



10 Best Garden Crops for Beginners

Plan your first garden with these 10 easy crops that offer great cooking possibilities.

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Discover the pleasures of gardening by taking on crops that can grow easily in your first garden.

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If you want to grow a garden next spring, it's never too early to start planning. One of the best ways to "learn as you go" is to read the seed catalogs that many companies will send for free. One of our favorites, with lots of gardening advice and great color photos, is Johnny's Selected Seeds (<http://www.johnnyseeds.com/>).

If you're a beginner, consider starting with the 10 crops discussed below. All are easy to grow, and this combination offers lots of possibilities for cooking. Some of these crops are best grown by setting out started seedlings, but most are easy to grow from a packet of seeds.

- 1. Radishes.** Radishes do well even in not-so-great garden soil and are ready to harvest in only a few weeks. Plant the seeds in spring and fall (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-radishes-zmazo8fmzmcc>).
- 2. Salad greens** (lettuce (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-lettuce-zmazo8amzmcc>), spinach (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/learn-how-to-grow-spinach-zmazo8onzgoe>), arugula and corn salad). Pick your favorite, or try a mix — many companies sell mixed packets for summer and winter gardening. Plant the seeds in spring and fall, and you can pick salads almost year-round.
- 3. Green beans.** Easy to grow and prolific. If you get a big crop, they freeze well, and they're also delicious when pickled as dilly beans. Start with seeds (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-beans-zmazo9jjzraw>) after all danger of frost has passed.
- 4. Onions.** Start with small plants (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-onions-zmazo9djzraw>), and if they do well, you can harvest bulb onions. If not, you can always eat the greens.
- 5. Strawberries.** Perfectly ripe strawberries (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/fruits/growing-strawberries-zmoz11zkon>) are unbelievably sweet, and the plants are surprisingly hardy. Buy bare-root plants in early spring. Put this perennial in a sunny spot and keep it well weeded.

6. Peppers. Both hot peppers and bell peppers are easy to grow (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-peppers/growing-peppers-zmaz10fmzraw>). Start with plants and let peppers from the same plant ripen for different lengths of time to get a range of colors and flavors.

7. Bush zucchini. This squash (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-squash/growing-summer-squash-zmoz12jjzkon>) won't take up as much room in your garden as many other types, and it's very prolific. Start from seeds or transplants. You won't need more than a few plants for a bumper crop.

8. Tomatoes. There's just no substitute for a perfectly ripe homegrown tomato (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-tomatoes/growing-tomatoes-zmoz11zsto>), and it's hard to go wrong when you start with strong plants. If you get a big crop, consider canning or freezing.

9. Basil. Many herbs are easy to grow, but basil is a good choice because it's a nice complement to tomatoes. Basil is easy to grow from seeds or from transplants.

10. Potatoes. An easy-to-grow staple (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/growing-potatoes-early-midseason-and-late-varieties-zmaz08djzgoe>) that stores well when kept cool. A simple and low-maintenance approach is to plant potatoes in straw rather than soil. 'Seeds' are whole or cut sections of potatoes, sold in early spring.

- Pickled Radishes Recipe (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/pickling/pickled-radishes-zerz1506zcvil>)
- Creamed Lettuce Soup Recipe (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/creamed-lettuce-soup-recipe-zmaz76jzgoe>)
- Herby Pickled Beans Recipe (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/seasonal-recipes/pickled-beans-recipe-zmrz14aszmat>)
- Bakes Stuffed Onions with Apples Recipe (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/baked-stuffed-onions-with-apples-recipe-zmoz16onzmar>)
- Preserve Strawberries: Easy Recipes to Stretch Strawberry season (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/canning/preserve-strawberries-zeoz11zhir>)
- 'Fish' Pepper White Sauce Recipe (<http://www.heirloomgardener.com/food/recipes/fish-pepper-white-sauce-zmrz17uzcvil>)
- Stuffed Zucchini Cups Recipe (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/seasonal-recipes/stuffed-zucchini-cups-zmrz14jjzmat>)
- Tomato Juice Cocktail Recipe (<http://www.grit.com/food/recipes/tomato-juice-cocktail-recipe-zmrz17soeva>)
- Basil-Infused Olive Oil Recipe (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/basil-infused-olive-oil-zmrz14fmzmat>)
- Warm Potato Salad with Lemon and Mint Recipe (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/real-food/warm-potato-salad-recipe-zerz1507zken>)

Discover more great gardening resources:

- The Vegetable Garden Planner (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/garden-planner/vegetable-garden-planner>)
- What to Plant Now (<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/what-to-plant-now-zloz0903zalt>)

- [In-Depth Companion Planting Guide \(https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/companion-planting-guide-zmaz81mjzraw\)](https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/companion-planting-guide-zmaz81mjzraw)