



Starting a Victory Vegetable Garden

"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow." - Audrey Hepburn



Photo Credit: Canva

Vegetable gardens have been and continue to be havens during difficult times. George Washington Carver promoted the idea of edible gardens in personal residences during times of war and coined the phrase 'Victory Garden'. Ever since, Victory Gardens arise during times of difficulties as a way to supplement meals with affordable and healthy produce and to boost morale. If you are new to vegetable gardening or need a refresher, here are a few topics to consider before digging in.

One of Stephen Covey's principles in "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" is "Begin with the end in mind." Essentially, create a vision of the end result prior to starting a project. Before planting, take time to figure out your garden goals: What do you want to grow? How much time is available to work in the garden? What size garden? Where will the garden be located? Who is involved in garden planning and maintenance? What supplies are needed? Defining the goals helps to set a clear path for success.

Plants need air, water, sun, nutrients, and space. Select a site that has easy access to water and your home; healthy, rock- and weed-free soil (add compost if needed); and a minimum of 8 to 10 hours of sunlight in the summer and 6 to 8 hours in the winter. The garden can be in-ground, a raised bed, or a container. Observe the site during daytime, making note of where and when the shadows appear. Windy areas, walls and fences, and slopes create their own weather called 'microclimates' which can influence how well the plants grow. Study the microclimatic conditions of the site before planting.

Vegetables are categorized as either 'Cool Season' or 'Warm Season'. In Southern California, cool season vegetables grow best from September through April and warm season vegetables thrive from March to October. Cool season vegetables include broccoli, cauliflower, peas, short-day onions, root, and leafy vegetables. Warm season vegetables are tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, peppers, beans, corn, and eggplants. Select plants appropriate for the season for best results. For a complete list of cool and warm season vegetables for San Diego County, look at the Master Gardener Vegetable Growing Guides at www.MasterGardenerSD.org/growing-guides

Once you've decided what to grow, plan where to place the plants by creating a planting plan and record. First, figure out how much space a mature plant needs. Then roughly sketch your planting area and plot the space for each mature plant. By doing this, the garden will not be overplanted and each vegetable will have enough space to reach maturity. Next, make a list of each plant (type and variety such as watermelon, Sugar Baby), the date planted, expected harvest date and a space for notes.