

Gardening is once again in vogue! Gardening for health, for purposes of saving money, for family togetherness, for relaxation and recreation — whatever the reasons, the idea is definitely returning in popularity.

And almost everyone can do some gardening, even in the concrete jungle of a sprawling city. Even germinating seeds in a jar for sprouts or using a window box for growing a few salad greens is a beginning.

The most obvious benefit of a garden is the nutritious food it can produce. But a garden can also provide inspiration, purpose and satisfaction, in addition to the benefits mentioned above.

According to a report from the U.S. National Commission of Food Marketing, most Americans spend about one sixth of their food budgets to purchase fruits and vegetables. Many willingly pay premium prices to get home-grown vegetables whenever they are available.

Why? Flavor!

No more do local truck farmers provide most of the food for major cities. Fruits and vegetables must often be shipped thousands of miles to market. This produces a gain in variety for the consumer, but a loss in flavor.

A loss in flavor indicates a loss in nutrients. Freshness is essential for the retention of

Garden Time!

Nearly everyone can enjoy the benefits gardening provides in today's frustrating economic and social conditions. Here's how, when and where to begin.

By Dale L. Schurter

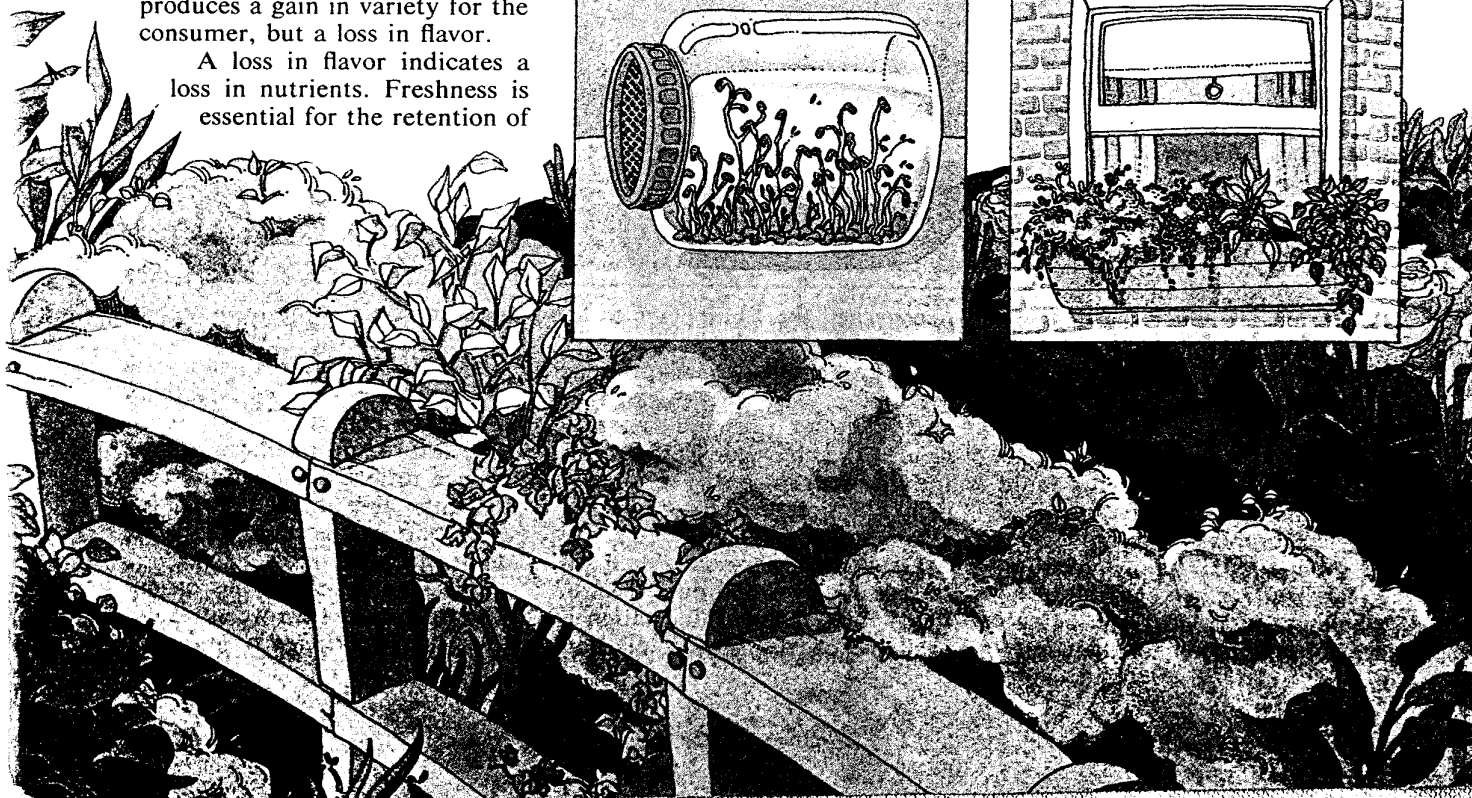
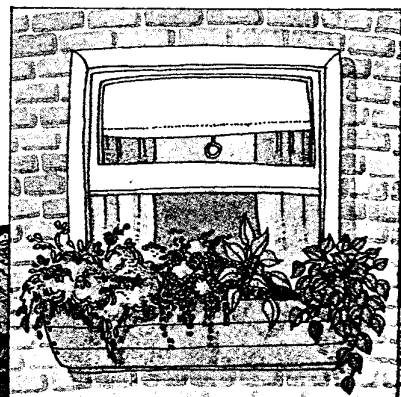
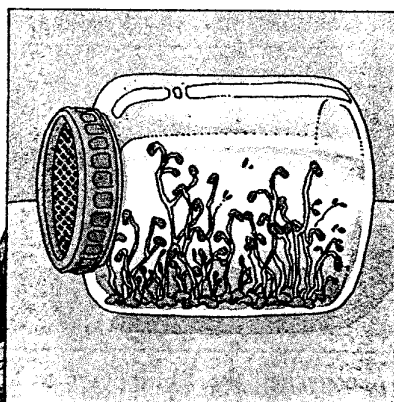
some vitamins. An ideal source of supply, to promote food flavor and quality, is your own garden.

Gardening in the Bible

God Himself prepared the first garden: "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and

there He put the man whom He had formed" (Genesis 2:8). God intended for society to be largely oriented toward agriculture.

Vineyards, herb gardens, nut gardens and cucumber gardens are all mentioned in Scripture. The term *vegetable garden*, how-



ever, does not appear in the Authorized Version because the word *vegetable* came into existence only about 200 years ago. Before that all of our everyday vegetables were known as herbs, even beets and carrots.

Hebrews 6:7 tells us: "For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God."

The importance of gardening began to receive new emphasis, even internationally, several years ago. In the United States, for instance, a Senate resolution entered into *The Congressional Record* April 6, 1972, concluded:

"Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives concurring), that each American family is urged where practicable, to plant a vegetable garden for the purpose of fighting inflation, saving money, getting exercise and having the fun and pleasure of family vegetable growing."

Watching the "birth" and growth of a single plant can be satisfying and rewarding. Even a small child will beam with excitement when the first sprout begins to show from where a chubby little finger punched a few holes and dropped in the seeds.

Garden planning, planting and care can be an enjoyable, rewarding family project. Here are some valuable tips to promote successful gardening.

Planning your garden

Success with a garden comes from proper planning, timing and management and following the laws that regulate soil fertility and quality plant growth (Leviticus 26:3-5).

Some will be able to grow a few vegetables right in their flower beds. Simply alternate rows — one row of flowers, one row of vegetables and so on.

Some vegetables, such as cherry tomatoes and artichokes, can be used as decorative plants and be planted beside the house or along the yard fence — almost anywhere. An area of only 6 feet square can produce many salad vegetables all summer.

Where garden space and storage facilities permit, you can plant enough vegetables for daily use and extra for canning and freezing.

An area open toward the morning sun, without shade from buildings or trees, is especially desirable in cool and cold climates. The soil will warm sooner and enable planting two to three weeks earlier, which will encourage faster growth.

If it is possible, it is best to

Illustration by Marie Frazee



plan your rows so that they run north and south. This way each plant will be better able to utilize sunlight.

Also, your garden should not be close to trees. Tree roots reach out many feet in all directions and will rob your growing plants of needed moisture and soil nutrients. However, in areas with hot climates, a tree row or building not too far away can provide welcome shade from the hot midafternoon sun.

Planting and harvest times vary in different parts of the world. In many areas, especially where temperatures seldom drop below freezing, a year-round garden is possible. Northerly areas and high-altitude or mountainous regions usually are colder and have later and shorter growing seasons. Cold frames, hot beds and greenhouses can extend home gardening to year-round production in most climates.

In the United States, the Department of Agriculture Home and Garden Bulletin No. 9, entitled *Suburban and Farm Vegetable Gardens*, gives guidelines as to which vegetables can withstand a light freeze and gives general freezing dates. It is available from the Department of Government Documents, Washington, D.C.

Readers in other countries can obtain similar information from the relevant governmental offices. Your library also provides helpful free information.

A general guide for determining when the last spring frosts occur is to notice when wild flowers are in full bloom in your area. Although killing frost dates vary from year to year and from place to place, wild flowers seldom blossom too early or too late.

Now, how can you "dig in" for a good beginning with your very own garden?

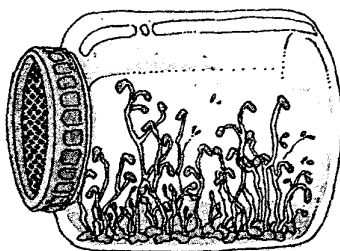
Soil preparation and fertilization

After selecting the best location, you can prepare your plot for planting. Determining the soil's state of fertility can be useful. This can be accomplished through making a good soil analy-

sis, which should include testing for the pH balance, organic matter percentage, ammonium nitrogen, nitrate nitrogen, phosphate, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, sodium and cation exchange capacity or base saturation.

Perhaps at first thought the idea of having a soil analysis done sounds way out or difficult, but such helpful information is routinely provided by good agricultural laboratories.

A representative sample of soil from your selected garden site is important in securing an accurate



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soil fertility report. You can take individual samples with a spade, sampling tube (probe) or auger. The sample should be uniform in profile, representing the soil from the surface to around 7 inches deep, to include the major feeder root zone.

Collect several individual samples from random spots throughout your plot and mix them thoroughly in a clean plastic pail to make a composite sample. Then take about one and one-half cups from the composite sample for testing. Package the test sample, label it "vegetable garden" and send it to the testing laboratory. Test results and recommended amounts of each element needed will be provided to you for a small fee.

The addition of organic matter (manures, grass clippings and compost, for example) will help improve soil structure, fertility and productivity. A healthy, fertile soil is a living soil. The organic matter provides food and environment for propagation of microorganisms, earthworms and other soil life. For best results, apply it evenly and well in advance (several weeks, if possible) of planting, and mix it into the topsoil.

The topsoil is usually the richest part of soil and in some cases may be quite shallow. You should strive to loosen, mix and aerate the soil. A spade, hoe, rake or garden harrow is fine for preparing the seedbed. Remember, the object is to loosen and mix, but not invert, the soil.

Seeds and planting

An important concern is your choice of seed. The old name varieties for some gardens usually produce the best flavor and nutritional quality.

Most major seed-company catalogs advertise both hybrid and open-pollinated varieties. You can specify a preference of open-pollinated varieties when placing an order, especially if you desire to save seed for the next season. Seed saved from hybrid plants often will not properly reproduce its own kind.

Local gardeners or garden stores near you can often provide good seed. Ask around and find out which vegetables and fruit and nut trees (and which varieties) grow best, produce best, store best and taste best in your particular area.

You may plant your garden in any artistic pattern that suits your taste. However, if you desire nice, straight rows, stretch a strong cord or rope taut along the ground. The corner of a hoe or a pointed stake will make a suitable furrow for most seeds.

A garden can and should be beautiful as well as useful. A variety of flowers can be planted for borders and interspersed in rows throughout the garden to add color and beauty. Flowers such as

marigolds and chrysanthemums also have helpful insect-repellent characteristics.

A good rule of thumb is to cover each kind of seed with an amount of soil equal to three times the diameter of the seed (or just check the directions on the seed packet). The number of days each requires to reach maturity is usually printed on the back of the seed package. When one crop comes off you can follow it with another throughout the season. This method of planting produces a continual vegetable harvest.

Wide-row planting is used by many, especially when space is limited. This method is viewed as more efficient and helps reduce weed populations because the soil will "shade over" sooner. Wide-row planting saves space and mulching, usually reduces insect damage, improves quality and keeps plants and produce cleaner. However, any width row is OK. You should use whatever works best for you.

Some garden vegetables such as Swiss chard and beets may intercross. Also, certain species of pumpkins and squashes will intercross. Species that will cross should not be planted near one another (Leviticus 19:19). Commercial growers separate them by at least one fourth of a mile.

Muskmelons (cantaloupes), watermelons and cucumbers will not mix or mingle with each other when planted in the same area. They can be planted next to almost any vegetable. However, two different varieties of watermelons, for example, will cross when planted in the same garden, forming hybrid seed. The same applies to cucumbers and cantaloupes. Such plantings are not recommended, since seed from each plant should be pure.

God ordained that every form of life would produce after its kind (Genesis 1:12). The fact that every plant reproduces itself is one of the many irrefutable proofs of God's existence!

Cultivation, pest control and watering

Be sure to cultivate your gar-

den properly. Hoeing or cultivating too deeply, too often or too close to the plants causes unnecessary loss of moisture and can destroy plant roots.

After plants are well established, it is generally wise to mulch your garden. Mulching means spreading a 2-to-4-inch layer of grass clippings, straw or hay between the rows (and around the plants, if they are spaced far apart).

Mulching helps control weeds, save labor and conserve moisture. A mulch also encourages earthworm activity, helping to create good, strong soil for future crop excellence.

We do not recommend toxic hydrocarbon-base insecticides for insect control, nor herbicides for weed control for home gardens. Sabadilla dust, powdered sulfur, pyrethrum, rotenone, water-diluted garlic and onion spray, for example, are good for controlling garden insects. Good fertilization, wide-row planting, cultivating, mulching and hand weeding can handle the weeds.

If you have properly selected seed and have fertile soil, your plants should be, for the most part, insect and disease resistant. In a garden that is properly fertilized, beneficial insects such as lady bugs, praying mantises, lacewing flies and orange-and-black-spotted beetles will also help take care of the destructive insects.

Pest insects seem to have been created for the purpose of destroying weak, sickly and diseased plants. What we may consider "bad" insects often are only doing their duty by eliminating unhealthy plants not nutritionally fit for human consumption. They were created to protect our health.

Proper watering is another important consideration in caring for your garden. Too much moisture can contribute to unwanted fungus growth. Also, excessive watering may restrict root growth to the upper portion of the soil, thus reducing availability of subsoil nutrients and moisture to the plant. The result of a larger root system is better production.

A lack of moisture is often indicated when plants begin to show a dark bluish-green color, yellowing, beginning signs of wilting or burning. When watering is needed, a good, gentle soaking once a week is better than wetting the ground daily.

Soon — the harvest!

To obtain the highest nutritional value, vegetables should be harvested when they are ripe. Home-grown vegetables served at the table mere minutes after being picked from your own garden are indeed delicious. Raw vegetables are especially good for you.

Clean, refrigerate, can, freeze, dry or otherwise preserve items as soon as possible after harvesting to prevent loss of valuable nutrients. Crops such as kidney beans, great northern and navy beans must be fully mature when harvested. This also applies to pumpkins and some types of squash.

At the end of your gardening season, if winter food crops will not be grown, you can increase soil fertility by applying manure or mulch to the garden area.

The Bible tells us that in the world tomorrow everyone will be able to have his own plot of land to provide fresh foods for himself and his family: "Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord of hosts has spoken" (Micah 4:4).

For more information about what that tremendous time, now soon to begin, will be like, request our free booklet *The Wonderful World Tomorrow — What It Will Be Like*. Also request our free booklet *Principles of Healthful Living*, which offers invaluable information on maintaining good health through proper diet, exercise, stress reduction and other areas.

Whether in a window box or a flower bed, a 6-foot-by-6-foot plot or an acre, why not find out what an inspiring, enjoyable, educational and rewarding experience gardening can be for you and your whole family? □