Intensive gardening makes the most of garden space

Gardeners who want to harvest the most produce as possible from a given amount of space can practice what is called intensive gardening. An intensive garden reduces wasted space to a minimum with a major goal to grow something in every part of the garden throughout the season.

Back in the 1940s, the typical family garden was spread over a large area, with 3-foot-wide paths between narrow ribbons of vegetables. The paths needed constant weeding, fertilizer was used abundantly and a large crop was ready for harvest all at once.

Gardening is different today. Home landscapes are often much smaller with little space for gardening. As a result, gardens have gotten much smaller. However, that small space can still be quite productive.

There are several intensive gardening techniques, including container gardening, vertical gardening, square-foot gardening and raised beds. Container gardening simply means produce grown in a container filled with soilless potting mix. This is a great option for apartments, decks and patio gardens.

Make use of non-typical gardening space with vertical gardening. This method involves plants grown in the soil or in containers and are staked or trained on a trellis, pole, net or cage to grow upward. Plants also can be grown in hanging baskets.

As the name implies, square-foot gardening involves plants grown in 1-foot squares. The idea is to maximize production from available space, give vegetables the right amount of space, as well as minimize weed pressure.

Raised bed gardening allows the gardener to concentrate soil preparation efforts in small areas, which can make soil amendments more effective. Also, there is no soil compaction from walking between the rows because gardeners work the area from either side of the bed.

One reason for intensive gardening is it concentrates the work efforts to create an ideal plant environment, which in turn provides better yields with less labor and an efficient use of all resources.

Thorough planning is a must in order for intensive gardening to be as effective as possible. Choose crops based on your preferences, as well as the amount of each crop needed. Gardeners also can stagger plantings, so everything doesn’t become ripe at the same time.
Succession planting is an excellent way to make the most of an intensive garden. To obtain a succession of crops, plant something new in the spots vacated by spent plants. An example of succession planting would be planting corn after peas. Another example of succession planting is a spring, summer and fall garden. Cool-season crops are followed by warm-season crops, which are followed by more cool-season crops or a winter cover crop.

Don’t worry if a large plot of land isn’t available for your garden. Using these intensive gardening techniques will help gardeners make the most of the space they have.

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