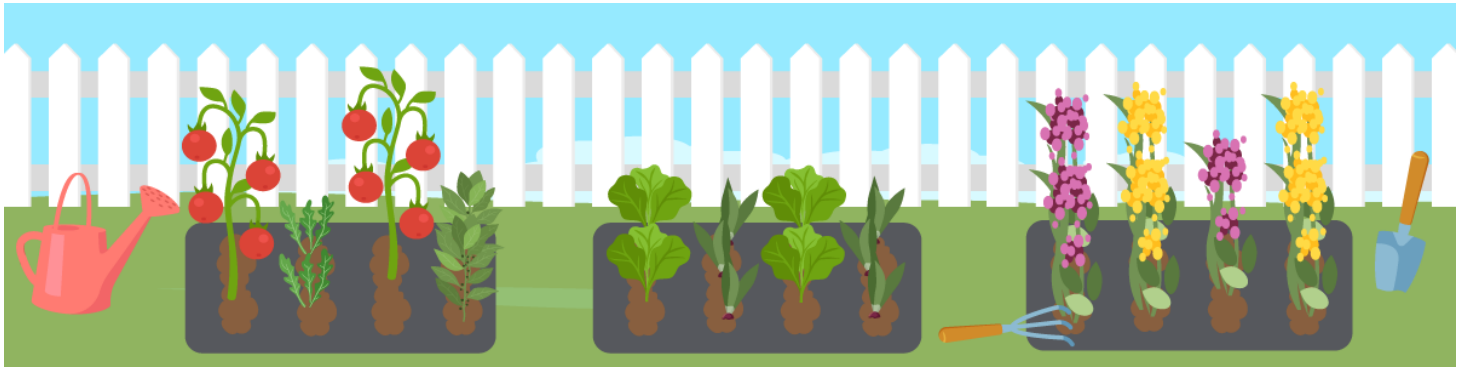


DIY Gardening Projects and Landscaping Ideas

Article found and submitted by Michelle, gardening research student in Knox County, ME

Gardening Basics



As you read through gardening articles and how-tos, you'll come across a lot of new terminology. Below are some common terms and phrases to know when getting into gardening. You will also find a gardening tools list that includes the best gardening tools every gardener should own. Get the whole family involved with a set of kids' gardening tools as well!

Gardening Terminology Every Gardener Should Know

- **Annuals** are plants with a life cycle that lasts for just one growing season before they flower, set seed, and die.
- **Biennials** are plants with a life cycle that lasts for two growing seasons. In the first growing season, they will produce vegetation, while the second growing season is when they flower and set seed before dying.
- **Perennials** are plants that grow back year after year. For some, the above-ground vegetation may die off during the winter, but the roots remain alive and allow it to grow back the following year.

- **Pollination** is when a flower is fertilized by pollen, an essential part of the plant reproduction process.
- **Pollinators** are things that help transfer pollen between plants and flowers, such as bees, butterflies, birds, bats, insects, humans, and the wind.
- **Bolting** is a term used for a plant that has begun to flower and go to seed, causing the taste and texture of the plant to worsen.
- **Companion Planting** is when certain combinations of plants are grown near each other to provide each other with benefits, such as deterring pests, attracting beneficial insects, and providing shade.
- **Aeration** means loosening the soil to improve drainage and air flow.
- **Beneficial Insects** are good for the garden and keep the bad garden bugs away; they include bees, ladybugs, green lacewings, parasitic wasps, and praying mantises.
- **Compost** is nutrient-rich decayed organic matter that is very beneficial for the soil and plants in a garden. It can be made from kitchen scraps, garden waste, leaves, or straw.
- **Crop Rotation** is when the types of crops that are grown in each section of the garden are rotated from one growing season to the next, which helps to improve soil health and lessen the amount of plant disease and pests.
- **Deadheading** is the act of removing dying flowers from plants to encourage more blooms.
- **Direct Sowing** is when seeds are planted directly in the garden soil, rather than being started in a small container and later transplanted to the garden.
- **Germination** is when a seed breaks from dormancy and a new seedling sprouts and begins to grow.
- **Mulch** is a material made from decaying organic matter that is spread around a plant to insulate and enrich the soil.

- **Tilling** is a way of preparing the soil for planting by digging and overturning it.
- **N-P-K** stands for nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, the three macronutrients that are essential for a plant to grow healthy and strong

What to Include in Your Gardening Tool Set

- **Gardening gloves** – protect hands from thorns and keep them clean of sap, dirt, and other debris
- **Pruning shears** – used to cut back unruly plants and cut through thick stems and branches
- **Hand trowel** – gardening hand tool used to transplant plants and easily dig up weeds
- **Spade** – short-handed shovel used to dig holes for plants and move small piles of dirt and as an edging tool for gardens
- **Garden fork** – used to turn soil and dig into denser soil
- **Hoe** – gardening tool used to prepare garden and flower beds and cut back thick weeds
- **Bow rake** – sturdier than a leaf rake and used for light tilling, weeding, leveling soil, and spreading mulch
- **Wheelbarrow** – used to move soil, compost, plants, or other heavy things around the yard
- **Garden hose with an adjustable nozzle** – essential garden tool that can be used to water the entire garden, with the nozzle allowing you to control the water pressure

What Beginner Gardeners Need to Know About Plant Hardiness Zones, Frost Dates, and Sunlight



Plant Hardiness Zones

The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map was created to set a standard for gardeners across the United States that determines where different plants are most likely to survive. This benefits gardeners, as they can easily identify the different types of plants that will thrive in their location during the growing season. The map is divided into 26 plant hardiness zones, based on the average annual minimum winter temperature of that location.

- Find the plant hardiness zone you are located in by searching for your ZIP code on the [USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map](#).

Frost Dates in the Garden

An important piece of information for a gardener to know is the first and last frost dates for their specific location. This determines how long the growing season can extend to before freezing temperatures will begin to damage and kill plants in the garden.

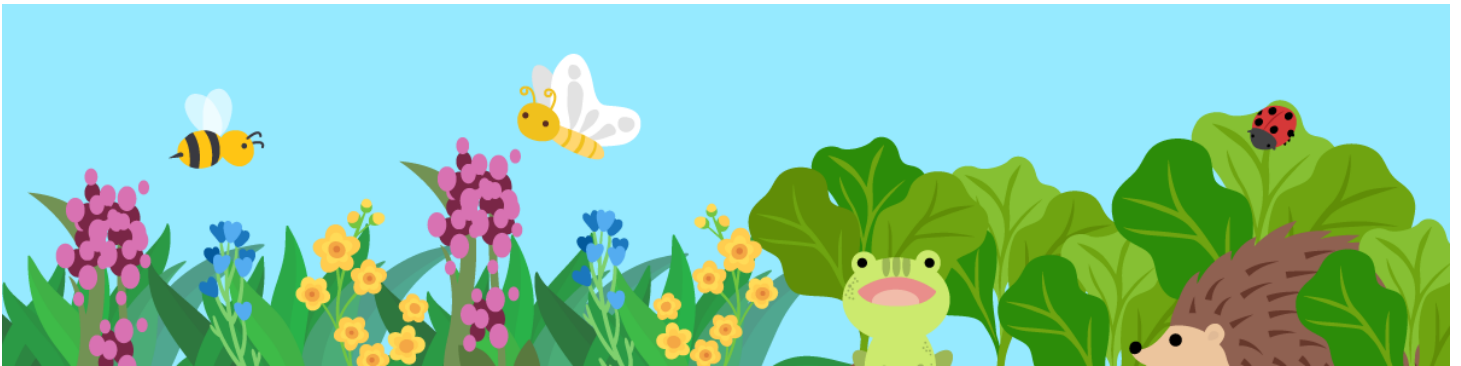
- The **first frost date** is the average first day of frost in the fall.
- The **last frost date** is the average last day of frost in the spring^{**}.^{**}

The Different Types of Sunlight

Plants need sunlight to grow, but did you know that not all plants need the same amount of sunlight? Some plants need sunlight most of the day to thrive, while others' leaves may burn if they sit in the hot sun for too long. The label on a plant or a packet of seeds will indicate how much sunlight it needs, which will tell you where in your yard to plant it:

- **Full sun** is an area that receives direct sunlight for six or more hours every day.
- **Part sun** is an area that receives between four and six hours of direct sun per day.
- **Partial shade** is an area that provides shade for part of the day, protecting plants from the hot afternoon sun.
- **Deep shade** is an area that receives less than two hours of dappled sunlight every day

Pollinator Gardens and Wildlife Habitats



How does wildlife benefit a garden? Some insects and other animals are an integral part of the gardening process, as they provide natural pest control against the bad bugs that destroy plants, while others aid in the pollination process that is critical to a plant's ability to produce viable seeds and fruit. To ensure that your garden will be helped out by these beneficial insects and animals, attract them to your backyard with a pollinator garden and wildlife habitats.

Pollinator Gardens

A pollinator garden is a space dedicated to growing pollinator-friendly plants. They attract beneficial pollinators to the garden but also provides pollinator with a habitat needed to survive.

- [Gardening for Pollinators](#): The USDA shares simple steps a gardener can take to create a more pollinator-friendly landscape around the home.
- [How to Build a Pollinator Garden](#): Use these helpful tips when you're planning and planting a pollinator garden.
- [Pollinator Conservation Resource Center](#): Find in-depth information about managing a pollinator habitat and the best pollinator plants for your specific region of the United States.
- [Animal Pollination](#): The U.S. Forest Service put together a list of important pollinators and the types of flowers they like to visit.

DIY Wildlife Habitats

Gardens also need wildlife to act as natural pest control and play an integral part in keeping the plants in the garden healthy. DIYing wildlife habitats for your backyard is one way to attract the wildlife you want in your garden. Below are some different types of wildlife habitats you can build for the backyard. You'll be amazed at all of the different wildlife that will move into your backyard habitats!

- [Bug Hotel](#): Bring beneficial insects to your garden with a bug hotel that offers plenty of nooks and crannies for insects to hide in among the twigs and dry plant material.
- [Bee Hotel](#): Attract solitary bee species to your garden and offer a spot for them to rest and lay eggs with a bee hotel made from holes drilled into wood or hollow stems.
- [Frog Hotel](#): Frogs are great for pest control, and you can encourage them to visit your garden by offering a safe habitat for them to live using PVC pipes, a bowl, and plants.
- [Toad House](#): For even more pest control, invite another amphibious friend to the garden with a toad house that can easily be made from an old flowerpot or plastic food container. The kids will have fun decorating it!
- [Birdhouse](#): Birds are another friend to gardens, as they eat insects that damage plants and can even lessen the amount of weeds. Make a birdhouse for the garden out of wood, or save money by making one from common household items.
- [Hedgehog House](#): Hedgehogs are another beneficial animal to have around the garden for pest control, and building a house for them offers them a spot in the yard to hide from predators. Hedgehogs like to have a wide range; you can give them access to your yard by making a small hole in your fence.
- [Wildlife Stack](#): Build a wildlife stack using items you may already have, like bricks, plywood, sticks, logs, stones, broken pots, pine cones, and dried leaves. They can be large or small and will attract a variety of wildlife.
- [Small Pond](#): Adding a water source to your yard, like a small pond, is a great way to attract a wide variety of beneficial animals and insects to your garden.

Flower Garden Guide



There's nothing lovelier than a flower garden full of beautiful and colorful blooms. They make the yard look and smell great and offer food for pollinators and other wildlife. You can even save money on expensive flower bouquets by cutting them directly from your flower garden instead! Below are some flower garden resources to get you started on creating the colorful landscape you've always dreamed of.

Resources for How to Grow a Flower Garden

- [How to Start a Flower Garden in Three Steps](#): Garden Design shares detailed guidelines for how to grow a flower garden, from getting to know your garden to choosing the perfect color palette for it.
- [Flower Bed Styles](#): Find the perfect type of flower bed to fit your garden space, from borders to islands to raised beds.
- [Using Color in the Garden](#): This guide makes it easy to find plants by color and includes tips on the best colors to mix together when designing a flower garden.
- [Tips for an Allergy-Friendly Garden](#): Even those who suffer from spring allergies can grow a flower garden with these tips for an allergy-friendly garden. See which flowers, grasses, shrubs, and trees rank low on the Ogren Plant Allergy Scale.

Annuals, Biennials, and Perennial Flowers

Annuals complete their plant life cycle in one growing season, going from seed to flower to seed within this time. The seeds can then be used for the next generation in the following growing season. Popular annual flowers for the garden include:

- Dahlia
- Geranium
- Marigold
- Salvia
- Begonia
- Snapdragon
- Verbena
- Poppy
- Petunia
- Zinnia
- Cosmos

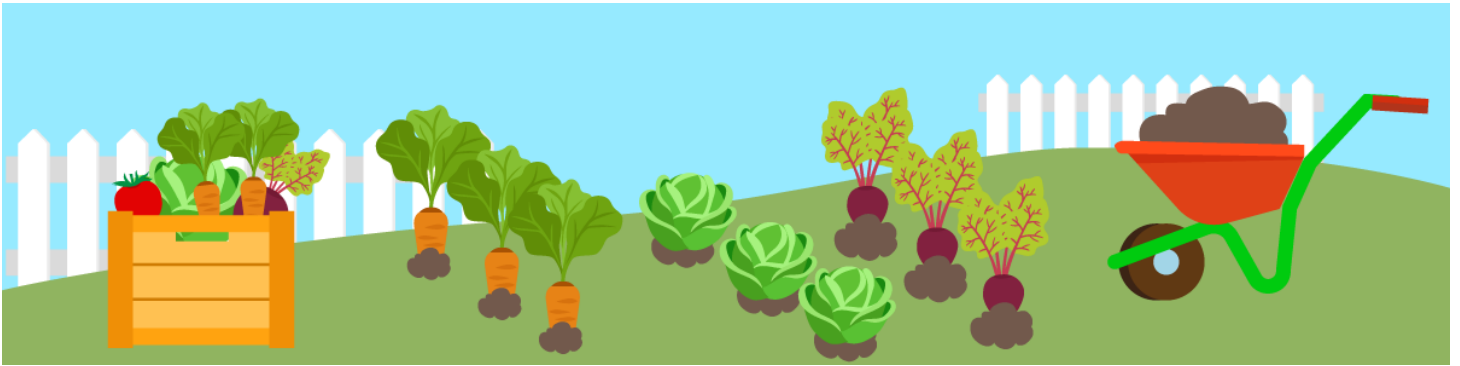
Biennials complete their life cycle over the course of two growing seasons. During the first season, they grow roots, stems, and leaves, and depending on the plant, they can also produce fruit. In the second season, biennials will produce fruit and begin to flower and go to seed before eventually dying. Popular biennial flowers to grow in the garden include:

- Foxglove
- Forget-me-not
- Hollyhock
- Stock
- Dame's rocket
- Canterbury bells
- Sweet William
- Honesty
- Teasel

Perennials live for several years. Part of the plant survives and thrives from one season to the next, although these plants do tend to have a shorter flowering period than annuals or biennials. Popular perennial flowers for the garden include:

- Peony
- Sedum
- Aster
- Daylily
- Tickseed
- Astilbe
- Bearded iris
- Hardy Geranium
- Echinacea
- Yarrow
- Chrysanthemum

Vegetable and Fruit Garden Guide



Growing a fruit and vegetable garden is a great way to save money on the grocery bill: Buying fresh produce can get expensive, especially when you're trying to eat healthy. Learn how to not only grow your favorite vegetables and fruits in your own backyard but also make your vegetable garden thrive throughout the growing season.

Resources for How to Grow a Vegetable Garden

- [Vegetable Gardening for Beginners](#): This beginner's guide to vegetable gardening is a great resource when it comes to anything having to do with gardening or the outdoors.
- [Smart Ways to Garden on a Budget](#): Growing a vegetable garden doesn't have to be an expensive hobby. Growing from seeds, DIYing, and making your own compost are all great ways to save money on gardening.
- [Beginner's Guide to Companion Planting](#): Planting your vegetables next to ones they like can help to limit pests and even get the plants to produce more. Check out the companion planting chart to see which plants like growing together and which ones don't.
- [Ultimate Guide to Vegetable Sunlight](#): All plants don't require the same amount of sunlight; this guide will help you determine an

efficient vegetable garden layout that accounts for the required amount of sunlight for each plant.

- [When to Water Your Vegetable Garden](#): This watering chart shares how much water different vegetables and fruits will need as well as the best time of day to water them.
- [Vegetable Garden Layout Ideas](#): This site includes free garden plans for more than 20 different vegetable garden layouts, including something for any sized garden space. Even the smallest outdoor space can work with a vertical vegetable garden.

Now, on to the most important part of gardening: choosing the garden vegetables and fruit you're going to grow! Read on to see our list of the best vegetables to grow in a garden for a beginner as well as a list of the best fruits to grow in a garden.

The Best Vegetables to Grow in a Vegetable Garden

- Lettuce
- Swiss chard
- Kale
- Tomatoes
- Peppers
- Green beans
- Radishes
- Beets
- Carrots
- Cucumbers
- Summer squash
- Zucchini

The Best Fruits to Grow in a Fruit Garden

- Strawberries
- Raspberries
- Blueberries
- Melons
- Apples
- Peaches
- Cherries
- Grapes
- Figs

DIY Natural Insect and Critter Repellents for the Garden

We're not the only ones who enjoy the fruits and vegetables that grow in the garden; there are plenty of bugs and other wildlife that will try to get into your garden to eat and damage the plants. Here are some easy and budget-friendly methods to create a natural insect repellent and deter unwanted animals:

- **Coffee grounds** sprinkled around plants will repel bugs, small critters, and even cats.
- **Clay cat litter** sprinkled around the soil will prevent damage from slugs and snails and repel moles, voles, and groundhogs.
- **Unwashed hair from your head** scattered and hung throughout the garden is said to repel deer, rabbits, and snails due to its scent.
- **Wind chimes** hung near the garden will make enough noise to scare some animals away.
- **Marigolds** planted around the garden will help to deter bad bugs.
- **Garlic spray** is easy to [DIY](#), and when sprayed around the garden, it will act as a natural insect repellent.

Herb Garden Guide



An herb garden is one of the easiest types of gardens to set up, making it a great option for a budget gardener. Herb gardens can be grown in the smallest of spaces; even a windowsill herb garden can produce fresh herbs all year long. Here are some herb garden ideas to fit any space:

- [Planning and Planting an Herb Garden](#): Growing an herb garden is easy and provides a variety of plants to use for cooking or medicinally.
- [Your Ultimate Guide to Growing Herbs Indoors](#): An indoor herb garden will allow you to save money on fresh herbs all year long without letting any go to waste!
- [How to Plant a Kitchen Herb Garden](#): Grow fresh garden herbs right next to your stove with a kitchen herb garden, or go with a [hanging herb garden](#) to save precious kitchen counter space.
- [DIY Pallet Herb Garden](#): If you're short on outdoor space, an herb pallet garden may be the answer. This DIY vertical garden will only require a spot to lean against an outdoor wall.

Garden Herbs and Their Medicinal Benefits

Herbs are used to flavor food, but they are also used medicinally and are known to offer relief for a range of health ailments:

- **Rosemary** prevents allergies and nasal congestion.
- **Sage** may improve brain function and memory.
- **Peppermint** fights nausea and relieve digestive issues.
- **Lavender** promotes sleep and soothes anxiety.
- **Echinacea** boosts the immune system and promotes wound healing.
- **Hops'** bitter properties can stimulate digestion.

Gardening Projects for the Family



Get the whole family involved in your new gardening venture with fun garden projects that even the kids will enjoy creating. These projects will not only benefit the garden but will teach your family all about the basics of gardening. All of these gardening projects are free or inexpensive and use common items that can be found around the home or yard.

- [Five Cool Garden Projects to Make Composting Fun for Kids](#): The whole family will enjoy these five composting projects that include how to make compost using things around the home, identifying compost bugs, and even instructions for a DIY compost bin to save money.
- [Egg Carton Greenhouses](#): If your family will be starting seeds indoors, this project is a great way to save money on expensive seed starter kits by using empty egg cartons instead.
- [Kids' Sundial Garden](#): Creating a sundial garden is a fun and educational project for the whole family. It's a great way to teach children about time and how to use the sun and their own shadow as an outdoor clock.
- [Practical Kids: Make a Worm Farm](#): This eco-friendly gardening project will introduce children to the many benefits that worms bring to the garden. Buying fertilizer can be expensive, but a worm farm produces its own fertilizer that is very beneficial for the garden.
- [DIY Fairy Garden](#): Kids will love this gardening project, as it allows their imagination and creativity to run wild as they build and create an outdoor fairy garden.
- [Budget-Friendly DIY Butterfly Feeder Craft for Kids](#): This easy craft for kids uses items that can be found around the home and is a great way to attract beneficial butterflies to your garden.
- [14 Fun DIY Garden Markers](#): Get creative with the family and make inexpensive labels for plants with these DIY garden markers, most of which are made from items found around the house.