

## The Backyard Gardener – Gotta Start Somewhere

When I started my vegetable gardening mission, all I knew is I wanted to eat as many homegrown veggies as I could possibly grow. I love farmer's markets; supporting local hard-working farmers, the freshness, the seemingly superior goods... Surely, I could give this a go and bask in my success! The first thing I did was call dear ole Dad, the one guy that knows EVERYTHING! Just so happens that my Dad does have extensive green thumb skills, back in the day, he had several large green houses and a plant business. After talking to him about my space (smallish backyard with a small patio) and my lack of gardening experience, a container garden made the most sense. Next was buying everything I needed, I spent about \$250 which included seeds, soil, tools, pots, couple wire supports, and some plant food.

- Purchase decent sized containers. A 20-inch diameter works well, make sure they include drain holes or drill some yourself. I've seen some pretty cool repurposed items used as containers; dresser drawers, tires, old luggage, wagons, etc. Get creative.
- Purchase good soil. I used Miracle Gro Garden Soil. It's smart to amend it with a bit of compost if possible. All that rich organic matter is a valuable component that will hold moisture and provide nutrients to your plants.
- Choose your seeds or transplant seedlings based on the timing of the last frost and the vegetables growing season. The seed packet itself provides a wealth of information to help you make your choice.
- Tools; a good sturdy gardening shovel, YouTube, and Google are what you need. I am by no means a veteran gardener, nor do I play one on TV. I am simply sharing my trials and tribulations along with very minimal wisdom. This is how I know anyone can do this!
- Video your planting, what row type for each vegetable, how far apart, quantity of seeds, etc., this way you will be able to tell what works and what might need some adjusting next time.
- Water! Water those seeds often, this is the most important practice in early germination.

The first tiny sign of sprouting from a seed will fill your heart with such joy and feeling of accomplishment. It was at that moment, I knew I could nurture those buds and win at this gardening game.

Everyone's doing it, why not you? I hope you are inspired by the faith I have in you to be a great gardener. You can do this! Next time, I'll share some advice on avoiding common beginner missteps and organic tips to keep pesky bugs and other nuisances away.

