



Tips for Success in Small Space Gardening  
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Don't let feelings of limited space hold you back from growing your own great organic food at home. Here are a few tips for success to realize high vegetable gardening yields from small spaces.

First and most important, consider using raised garden beds or containers to maximize veggie garden space. These options save water, hold improved soils for better growing conditions, require less maintenance, and minimize diseases and pests. Harvesting is usually effortless when veggies are up off ground level and closer to the house or kitchen. One of the biggest advantages is your flexibility to locate containers anywhere you want your plants: small areas, patios, decks and unused spaces like side yards or along fences and walls.

Locate containers in sunny areas; aim for an ideal eight hours a day. If sun is a challenge, place containers in south-facing areas or near stucco walls for warmth and reflected light. Containerized plants dry out more quickly, so keep your water source handy. Drip irrigation helps conserve water, as does organic mulch over exposed soil surfaces. Good quality potting soil for your containers is important, as is topsoil for larger raised beds. Keep your plants happy by adding compost to the soil mix, and use a slow-release organic fertilizer occasionally through the garden season.

An important rule of thumb is to maximize vertical space: grow UP, not OUT whenever possible. Match the growth pattern of the plant to the type of container, use any number of plant support systems, and the sky is literally the limit for climbing and sprawling vegetables. Put climbers like vining peas, cukes, squash, and melons in the centers of pots with strong trellises or poles with string or wires for support. Growing up frees up space beneath for low-growing veggies: cabbage, carrot, chard, lettuces, herbs, beets, and turnips. Add some flowers for color if space allows, and they'll help draw pollinators in.

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Choose plant varieties that are better suited for containers when possible. Look for descriptive varietal names such as “compact” or “mini,” dwarf or semi-dwarf. Determinate tomatoes are well suited to grow in containers because they stay in a bushier shape. However, indeterminate tomato varieties can be grown successfully with supports to help them stay upright and hold up heavy branches – sturdy tomato cages to the rescue!

Support systems for plants in small spaces are very important, and fortunately there’s a variety of support systems available: arbors, trellis, arches, and pergolas to name a few. Supplies like string, wire, netting, bamboo and wood stakes allow you to design your own cost-effective supports. Wires strung along stakes in narrow spots by garages or fences facilitate espalier-style growing, which is good for high yields in small footprint areas.

No space is too small to grow the fresh veggies you’ve been craving - are you ready to get started? Master Gardeners are here to help you design a successful small space garden today, for the harvest of your dreams later this year. Join Master Gardeners for a free virtual class: Developing a Vegetable Garden in a Small Backyard Space, on Wednesday, March 10, 2021 from 9:00am to 10:30 am. Master Gardener Mike Pavlick discusses site location, design, raised bed options, and container gardening allowing anyone to have a vegetable garden in a small backyard setting. Register in advance for this virtual class:  
<https://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=32833>.

*Due to the pandemic, Master Gardener events will for the foreseeable future continue to be limited. We realize our public classes are valued by county residents and we are doing our best to provide virtual learning opportunities. You can find our new online class schedule at: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public\\_Education\\_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698), and recorded classes on many gardening topics here: [https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Public\\_Education\\_Classes/Handouts - Presentations/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Public_Education_Classes/Handouts_-_Presentations/).*

*The Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open on Fridays and Saturdays from 9 AM -12 noon April – October. Closed April 16 and 17. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the number of people allowed in the garden at one time is limited to 10, and masks and distancing are required. Please check our website for more details [https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Demonstration\\_Garden/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/)*

*Save the date for our annual plant sale, April 17! This event was cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, we’re committed to having a sale this year and more dates may be added. Please check our website in late March to see [how you can shop our sale: http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu)*

*Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard remotely and can still answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: [mgeldorado.ucanr.edu](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu). We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.*

*For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website*

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at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/master\\_gardener\\_e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news).