

Five Steps to Starting a Garden

1. Choose a location that gets at least 6 hours of sun per day and has good drainage, meaning the water doesn't stay on top of the soil. Determine the size of your garden, considering what you want to grow, how much space is available, and how much time you want to spend. A border constructed with landscape timbers, metal edging, or railroad ties is helpful in preventing weed growth into the garden. The border should be installed after cultivation.
2. Till soil to a depth of 6-12," adding compost, to loosen and uproot any weeds or grass, and aerate the soil. Cultivation can be done by hand with a hoe or shovel. Or mechanically with a tiller. Remove and dispose of any loose weeds with a rake and/or by hand.
3. Plant allowing enough space for each plant to grow and flourish using the guidelines on the tag or package, considering its growth habit and mature size. Plants with the tallest mature height should be planted at the north end of the garden to prevent shading of smaller growing plants.
4. Mulch to inhibit weed growth and conserve water. Lay mulch 2" thick leaving 2-4" of space around each plant stem. Mulch can also be used for your garden walkways and is good for absorbing excess water. Any weeds that remain, and/or continue to grow should be pulled or cultivated and disposed of on a weekly basis.
5. Water when the soil becomes dry. Some plants require more water than others, but beneficial root growth occurs when roots have to search or "reach" for water. Check soil daily and water when dry. To prevent potential problems, watering in the morning is best. During the hottest part of the summer, daily watering may be necessary.

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