



Healthy Bite

Meal and Nutrition Services for All

April 2014

Plant a Garden!

From the desk of Lori Harvey RDN, LD

Container Gardening

Maybe you are not allowed to plant a garden because you rent an apartment or a house, or maybe you just do not have enough yard space available for a garden. Either way, container gardening is an easy way to grow your own produce without worry. Growing your own produce is a great way to reach your fruit and vegetable intake goals, spend time with your kids and/or grandkids, and is an excellent way to increase your physical activity.

Fruits and vegetables for container gardening

The following fruits and vegetables are appropriate:
Strawberries; Tomatoes; Carrots; Salad greens, such as:
Arugula, Endive, Leaf lettuce, Mustard, Bibb lettuce;
Radishes; Peppers; Cucumbers; Eggplant; Green beans;
Green onions; and Squash

Herbs that grow well indoors

The following herbs that do especially well indoors: Basil,
Lavender, Thyme, Mint, Parsley, Oregano, Cilantro,
Chives, Sage

These suggestions can help get you started.

Appropriate plant varieties

Select bush or dwarf varieties of plants. These adapt well to growing in a pot. "Compact" varieties of herbs grow better than conventional varieties indoors.

Containers

Choose almost any container, just so it is large enough. Use at least a 4-gallon container for larger plants, such as: Tomatoes, Carrots, Cucumbers, and Peppers. Make sure that your container has drainage holes in the bottom. Select light-colored containers, because dark containers absorb heat and could cause damage to the plants.

Soil

Use potting soil in your containers. Some people prefer synthetic mixes that contain peat. Garden soil generally is not recommended, because it is too heavy and difficult to aerate.

Fertilizer

Add either a slow-release or a complete organic fertilizer at the time of planting. Many people add liquid fertilizer to their watering can every time they water their plants.

Watering

Water frequently. Plants in pots and containers require more frequent watering than those in the ground.

Sun or shade

Read the seed packet or plant tags to see how much sun or shade your plants require, and plan accordingly. For example, strawberries require 6 hours of sun/day.

Tomatoes

Remember that you need to stake or cage tomatoes to produce the most fruit and to prevent them from falling over as they grow.

Nighttime

Start growing plants earlier in the year and keep them growing past their regular season by bringing them in at night.

Drying herbs

To dry your herbs, tie them into bundles and hang in a dark, warm place. They should dry within 1-2 weeks. Alternatively, you can bake them on a cookie sheet for 2-4 hours at a temperature below 180° F.

Freezing herbs

To freeze fresh herbs, place them in boiling water for 1 minute and then cool them quickly in ice water before placing into freezer bags. You can freeze dill, basil, and chives without boiling.

Visit your local Ohio State University Extension Office for additional information -- <http://extension.osu.edu/>

Resources: www.rd411.com

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Thank you!

Phil Marcin

Development Director

Questions? If you have any questions on this or any nutrition-related topic, or have an idea for a future *Healthy Bite* topic, please call our registered dietitian, Lori Harvey. You can reach her by telephone at 330-376-7717 extension 140 or by email lharvey@mobilemealsinc.org.

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