

## Small Area & Container Spring Vegetable Gardens

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**A**s spring approaches and the weather turns delightful, the primordial urge to cultivate the soil grows stronger in our community. Anytime after March 20 (when freezing weather is unlikely), one can start a spring garden. Gardens can be of any size and shape, depending on your available ground. They may exist on any sunny plot of ground or in various containers. The benefits are tasty produce, exercise and self-satisfaction. Late winter and Early Spring are the times to think about what to plant and prepare the garden plot. The following offer some guidelines and hints on getting started:

**Helpful Tools:**            Small Area:     Shovel, hoe, rake  
   Container:       Hand trowel, hand cultivator

### **What to Try?**

**Small Area & Container**  
(areas approximately 100  
square feet in size)

Green beans  
Squash  
Tomatoes—wilt, fungus resistant  
Basil  
Cucumbers (a trellis is helpful)  
Peppers – all varieties  
Eggplant  
Sweet Basil

**Larger Plots**  
(areas greater than 100  
square feet)

Southern peas (Black-eyed, Crowder, White Acre)  
Lima beans (white and speckled varieties)  
Okra  
Corn  
Melons (they take a lot of space)

Having made your selection, now decide whether to start from seed or buy plants. Both are available from garden supply stores in Tallahassee . With a plan in place, it's now time to get out the tools, garden gloves and get to work!

### **Soil Preparation:**

Use a shovel to turn over the grass or other vegetative material, approximately 6-8 inches deep. Let it sit for several weeks. Cultivate into a finer composition with a hoe. It is vital to make a fine seed bed for either seeds or plants. (If you have access to a tiller, this will make life much easier) Mark off the rows with sticks and lines in the soil. Use the hoe to make a row in the soil, approximately 6 inches deep. Now use the hoe to fill in

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both sides of the row, creating a mound about 2-3 inches above level ground. This action creates a very fine seed bed.

### Planting:

Use the tooth rake (or hoe) to level off the mound, then use the rake or hoe handle to cut a 1 inch deep hole in the top of this mound. Place the seeds in this hole and cover per packet instructions. Plants may also be set out on the level mound.

### Weeding & Insect Control:

It is most important to control weeds and to keep a wary eye out for bugs. Insects can sneak up on you very quickly. The best way to do this is to observe the garden area frequently. A short inspection each day with weeding once per week is much better than monthly escapades with great effort. Don't forget the value of mulch! It is very helpful for weed control and to keep moisture in the soil. Insect control must be performed when they are observed.

### Feeding & Watering:

Fertilize lightly when the plants are 4-6 inches high. For our area, a **15-0-15 fertilizer** is recommended. A light application on the side of the row is best for vegetables. Apply again lightly after first fruit appears, if needed. **DO NOT OVER FERTILIZE!** Water should be equal to a half to 1 inch per week, either from rain or provided by the gardener (most sprinklers will expend  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch per hour).

### Harvest:

Now comes the rewarding part: picking and eating your harvest. Depending on your plant selection, fruit of your labor will be ready from 40-55 days (green beans and squash) to 90-110 day

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