

# THE WISCONSIN VEGETABLE GARDENER

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QUARTERLY DIGITAL MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2016

MANY USES FOR  
ZUCCHINI

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GROWING  
IN SMALL  
SPACES

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HOT WEATHER  
PLANTS

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BECOMING  
SELF  
SUFFICIENT

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WATER  
CONSERVATION

Interview:  
**Joel Karsten**  
Author of Straw Bale Gardens



## about us

Joey & Holly Baird are the founders of The Wisconsin Vegetable Gardener.

They are a married couple living in southeastern Wisconsin (just outside of Milwaukee). Joey & Holly make videos on youtube about how to grow your own food organically, reusing found items (or items you may just throw away), what to do with the food you grow, home canning and simple home living. Along with traditional ground gardening they also grow indoors year-round using up and coming methods along with winter growing in cold frames and low tunnels.

Their goal through their; videos, podcast, public lectures and online communities is to educate the average person how easy it is to grow food, store food, and reuse everyday items. Their motto is ;

*“For The Health Conscious Organic Gardener Worldwide”*

Joey and Holly enjoy speaking at garden expo's throughout the midwest. Holly is also an award winning home canner with a handful of ribbons from the Wisconsin State Fair including a Best of Show award for her home canning talents.

If you find this interesting and have any questions or would like to talk further we can be emailed at [thewiveggardener@gmail.com](mailto:thewiveggardener@gmail.com)

[TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com](http://TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com)



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Joey Baird-Host, Cofounder

Holly Baird-Marketing Director, Cofounder

Norman Gaulin- Art Director



"A child's imagination and  
the hope of whats to come."



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# Small Spaces

By Holly Baird

When most people think about the word “garden” they envision a large space in a backyard full of flowering plants, veggies and all sorts of green life, but in the 21st century that’s not always the case. Large production of vegetables can be grown in small areas if the techniques are done correctly. I will touch on a few of the techniques and some unique ways you can grow even if you have ground to grow in.

Container gardens make a nice addition to any porch, patio, deck or even if you don’t want to commit to digging up your own yard. It is best to get a good container mix; we recommend Hsu organic rice hull potting soil which has a slow release fertilizer. When growing in any space you want to make sure you have adequate sunlight for the plants you want to grow and keeping the soil moist but not wet. The containers don’t have to be fancy, just ensure they are at least 8 inches deep and have some type of holes for drainage.

A simple raised bed can be put together by using 2 inches x 8 inches lumber to make a 4x4 foot bed. This gives you 16 square feet. You can plant in rows or grid it off according to the square foot garden method. This method allows you plant in 1 square foot many vegetables. For example, in 1 square foot you can fit 16 radishes, 9 bush beans or 1 tomato plant. In 16 square feet you can fit in quite a few plants, and this allows for a great harvest.



*Bonus:* Visit our website for an indepth look into Strawbale Gardens  
[TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com](http://TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com)



the local university extension for a small fee. This is especially important if you feel you may have toxic soil. When you are ready turn the soil over with a garden shovel or a rototiller and begin to plant. You may want to fence the area off if there are a lot of rabbits in the area. In this case, the square foot method would be ideal for planting.

### *Further Resources*

The University of Wisconsin Madison offers soil testing for a standard fee.  
715-387-2523  
[soil-lab@mailplus.wisc.edu](mailto:soil-lab@mailplus.wisc.edu)  
<https://uwlabs.soils.wisc.edu>

Before digging on your property call Diggers Hotline at 811.  
[www.diggershotline.com](http://www.diggershotline.com)

For even more information visit  
[TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com](http://TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com)  
Podcasts ,Video Series, Recipes and more.

You can also grow in a straw bale. There is a conditioning period you must follow. We learned this method from Joel Karsten, the author of the *Straw Bale Gardening Method*. Anything you want to grow in the ground you can grow in a straw bale. This is almost like a container concept as you can put these anywhere that gets proper sunlight. You can also use the bales for 2 to 3 years and you don't have to buy compost. However, you do have to purchase fertilizer to condition the beds.

Another option is turning over the soil in a small space in your yard. When choosing to do this you want to call diggers hotline 72 business hours before you choose to dig. They will ensure it is safe and it is a free service. A soil test is a good idea especially if you are unfamiliar with your soil. You can send your soil into the local university extension for a small fee. This is especially important if you feel you may have toxic soil. When you are

# Conserving Water in Your Garden



Rain Barrel



Water is a precious resource, especially clean water. While *70% of the earth is covered in water, only 2.5% of that water is fresh and clean. 66% of the USA is subject to drought at any time.* Water is vital to us and it is also vital to our plants. Water conservation is important, and you can start right in your garden.

One simple and often used solution for your garden in regards to water is rainwater collection. The most known way to collect rainwater is with a rain barrel. Some municipalities will have these for sale in the spring. You can also find them at your local organic food store, or you can even type in rain barrel and your zip code in your favorite search engine and you can typically find rain barrels locally that way. There are different ways you can make your own. If you are to do so, be sure whatever container you are using, that it is food grade. Anything that had toxins or chemicals stored in it, even if rinsed out, can cause harmful things to leach into your harvested rainwater and then into your garden -that is a risk I would suggest not taking. Rain barrels are easy to install also, and you

can even paint them to add some color and whimsy to your yard. You can even connect rain barrels together, so you can have large amounts of water stored at one time. One thing to be aware of, in some municipalities collecting rainwater is illegal, or there are laws about how you are collecting rainwater. It is best to investigate these laws in your local area before investing your time and money in rainwater collection.

Another way to conserve water in your garden is through drip irrigation. The concept can be used in regular ground gardens, raised beds and even containers. Drip irrigation is a system to where you can target water to the exact point in your garden. The water goes right to root of the plants. Drip irrigation reduces water as you're not overwatering everywhere else in your garden. This is a little bit of an investment, but to start off you can buy a little each year and slowly add to your drip irrigation system.





used separately, but together is the most effective. Mulch can be left in the garden at the end of the season, as it will break down and add nutrients to your soil over winter.

Mulch alone, or with drip irrigation is an incredible asset to a gardener. There are a variety of mulches you can use. Including free resources you already have on your property. When using mulch, it is best to use organic or non-synthetic material. Mulch you may have includes leaves, shredded paper and even dried grass clippings. Mulch can also help plants grow by keeping the soil and roots cool, and also preventing diseases from splashing onto the plants. You do not have to use drip irrigation and mulch together, they can be



Grass Clippings as mulch



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*Interview*  
Joel Karsten



photo courtesy

**Joel Kartsen**, a farm boy who grew up tending a soil garden like other gardeners have for centuries, shook up the gardening world with his first book describing his breakthrough Straw Bale Gardening concept. The New York Times called Straw Bale Gardening “a revolutionary gardening method” and his ideas have been enthusiastically embraced globally, making his books best-sellers in many languages. Karsten earned a BS in Horticulture from the University of Minnesota and spends his summers tending his vegetable garden, doing research, and experimenting with new ideas and methods he can pass along to his followers. He is a popular speaker, making appearances around the world at events that celebrate innovation, garden

garden enthusiasts and healthful lifestyles, and he is renowned for his social media presence, blog and on-line impressions. Karsten has inspired tens of thousands of first-time gardeners and a legion of “seasoned” growers who found a new and better way to pursue their passion, as well as enabled “retired” gardeners to begin gardening again since his method eliminates the physical challenges found in traditional soil gardening.

**Q:** *What’s your favorite part about growing in straw bales?*

**A:** *I have to admit that I am not a fan of weeding my gardens. I don’t enjoy it at all.*

So the fact that I can grow an entire vegetable garden all summer and never pull a single weed is truly my favorite part of the process.

**Q:** *Is there any common problems people face when growing in straw bales?*

**A:** Yes, the biggest one is that they fail to follow a proven protocol for preparing and conditioning the bales before they plant. Another very common error that leads to other problems is overwatering. If water leaches out the bottom of a bale it carries soluble nutrients with it, which means more fertilizer must be applied to compensate. Watering for very short durations and then increasing the frequency of applications as the summer heat comes and plants grow larger is the ideal way to water.

I hear from many failed straw bale gardeners who haven't use the STRAW BALE GARDENS™ method but instead they read some silly advice on the internet, and their results are often very disappointing. I did not invent the carbon/nitrogen ratio, mother nature did that, but I do thoroughly understand it. Getting advice from someone who has never studied a topic it is like learning to eat fire from a guy who read an instruction manual 20 minutes before he teaches the class. Wouldn't you rather learn from someone who has actually been eating fire in his circus act for 25 years?

**Q:** *How did you discover straw bales can be used as a medium to grow in?*

**A:** I grew up on a crop and dairy farm in South Western Minnesota. Every now and again we would have a busted bale of straw that would get moved over by the barn out of the way, and it would be forgotten. After many months went by and a few thistle seeds floated over and landed on top, those bales would grow the biggest, tall-

est, healthiest and greenest thistles on the whole farm. I noticed this even as a young kid, and would question my Grandma Josephine about why that happened. She would have me shove my hand into that old rotting bale, and feel the moisture inside. Even when the soil was dry the bale was still moist on the inside.

**Q:** *For people who don't know the difference, what is the difference between straw and hay?*

**A:** Straw is the stalk portion of the cereal grain plants, once the seeds of oats, wheat, barley or rice are removed, we then bale up the remaining stalks and use them in agriculture as animal bedding material. Hay is fodder or food for livestock, usually baled up alfalfa, or grasses of one kind or another. Hay is green and straw is usually lighter colored yellow or golden, and straw bales are much lighter weight.

**Q:** *Can both be used in straw bale gardening?*

**A:** Yes, both can be used. Both will work just fine, however the straw bales tend to hold moisture a bit better, while hay has more nitrogen in it, so each has a bit of an advantage or disadvantage over the other depending on how you look at it. I suggest shopping price and availability, because either way you will have a great garden.

**Q:** *One of the mistakes people make is they think they can just plant directly in the bale right away, but is there a conditioning process?*

**A:** Yes conditioning takes about 10-12 days, and it is during this time that we are encouraging the growth and development



*“Most straw has an average carbon/nitrogen ratio of about 60/1, and bacteria and the other organisms require a ratio of approximately 24/1 in order to break down the substrate, which in this case is the straw. Therefore it is essential that we add a significant amount of nitrogen to bring that ratio down.”*

of bacteria inside the bales. This colonization of the bales by bacteria is KEY to the success in the STRAW BALE GARDENS™ method. Many people assume that when we plant into a bale we are growing vegetables in straw, but that isn't actually the case. If it were still straw, and only straw inside the bale, nothing would grow. The straw is broken down and decomposed by insects, worms, fungi, mold and the biggest decomposer, which is also the smallest organism at work here, bacteria. These organisms deconstruct, digest, consume and metabolize the straw cells and break them down into the building blocks of those original cells, which are molecules of things you may have heard of including: nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, molybdenum, zinc, manganese, iron, etc. These molecules can now be reabsorbed into the root of a newly developing plant, and start the construction of new cells to build a new plant.

*Q: Does it require much work?*

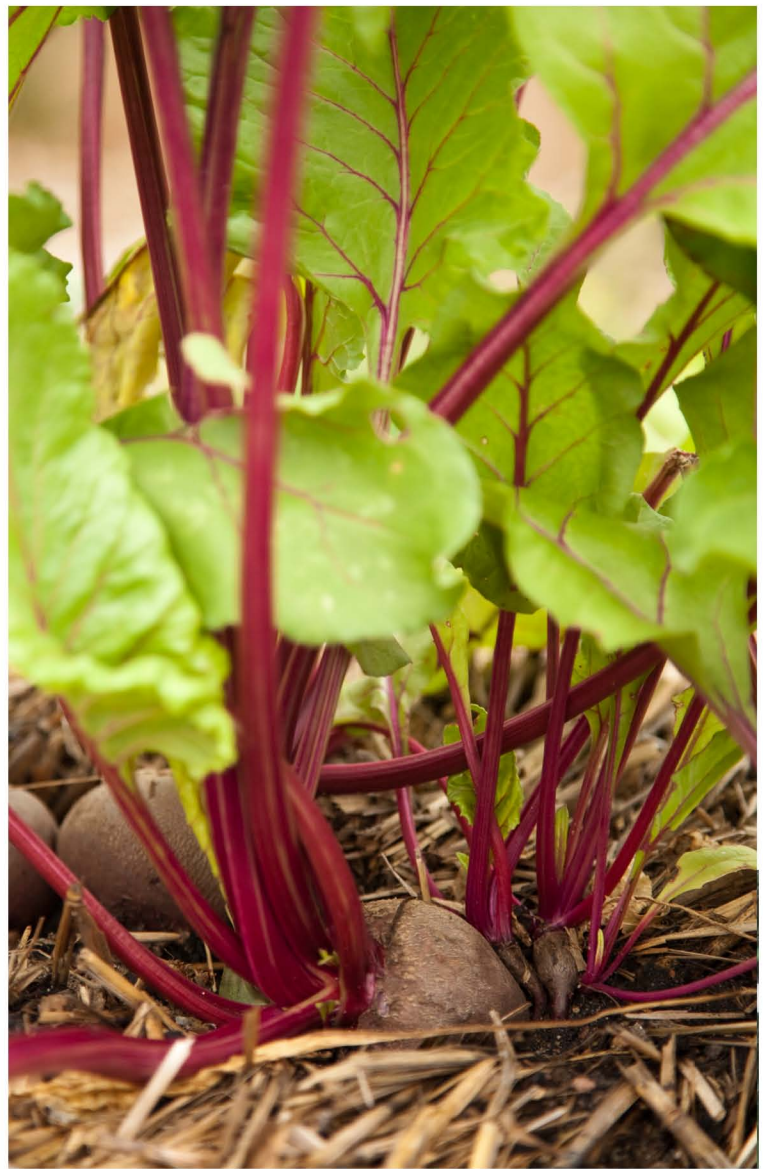
A: Not really, the main ingredient is simply a supply of nitrogen. Most straw has an average carbon/nitrogen ratio of about 60/1, and bacteria and the other organisms require a ratio of approximately 24/1 in order to break down the substrate, which in this case is the straw. Therefore it is essential that we add a significant amount of nitrogen to bring that ratio down. If a bale weighed 60 pounds, it would contain only 1 pound of nitrogen. We would need to add 1.5 pounds of nitrogen in order to balance out that amount of carbon, and bring it to the 24:1 ratio we need. Most bales are half that weight, thus we need to add .75 pound of nitrogen to the average bale. If we are using 35% nitrogen fertilizer this translates to about 2.25 pounds of 35% nitrogen fertilizer per bale. It is rather important however, how and when the nitrogen is introduced to the bale of straw. This is where my

years of research come in, and why I have written such detailed for the conditioning protocol in my books. Follow that protocol and you are assured to have success. Don't follow it, and you may or may not be successful depending on many other factors. Insects, worms, fungi and mold may help you, but the bacteria may never colonize the bale, and your crops will be growing in straw, not soil.

*Q: Are there only certain things you can plant?*

A: No, you can grow almost any crop, because the media inside the bale that results from the conditioning process is ideal for most crops. There are a few crops that are simply not logical to grow, including those requiring specifically low pH like blueberries or high pH, because the bales are close to neutral or slightly acidic at 6.8 on the pH scale. Most crops like a pH close to neutral. Space is also an issue so I suggest avoiding growing corn, since it has huge roots and requires lots of space, it also gets tall and shades everything on the north side of it. Other crops that have perennial roots, like asparagus and rhubarb will take several years just to get established, and the bales will decompose into soil completely within three years for sure, so the objective of planting and harvesting in a bale would never happen with those crops. The bales may work just as a tool to establish those plants into a garden space, knowing that, it works best to bury 1/3 of the bales into the ground so that when they do decompose, the plants will be level with the existing soil.

*Q: Can you plant root crops for instance?*



A: Yes, root crops perform well in the bales. Sometimes soils can be compacted and non-porous making it difficult to grow root crops due to poor drainage. The bales are very well drained, and cannot flood, and are never subject to compaction at all.

**Q:** How friendly is this to use for a full garden?

A: I know many people who have completely switched their gardens over to straw bales over the past few years, so I know it is perfectly viable. I would keep a soil garden for corn, and my perennial crops, like those mentioned earlier, as well as raspberries, and strawberries. Otherwise there is no need to maintain a traditional soil garden, where you spend your summers pulling weeds.

**Q:** Can you use a straw bale for a number of growing seasons or do you start fresh with new bales every year?

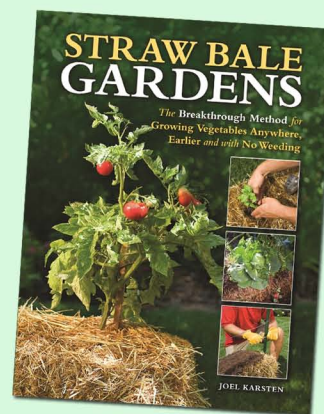
A: That depends! If you get bales that are highly compressed and compacted, and you do not overwater, the bales will easily hold up for a second season. Most people end up replacing all or most of their bales each year however, so plan on using them for one year, and if you get two, consider that a bonus. Second year bales need no preparation, however they also do not heat up inside like the first year bales do. The HUGE advantage that the heat provides is thus lost on a second season bale. Second year bales work very well for root crops, since those crops do not benefit, and can sometimes be inhibited by excess heat inside of the fresh bales.

**Q:** What made you decide that writing a book on this was the thing to do?

A: When you tell the same story, and give the

instructions over and over thousands of times, you ultimately see the writing on the wall. The interest shown by those who would see my gardens and inquire about how I did it, grew quickly once the STRAW BALE GARDENS™ method started to get media attention. I was featured on the news a few times and that created a buzz, and people wanted to learn more. I wrote a self-published book that sold very well all over the world due to the “new media” and things like Facebook, where the popularity soared. Pictures tell the stories over and over. One can’t be a doubter when people shower you with pictures of their huge vegetable plants growing out of mere bales of straw. I say it all the time, it isn’t me that made this work, mother nature does it, I just show people exactly how they can do it step-by-step so they don’t fail in their attempt to try it.

*Learn Even More*



**Q:** Where can people find your book?

A: If people would like to learn the STRAW BALE GARDENS™ method they can find my book on my website at [www.StrawBaleGardens.com](http://www.StrawBaleGardens.com) and if they order after reading this article they can use the promo code **30UYTY5BLOBP** and receive free shipping on their purchase.



# 4 things: I wish I knew, before I started gardening.

By Holly Baird

1.

*Start small.* If you've never gardened before or even if you have and it's been awhile, it's okay to start small. Growing up in the city we had a 2 by 4 foot area we grew veggies in. While we could've handled more, and eventually added on, starting small allowed us to grow fresh veggies and able to keep the weeds down while having control over the area. We grew a lot in that small area. It was also very enjoyable. Even if you have to start with a few containers, it's worth the effort.

2.

*Grow what you know you will enjoy eating.* A lot of the time you'll want to grow everything. Even things you may not enjoy because you'll get strange input from friends and family about what you should grow and before you know it you'll have a laundry list of things you "should" grow that you're not even sure what to do with. Or you'll get a seed catalog in the mail and you'll see all of these neat vegetables you can grow that look fun and different. But maybe you can't grow them in your area, or you don't know if you have the right growing conditions. Order something you know you can use and maybe try one exotic thing if you have the extra space and time. But if you are mostly a weekend gardener then remember that and choose wisely. So, keep it simple. If you and your family hate cucumbers, then don't grow them. Take the time to grow what you know you will eat and use.

3.

*Think about your soil.* Soil is the lifeblood of the garden. Your plants get their nutrients from the soil so it's important to have good soil. If you live in an area where you are unsure about your soil or have heard it may not be the best, then you may want to get it tested. Your local UW extension has soil testing for a small fee. Also, you could do something like raised beds or containers filled with rich, organic compost. We prefer Hsu Leaf compost that is made in Wausau.

4.

*Consider the sun.* Most vegetables prefer 8 to 12 hours of sunlight during the peak parts of the summer. When deciding where to put your garden keeps this in mind. You may seem to have a lot of sun in your yard right now, but during the peak parts of the summer when the trees and foliage is filled in its best to keep that in mind before you commit to a spot.



## AWARD-WINNING KNOWLEDGE

The complete first season of Joey and Holly Baird's groundbreaking gardening podcast is now available for free exclusively on [TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com](http://TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com)



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# extra:zucchini



Stuffed Zucchini

*Zucchini* is delicious fresh from the garden. It is a summer squash which means it has a short storage life, because it is to be used during the summer. A lot of the time your plant will produce more than you can handle, or you'll find one that was hiding under some leaves and is now double in size of what you want, but instead of sneaking some on your neighbor's doorstep, there is a lot you can do with zucchini that you may not have ever heard of.

*Zucchini relish* is a delicious alternative to pickle relish. It is sweet and tart, but if you have a really oversized zucchini that could end up being a little earthy tasting for other recipes. The most recent edition of the Ball Blue Book of Canning and Preserving has a great zucchini relish recipe.

*Zucchini pie* may sound a little different, or even insane, but it is really good. While I have seen many recipes for this, if you have a favorite apple pie recipe all you do is replace the apples in that recipe with

peeled and seeded zucchini. You're friends and family won't even know the difference.

*Donate to a local food bank.* While many food banks get plenty of non-perishable food items, they often lack fresh produce. You could certainly donate your zucchini, or any overabundance of produce from your garden. Make sure you check with them before you take in a large amount of produce to donate. Some local food banks even encourage you to plant an extra row for donation.

*Zucchini noodles* are a nice low carb alternative to any kind of pasta. You can buy a special tool to make zucchini into a noodle shape, or you can just use a vegetable peeler and peel long strips. You can find many recipes online, otherwise if you can your noodles, sauté them in a little oil and garlic, until warmed through, then top with your favorite sauce.

*Zucchini bread is a good classic.* If you've never had it, or made it, it is a quick bread that tastes somewhat similar to banana bread. If you are on a particular diet, such as low carb or grain free, there are a lot of different recipes to be found. It is best served warm out of the oven with a smear of butter, but also makes a great accompaniment to breakfast.

*Zucchini pickles.* Just like zucchini relish this is a great alternative to regular pickles. You can find many recipes online for this. In my experience I would recommend a refrigerator method or a fermented method verses something for long term storage. They tend to get mushy over time, so something you consume within a few weeks of pickling is best.

There are many other ideas for what you can do with your zucchini, including making low carb wraps, or many recipes where you stuff and bake the zucchini as a delicious meal. Using your favorite search engine you are sure to find many things to do with your extra zucchini. We also have many recipes available on our website [TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com](http://TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com)



Zucchini Pasta

GettyImages

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## Trash to: Treasure

When it comes to gardening there are many companies that will provide products to help you be a better gardener and make life easier in the garden. As wonderful as these products are, you don't necessarily need them in all situations. Sometimes, simply stepping back and thinking outside of the box, items you already have on your property can be just as efficient as the products you would spend money on brand new. It just takes a little imagination. Here are some ideas of what you can reuse that you may consider junk or trash

A great idea is using a **milk crate**. You can plant in this pretty easily, and even successfully grow plants off of the side of it. It is ideal to choose a milk crate with smaller holes. Simply pack soil or compost in a milk crate, then make so you have a catch basin of some sort underneath just in case some soil falls out. Then plant your plants in the top, and even some off of the sides. Cabbage is a great plant to grow in one of these.

When it comes to starting seeds there are many products out there to do so. However, you don't need to look further than your recycling bin.

When it comes to starting seeds there are many products out there to do so. However, you don't need to look further than your recycling bin. Many **small containers** make great vessels for starting seeds. Yogurt cups, sour cream containers, margarine tub, and even the bottom of an orange juice or milk carton are items you can use to start your seeds in. Even toilet paper tubes or paper towel rolls cut down short can be used if you group them next to each other over a tray, and then pack them with good soil, and you have a whole bunch of seed starting vessels.



Homemade Trellising

**Trellising** is important for many plants, as it allows the plants to have good air circulation, gets them off of the ground to prevent disease, and makes it easier to harvest. You can buy some nice trellising equipment, or you can look through your attic, basement, shed, or garage. Things like baby cribs, dog crate sides, even 2 fence poles with string tied across make great trellises. If you are concerned about the look you can always paint them to give them some uniformity. One of our best trellises is one we made out of the bottom spring of a baby crib. We've even use old tent poles for pole beans.

One innovative and very helpful tool we made from trash or junk is the **Planting Stick**. (pictured). The planting stick is used to help the gardener remain upright (standing) while plant-



Planting Stick

ing rows of larger seeded crops such as beans, corn, squash, and beets are all good crops for this. It is simply made of old vacuum extension wands stacked together for the right height, with a handle if you feel it will help you, and then a seed basin at the top, which we used part of a 2 liter soda bottle. Then you have this tube, or planting stick, the put your seeds in the rows, without having to bend over or strain your back.

Before you throw that item away or sell it at the neighborhood yard sale, think to yourself about what you might be able to use in the garden. -Holly Baird

# Everyday: Self Sufficiency



No matter what you call yourself, farmer, gardener, homesteader, prepper or city dweller, it's the little things we do that we may not be aware of to make ourselves more self-sufficient. There are ways we are all self sufficient without realizing it and ways we can become more self sufficient.

*Buy local* - Buying local is efficient as it cuts down on how far goods need to travel. It also puts more money back into the local economy. When you are buying from a small shop you are providing income for local people for profit without supporting the large stores that drive out the small shops. This is good for you and the local economy. This also increases your self-sufficiency as you are getting to know a local business, which networking may come in handy at a time you are in need.

*Farmers markets and CSAs* - The average American meal travels 1500 miles from farm to table. This is costly, not ideal for the environment, and the food is likely to lose nutrients in the travel. When you buy from a local supplier, the food is going to be fresher, you'll have a

larger selection, you'll support your local economy and it will have less of a distance to travel. CSA stands for community supported agriculture. You simply buy a subscription from a local farm and X amount of times during the month you will receive X amount of vegetables. There are also CSAs for meat, dairy and eggs. Farmers markets now sell everything from vegetables, to pastries to even local handmade soaps and many other goodies.

*Storing food* - This is simple, but many people view it as complicated. You don't have to do a lot of work when it comes to food storage. Many fruits and vegetables can be frozen, dehydrated or even put through the process of lacto fermentation. However, if you don't even want to explore those options you can stock your pantry and freezer when shopping. If an item is on sale, buy more than one, especially if it is something you use frequently. If you know you may have harsh weather conditions coming, stock up on

essentials beforehand and you will not be rushing to the store with everyone else who is unprepared.

*Raise your own livestock on a small scale* – You don't need to necessarily have a huge heard of anything to raise animals for use. You can raise chickens easily for eggs and meat, goats for milk and meat, rabbits for meat and other animals for your use.

*Grow edibles, big or small* – You can grow edible food and make it as complicated or as easy as you want. Theres everything from growing sprouts by your kitchen sink to a full scale vegetable production. No matter what, growing something for yourself is enjoyable and increases self-sufficiency. Growing food is a timeless skill and has been practiced many different ways over the years.

For more information on self sufficiency visit  
[TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com](http://TheWisconsinVegetableGardener.com)



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## Plants That *Love the Heat*

At some point during the growing season, no matter where you live, there are periods of extremely hot weather. Not all vegetables and fruit you grow like the hot weather, but there are plants that do love the hot weather and grow best during it. Your location determines what heat loving plants are best to grow.

In our garden, in SE Wisconsin, though it gets hot in the summer months, we are unsuccessful at growing okra, which is a plant that loves the heat. Okra prefers long periods of very hot weather to grow and it will find success in the heat.

**Eggplant** thrives in the heat in mid to late summer and can be grown in all parts of the country. We have had success to grow it in our garden. There's many different types of eggplant to grow, some people choose to grow just the standard purple, but if you live in a micro climate or have a variety that favors your area, it is best to find that and grow it.

**Tomatoes** love the heat but not to the point that many people believe they do. Once the temperature exceeds 90 degrees Fahrenheit they do not set fruit. Tomatoes do well in warm, but not

but not extremely hot. During the peak of summer in most areas tomato production will drop off because the day time temperatures will be too warm for them to produce.

**Bell peppers** are similar to tomatoes with the temperature exceeding 90 degrees and them not doing well. On the other hand, hot peppers and sweet peppers produce very well despite the heat. Summer squash, such as zucchini, patty pan and yellow crooked neck squash, is a go to staple in the garden. These plants do well in the heat as well. If it gets too warm and wet they can fall



Hot Weather Plants



mildew, but other than that they take care of themselves and there's many varieties to choose from whether for a salad or pickling.

The most common is vining, but there are new hybrid varieties that are grown in a compact bush for smaller areas.

This is a small list of plants that love heat, with all of these consistent watering is the key to steady production throughout the summer months - Holly Baird

victim to powdery mildew, so it is best to space plants properly to avoid overcrowding and provide them air circulation.

If you like spinach, but don't like that it only does well in the cooler parts of the year, try swiss chard. This is a hardier green, similar taste and use to spinach, but will continue to grow and thrive in the warmest parts of the year.

**Shelling beans or edible pod beans** are a great heat loving plant. Pole beans take up little space and produce heavy, bush beans will produce quicker than pole beans, but will not continue to grow and produce as long. Both beans can be grown in all parts of the country and the heat will not bring them down.

**Cucumbers** are another heat loving plant, on challenge some gardeners may face is powdery



*Joey's Bonus Garden Tip: Make a simple row for planting use the handle of your tool pressed lightly in the soil*

# What's Next, After Planting Your Garden



You spend winter planning your garden, reflecting on years before. Come spring you are ready to plant. You work hard to get your seeds and seedlings planted, but then when it's mid to end of June you are done planting, and you think to yourself – now what? There's a number of things you can do while you wait for your harvest.

If you planted spring crops you can start harvesting those and possibly letting some go to seed for future seed saving. This includes lettuce, radishes, peas and spinach. These items, if left without fully harvesting, will bolt and then you can save the seeds from them.

**Weeding** your garden is always a good idea. When weeding you want to pull weed out down to the root. This prevents the weeds from coming back. You also want to weed, if possible, before the weed has gone to seed to prevent future spreading of weeds. Weeds will take away water

and nutrients from your plants you want there so it is important to take care of them.

When you have a **compost pile**, it is important to work through that as well. In the spring we are constantly adding to it, just leaving it sit, and it has a tendency to get a bit out of control. Once everything is planted then it is best to re-evaluate it and even mix it up. When composting it is important to have a good mix of carbon to nitrogen, or greens to browns. Sometimes this isn't always possible. Carbon, which is the brown, includes things like dried leaves, shredded paper and even broken up brush. Nitrogen, which is the green, includes things like grass clippings, food scraps, and weeds. This allows the compost to work together and properly break down. At this point, while we are waiting for our plants to grow, we will mix up the compost. Move it around if we have to, and even sift

it. When sifting your compost you are allowing the good compost to be used and the stuff that needs to break down continue to sit and wait. You can also consider a new area for compost, or learn different methods of composting during this time.

If you choose to extend the harvest by **canning, drying or freezing** it is good to prepare for that too. Look through your supplies and see if anything needs to be restocked. This includes anything from canning lids and freezer bags to vinegar and canning salt. If you found a new recipe you are going to try this season it is best to read it over to make sure you have everything on hand and ready to go. This is also a good time to look through your food storage and see what needs to be replenished. -Holly Baird



*Joey's Bonus Garden Tip: Grass clippings can be used as mulch dry them 1st before using walk paths work well for this make sure they are chemical and seed free too*



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