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Plant a Garden

Why we care

Conventional food production is efficient in meeting our nation's short-term need for food but is heavily dependent on fossil fuels, much of them for synthetic fertilizers. These fertilizers produce excess nitrogen which, along with pesticides, contaminates water supplies. Industrial agriculture also causes large-scale erosion and depletes the soil of nutrients.

Homegrown, organic vegetables, on the other hand, are tastier and have more nutrients than some store-bought vegetables that must be picked early. They don't require synthetic fertilizers, long-distance shipping, or packages to preserve freshness. They save you money, increase self-sufficiency, and bring you joy.

Simple, practical steps

For new gardeners:

1. Review Growing Your Own prepared by the OSU Extension Service.
2. Choose a garden spot that receives at least six hours of sun per day.
3. Make sure soil is dry enough to work.
4. Add up to three inches of high-quality organic compost and till six inches deep. Add compost on top in successive years.
5. Check planting guides for your location or talk to experienced gardeners to determine what to plant.
6. Start small, perhaps just tomatoes and sugar snap peas the first year.
7. Check the soil temperature with a probe thermometer to determine when the soil is warm enough.
8. Plant organic seeds or seedlings according to directions.
9. Keep soil moist with a soft spray. After plants come up, water deeper and less frequently using a soaker hose.

Whether you are a new or experienced gardener, your county Master Gardeners are a great resource when you have questions.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@ecoschoolnetwork.org.