the website (link below) for information ranging all the way from planning your garden to recipes to enjoy the food you've grown!

<https://www.growpittsburgh.org/garden-and-farm-resources/info-hub/>

Picky Kids

If your children are picky when it comes to eating their fruits and vegetables, a garden can be a good way to spark their interest. When children help plant, water, and tend to a growing crop, they are excited to finally see it be fruitful and produce a juicy red tomato or a bright



orange bell pepper! They may be excited to eat what they worked hard to grow. Research shows that children who have a garden at home eat significantly more vegetables than those without a garden. All the while, gardening with your children is a way to spend time together while also teaching them a lifelong skill.

An Easy Start

If you are not an experienced gardener, a couple crops to start with could be green beans which grow



very quickly or cherry tomatoes because they are plentiful. It will be fun to see such success so rapidly. Wait until any chance of frost is gone. You will have more success if you start with a transplant

cherry tomato plant that is already 6-10 inches tall. Fertilizer will give the plant nutrients. When new growth appears where the branches meet the stalk, pinch them off because they will eat nutrients that the tomatoes need. Pinching off these new growths will help the tomatoes flourish. It also helps to tie the plant to a stake to help it stand when it gets weighed down from the tomatoes. The tomatoes take a couple of months to grow but when they are red and easy to pick, they are worth the wait!

Herbs

Growing herbs could also be a good place to start because they are one of the easiest plants to grow. Mint, parsley, basil, rosemary, and oregano are just a few of the many herbs you can grow at home. You may have an abundance of herbs at the end of summer which is okay because herbs can be dried

and used to flavor your food all year long. You can also use an abundance of basil to make pesto. Pour the pesto into an ice cube tray and freeze for later use.



More than the Eye Can See

Roots and tubers are fun to plant. They grow underground so when it is time to harvest, the results are a surprise! Carrots, beets, potatoes, and radishes are some of the roots and tubers that you could plant in your garden. Beets grow well in cool temperatures, spring and fall are best. They require little room to grow and the whole beet can be used including the greens. Potatoes are a tuber. They also do best in cool temperatures; however, not too cold because the tops cannot endure frost. Radishes are also a cool season crop and are usually one of the first vegetables ready for harvest in the spring. This is another vegetable that both the root and greens may be consumed.



Strawberries

Strawberries are a common fruit grown in gardens in Pennsylvania. June bearing is a common type of strawberry plant and is harvested in a 2 to 3-week time usually in the month of June. Strawberries need full sun either in the ground or in a container. Strawberry plants will spread because they produce runners, which are daughter plants of the original plant. Runners will produce fruit as well. Strawberries are the sweetest to eat when they are not picked until they are fully ripened on the plant.

The chart below will help you navigate the basics about when to plant and harvest certain crops, along with if it is best to start from a seed or a transplanted crop.

Crop	When to Plant	When to Harvest	Should I start from seed or transplant?
Basil	Early Summer	Summer	Either
Beets	Spring to early fall	Summer, fall	Seed
Broccoli	Early Spring, Summer	Early summer, fall	Transplant
Brussels Sprouts	Early Summer	Fall	Transplant
Carrots	Spring-early fall	Summer-fall	Seed
Cucumbers	Early summer	Summer	Either
Eggplant	Early summer	Summer-early fall	Transplant
Kale	Early spring, late summer	Spring, fall	Either
Melons	Early summer	Summer, early fall	Either
Mint	Spring	Spring-fall	Transplant
Okra	Early summer	Summer	Seed
Peppers	Early summer	Summer-early fall	Transplant
Spinach	Spring, fall	Spring, fall	Seed
Strawberries	Spring	The next early summer	Transplant
Summer squash	Early summer	Summer, early fall	Either
Sweet potato	Early summer	Fall	Transplant
Tomatoes	Early summer	Summer, early fall	Transplant
Winter squash	Early summer	Late summer, early fall	Either

Source: <http://www.growpittsburgh.org/wp-content/uploads/General-Info-Planting-Harvesting-Chart2.pdf>

Need a Dietitian?

Registered Dietitians are here to help you with your nutrition questions. To make an appointment call 412.692.4497 (Oakland location) or 412.623.2421 (Shadyside location).