

# Basic Instructions for Vegetable Plants



You may be able to receive free seeds or seedlings from your local nursery or greenhouse. It doesn't hurt to ask! If not, seed packets normally cost a few dollars.

## *What type of food should I plant?*

Virtually any food will grow in a bucket as long as there are drainage holes in the bottom. Plant tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers, melons, pole beans, etc. Plant **thickly** because you can always thin out the food (see below).

## *What should I put the seeds in?*

If you have garden space, use the land. Otherwise, plant veggies in a garbage can, a container or a five-gallon bucket. Try to obtain good potting soil from a local nursery if you do not have access to fertile soil. Be sure to get all the rocks and grass out of the soil before you plant. Also, try to use compost: save potato peels, carrot tops, egg shells, old paper towels, or newspapers and put them in a garbage bag with a lid, if possible. Once that rots, it's compost. These items can take from 6 months to a year to become compost. Good soil is important for good vegetables!

## *How do I thin the plants?*

Thinning is the removal of unwanted plants. You have to thin plants if they grow too close together since plants need room to reach their full growing potential. Depending on the plant, thin them every 7 to 12 inches. Eat the plants rather than throw them away! Wash them off and have sprout salads or sandwiches as soon as they come out of the ground!

## *How should I plant the seeds/seedlings?*

Plant rows of seeds north to south, because the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. This way, the plants will not block each other. Try to plant in full sun, unless the directions on the seed packet tell you not to. Vegetables thrive in at least 7 to 8 hours of sun a day. Plant your vegetables so that they will have sun in the afternoon when the sun is the strongest. If they are going to be in the shade, it is better for them to be in the shade in the morning.

## *Watering Your Plants*

Water at least two times a week if there is no rain, or follow instructions on the packet of seeds. When the seeds sprout, water them at least two times a week, also. **IMPORTANT:** It is easy to over-water seedlings, but it is also important for them to stay moist. Make sure that they stay moist without drowning them. Check your seedlings every day to see if they need water. When you water them, do not use a lot of force. Try to use a sprinkler head, hose or watering can.

## *You may not be the only one who likes to eat vegetables: Getting Rid of Insects*

Check your plants to make sure that no pests are eating your vegetables. If they are, try to use organic methods to control them. These plants will be food for human consumption. Chemical free alternatives are the safest and healthiest approach to gardening. Start with the least drastic approach. Many bugs can be taken off seedlings by hand. If hand picking does not work, try using soapy water. When using soapy water, use a good force of spray. Add rubbing alcohol to soapy water for greater effectiveness. If that does not work, use an organic insecticide, such as SAFER product.

## *Help is available!*

We are here to help and we want to hear from you! If you have any questions regarding growing vegetables or other plants, contact Scott D. Appell, Director of Education, at the Horticultural Society of New York at (212) 757-0915 ext. 214. The Horticultural Society also has a library that anyone can visit. You can call the Cornell Cooperative Extension Office at (518) 765-3500 for upstate New York. Otherwise, call the Hunger Action Network at the below numbers

**TIP:** In the Fall, before the last frost, pick all your green tomatoes and put them on newspaper (stem side down) in a dark place such as a drawer or closet. You'll have ripe tomatoes for Thanksgiving supper!



*Getting to the  
Root of the  
Problem*

## **The Hunger Action Network of NYS**

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