

Be Green and Raise \$Green\$

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How to Grow a Kitchen Garden 101

1 – Select a Spot: smaller is better to start. Try an area 4x8 feet or use pots. Make sure the spot gets 6-8 hours of sun each day and has good drainage, meaning no standing water after a good rain.

2 – Prepare and amend your soil: work the soil 6-8" down using a tiller or a garden tool such as a garden claw. Amending the soil is the most important step. Give it the Squeeze Test: squeeze a handful in your hands. If it crumbles when you let go, you've got a sandy loam – perfect soil. If you're stuck with either sandy or clay soil, add compost. See our web site www.atozrecycling.com for how to make compost, or buy it.

3 - Decide what you'll grow: grow what you eat. Don't grow what you don't eat. Herbs, lettuces, spinach, green beans, potatoes, peppers, carrots, cucumbers and squash & zucchini are easy to grow. Tomatoes are more challenging but worth the work. A tip: start small so you're not overwhelmed. Choose 2-3 veggies and herbs.

4 – Plant the seeds: easy-to-follow instructions are on each seed packet and in most cases you'll see the plants emerge from the ground in just a matter of days. The packets tell you how much space each plant needs. Once they germinate, or sprout from the ground, thin them. In other words, if the directions call for 2" apart, remove all the seedlings that have germinated except the healthiest ones that are 2" apart. Discard the rest.

5 – Mulch the area and water regularly: choose organic mulch such as straw or grass clippings and apply regularly. Mulching is just as important as good soil so don't skip this step! Most crops need the equivalent of 1" of rainfall per week, but be consistent.

Go to <http://www.thefarm.org/charities/i4at/lib2/howgardn.htm> for more info.

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