

How to start a Garden

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In this article we will teach you how to begin a basic garden. Even though we have a multitude of great weather and sunshine, there are so many other factors that make Florida a challenging growing climate. We will get into these, but first we will start with how to start a simple garden for the beginner.

First, select a suitable location by on your property. Southeast to South facing is best. Your plot will need 5-8 hours of full sun to be successful, and will benefit from late day shade. To prepare an instant garden get ready for a little work. Start small if you're intimidated. You will need to remove all weeds and grasses and all living roots as much as possible in your plot. We highly recommend a good fence that goes underground to keep out any rabbits, raccoons, armadillos, etc. Galvanized Hardware cloth is your best option around the bottom and then a higher fence attached to posts that comes up at least 3 feet high.

After establishing your plot and removing all the weeds you will need real soil, lots of it. Dump compost or garden soil over existing soil 6-12 inches deep, or as much as you can afford. You can also put down cardboard around the outside of the border to suppress the future weeds, then cover that with heavy mulch for future expansion of the plot. You will need a big bag of peat moss, at least 5-10 bags of garden compost and 50% manure depending on how big the garden is. It is best to have beds that are at least 6-8" high. If you have access to raw manure, even better to mix in. What you want is a good base and then the manure to bring in the micro organisms where the life really happens.

Next you will need a good fertilizer to feed your plants. We love Fertrell products sold at MRT, Super plus is the best formula they carry, it has all the nutrients needed for healthy plant growth except phosphorous, which can be applied with bonemeal. When you grow a healthy plant it can ward off diseases and pests more easily than if it was fed synthetic fertilizers which cause weakness and is more susceptible to disease and pests, hmmm very same to us.

After acquiring all these goodies it's time to get down to the dirty work, and fun, dump all your bags out in your plot, try to spread around the peat moss evenly. Make life easier for your self and buy the most wonderful garden tool your could ever have, A POTATO FORK. It has 4 long tines to get under roots and lifts them out of the ground easily. Mix everything around, add in the fertilizer 1.5 LB per 100 sq feet of garden space. You are almost ready for planting. Time to establish rows for planting and rows to walk in. A basic 2' wide row 6-8 feet long is what we have with a small 1 foot walking space in between. Mulch the pathways so weeds won't grow. Carve out all the pathways and rake the soil into 2' wide garden beds, 6-8' long. Mound your soil up at least 8" this so plants have plenty of ground to grow in. When you are ready to plant make little volcanoes to plant in, this allows the water to seep into your plant without running off the bed, very important. Also in every hole put a pinch of bone meal, this will strengthen your plant even more. If you are starting with seeds make little furrows and follow the planting guide on the package of seeds for planting depth.

Last, you will need to consider what grows this time of year. We are quickly approaching the summer months so right now it may be getting too hot for most traditional vegetables. There are plenty of edibles that will survive the summer heat. Included are sweet potatoes, black eye peas, cow peas, pigeon peas, chayote, peanuts, Arugula (in part shade), seminole pumpkin, longevity spinach, cuban oregano, chaya, & cassava. Check out our farm page on facebook for

more vegetables to start and when. Think in terms of this being a garden that will be the most abundant in the fall when the real garden season begins and you can enjoy 2 summer plantings starting in October-December, a winter crop in the middle of winter December- February, and another summer planting From February on until late April if it doesn't get too hot.

Master list of what you will need : Potato fork (for digging up roots) , or large fork can work too, regular hard metal rake , soft leaf rake for making a perfect bed, fence material , hardware cloth, and posts, Large bag of peat moss, compost/garden soil, manure, Fertrell - Super K fertilizer , & separate bag of bone meal. Happy gardening.