

Many options available for small garden spaces

As backyards shrink and garden space becomes more limited, finding room to grow vegetables becomes even more challenging. This means gardeners must get creative as they look for ways to fit fruits and vegetables into the landscape. It is time to break away from the traditional rows of vegetables and experiment with new ways to grow food. Even if your entire garden is a window box, you can still grow many nutritious edibles.

Many gardeners have little more than a patio or balcony on which to garden. In small spaces, containers provide the perfect location for growing a wide range of vegetables, such as tomatoes, peppers, lettuce and herbs. Container production has several advantages, including good drainage, custom-mixed soils and efficient fertilizer. Containers can be used anywhere in the landscape to provide additional planting space. Vegetable containers can be beautiful; imagine a window box lined with chard and overflowing with cherry tomatoes and petunias.

When we think of garden space, we tend to think in only two dimensions – length and width. But gardens have vertical space that we can take advantage of when growing fruits and vegetables. Vertical space is exploited through the use of trellises and hanging baskets. We don't commonly think of growing fruits or vegetables in hanging baskets, but grape or cherry tomatoes, runner beans and even strawberries are well suited to this type of container. When paired with a colorful herb or flowering annual, they make a striking accent.

Plants grown on trellises can be planted closer together. Leave plenty of open soil to plant other, low-growing vegetables, herbs or flowers. They also receive better air circulation and have increased access to light as compared to plants on the ground. Many crops experience fewer disease problems when grown vertically, as the foliage dries faster and the leaves are less exposed to soil-borne pathogens. Trellises come in many shapes and sizes, and can include structures such as arbors and pergolas. Be sure to use a trellis system that will support the weight of the mature vegetable crop.

You can still have a garden even when your outdoor space is limited. Containers, trellises, and even small, raised-bed gardens are great alternatives to the traditional row garden. Raised-beds are space saving because the area typically devoted to paths is reduced. The raised-bed garden can be less work because the beds are never walked on and the soil doesn't become compacted, so tillage isn't necessary. In addition, erosion is reduced, therefore helping maintain soil structure. Please feel free to stop by or contact me if I can be of assistance.

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