

## Site Selection Basics



Location: yard, vacant lot, neighbor's/relative's yard, school/hospital/church, community park/garden, farm, county fairgrounds, patios/windowsills/balconies/decks/rooftops

Sunny

Readily available source of water

Drainage: avoid steep slopes and low spots where puddles form. Level is ideal, but not always possible.

Easily accessible to the child and can be admired by others

- Small (a yardstick garden keeps the size easily manageable for most children); pots & containers for apartment or rental living
- Visible: out of sight, out of mind so site the garden where you will remember to tend it and others can admire it
- Clean soil: avoid soil that has been treated with chemicals, pesticides or herbicides. Determine if the soil is contaminated with lead or other heavy metals.

### Small space suggestions

- Interplanting: grow two or more vegetables in one area by planting slow and fast maturing crops among each other. The fast maturing will be harvested before the slow maturing begin to crowd them.
- Succession planting: plant another crop once the other is harvested or finished (spinach then beans or beets)
- Wide row planting: scatter fruit and vegetable seeds over an 8-12 inch band rather than a single row.
- Vertical space planting: use trellises or fences to support pole beans, cucumbers, squash.
- Plant bush varieties.
- Square foot gardening: mark squares of space for crops rather than straight rows in 1x1 foot areas based on space needs.
- Don't hold yourself to a square, but be creative— circles, triangle, zigzag, etc.

### Alternative ideas for spaces

- Re-seed a small area of your lawn if you don't want to have a designated garden.
- Grow pits & seeds from produce purchased at grocery store in your windowsill— avocado pits, pineapple tops, lemon seeds, orange seeds.
- Grow pots of herbs in your windowsills.
- Don't limit yourself to a square— pizza gardens can be round. Assign each child a section or plant different plants in each section.



- Use a tripod to support/train climbing plants like sugar snap peas, beans, nasturtiums to grow live tepee.
- Use recycled plastic containers like well-cleaned milk bottle with tops cut off.
- Add a sundial & plants (sunflowers).
- Plant sunflowers in a circle or square, leaving space for an entry, then tie tops loosely together near the heads and make sunflower houses or hideouts, then cover the floor by planting with clover or thyme.

#### Create a maze

- Tall grass maze
- Stepping stone maze

#### Employ good practices

- Build healthy soil. Healthy soil means plants are able to resist diseases and pests.
- Work with nature. Observe patterns. Do things that help the garden grow like mulch, appropriate water, creating the optimum conditions.
- Put the right plant in the right place. Full sun plants need full sun, partial sun plants need some shade, and shade plants can't tolerate full sun. Also, check soil requirements. Plants that thrive in sandy soil won't do well in clay, etc.
- Encourage biodiversity. Tons of critters help the garden— frogs, bees, butterflies, lizards, even snakes. Provide a place for them and your plants will do much better. You might even leave an area with weeds (gasp!) where critters can live naturally.
- Conserve resources— water wisely.
- Learn as you grow. Keep a journal so you can track what you're learning.
- Be flexible and resilient. Plants are going to die. There will be days without rain. There will be days with too much rain. There will be an unexpected freeze or heat wave. Go with it. Adapt.

