

PLANT

Start Your Garden Today

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Now that your garden beds are ready and the sun is warm, it's time to take another hard look at your garden plans and start positioning your plants. Ensure that adequate space is provided for each plant. Some plants, like vining crops such as watermelon will require large amounts of space to roam, while other plants will require stakes to climb up. There are online garden planners that can help you plan your garden and make the most use of the space you have.

THE SPACE IN YOUR GARDEN IS KEY TO HEALTHY GROWING PLANTS

One garden method, in particular, that utilizes all garden space is the Square Foot Gardening Method. Many first-time gardeners have had great experience using the Square Foot Garden Method and it's easy to do!

For those who are limited on space, consider planting a patio garden to grow additional plants in. Urban and suburbanites can garden in their small spaces using vertical gardening and small space gardening techniques such as grow bags, vertical garden systems and containers. Some of the most popular are:

- Vertical gardening systems
- Window boxes
- Grow bags
- Containers
- Garden boxes
- Pallets
- Hanging planters

PLANTS PREFER LOTS OF DRAINAGE

Ensure that your pots and containers have adequate drainage holes at the bottom. Plants do not like to sit in soggy soil and will quickly develop root rot, as a result. Plant shallow-rooted plants such as small herbs, green leafy vegetables, strawberries, and green onions which can be grown close to one another and will help plant roots stay shaded from the hot sun. This is a principle of [xeriscaping](#) and will also help to cut down on watering.

To keep plants healthy, water only when soil feels dry. The best way to determine when to water is to insert your index finger 2-3 inches into the soil. If the soil feels dry, it needs water. If it is still moist, then it can go another day until it needs to be watered.

ALL-PURPOSE SOIL RECIPE

Quality soil is critical for growing container plants. Because the plants will not be getting essential nutrients from the ground, you need to ensure that the soil you use is suitable for containers. Perlite, vermiculite, calcined clay (kitty litter), and sand are the mineral aggregates most commonly used in potting soils, and adding these would be beneficial to the success of your garden. The following is a mix that can support container plants for a year or two without additional fertilization.

Mix 2 gallons each of:

- peat moss
- perlite
- compost
- garden soil

1/2-cup each of:

- dolomitic limestone
- greensand
- rock phosphate
- kelp powder

Place a 1/2-inch mesh screen over your garden cart and sift the peat moss, compost, and garden soil to remove any large particles. Then add the remaining ingredients and turn the materials over repeatedly with a shovel, adding water if the mix seems dry.

BEST PLANT TYPES FOR CONTAINER GARDENING

Growing compact plants with smaller root systems is another way to garden in small spaces. Many herbs such as oregano, rosemary, thyme, lavender and sage will continue growing in most parts of the country and do not need to be replaced each season, thus making them wonderful additions to a year round patio garden.

Make a concerted effort to purchase heirloom quality seeds. These types of seeds are bred for their flavor and not their durability for shipping and mass distribution. Additionally, these seed types will produce fertile seeds that can be saved for subsequent growing seasons, which many sustainable-minded folks prefer. The following is a list of plants that grow well in containers:

- Bush-type tomatoes – may require staking
- Peppers
- Greens such as lettuce, spinach, mustard greens, kale
- Cabbage
- Cucumbers – requires a trellis
- Green beans
- Broccoli
- Carrots
- Turnips
- Onions
- Garlic
- Radishes
- Potatoes
- Most herbs

As well, consider adding some colorful flowers such as petunias, marigolds, or roses to attract beneficial insects to help pollinate your patio garden.

HOW TO PLANT LIKE A PRO!

Because young plants are still developing their root structures, special care should be taken during planting time.

1. One easy way to keep new plant happy is to water the garden bed beforehand. This will soften the soil and provide immediate water to transplanting plants. As well, give the plants that you are about to plant a weakened solution of sugar water. In many cases, this helps to give the plant more “strength” in preventing transplant shock. If no sugar water is available, regular water will do.
2. Mix compost or a small amount of fertilizer in with soil. This will help prevent shock and give plants some added nutrients to begin growing.
3. Dig out a hole in the destination pot with the approximate same dimensions as the size of the pot from which the plant will be transplanted. If you are planting vines like tomatoes, plant them deep only leaving the top three leaves exposed. Adding phosphorus or bone meal to the planting holes is a great way to help reduce transplant shock, and help the seedlings to develop stronger roots.
4. Remove the plant from its original pot by grabbing the base of the plant with a flat hand, make sure to cover as much of the topsoil as possible. Flip the pot upside down and carefully pull the plant out with the soil. Don't move too quickly or else

you may damage the roots in the process. Do not shake the dirt off, bump the root ball or rough up the roots during the planting process. Cover with soil.

5. Water plants after transplanting.

AVOIDING TRANSPLANT SHOCK

Transplant shock in plants is not avoidable. Plants were not meant to be uprooted and moved from one location to the other. Doing so disturbs their growth. That said, there are some ways to minimize the effects. Leaf curl is one of the first signs to appear from transplant shock. Typically, a yellowing or bronzing of leaf tissue, leaf rolling or curling immediately occurs from shock. If your plant is exhibiting any of those symptoms, then special care should be made for the plant.

CARING FOR SHOCKED PLANTS

While there is no sure-fire way to cure plant transplant shock, there are things you can do to minimize the transplant shock in plants.

1. Add some phosphorus or bone meal. This organic material helps with root development and will give the plant what it needs to recover.
2. Add some sugar – A diluted sugar and water solution given to a plant after transplanting can help recovery time for transplant shock in plants.
3. Keep the new pot in a place with low levels of light for a few days. It will take a day or 2 for the plant to adjust to its new soil environment, and only then should you bring it back into a full-light environment.
4. Keep roots moist – Keep the soil well-watered, but make sure that the plant has good drainage and is not in standing water.
5. Patience – Sometimes all a plant needs is a few days to recover from transplant shock. Give it some time and care for it as you normally would and it may come back on its own.