



## What types of vegetables and herbs can be grown indoors?

Herbs, leafy plants and microgreens are the most common edible plants for indoor growing. They generally do well with shallow soil because they're smaller and don't need as much space inside. They also don't need as much sun and are easier to grow if you're just starting out.

It's possible to grow fruits indoors, but they generally need a significant amount of sun plus exposure to pollinating insects or animals and wind, which are more difficult to replicate indoors.

Examples of vegetables and herbs that you can grow indoors include the following:

### VEGETABLES

- Leafy greens (such as spinach, kale, lettuce and arugula)
- Carrots
- Scallions
- Potatoes
- Mushrooms
- Microgreens (vegetables such as beets, radishes and peas harvested as seedlings or sprouts)

### HERBS

- Mint varieties
- Cilantro
- Parsley
- Basil
- Rosemary
- Thyme
- Lavender
- Oregano

## Planning your garden

Before starting your indoor garden, consider your family's lifestyle. Plants need tending and care to grow successfully. If you're a

newbie to gardening, you may want to start small and simple, such as using an indoor grow system to simplify the process.

On a basic level, plants need at least water, nutrients and light—and, of course, you'll need the plant seeds or seedlings. Consider your space and what will grow best in that environment. Alternatively, if you have more flexibility, you can think about which plants your family wants to grow and how to adapt your environment to meet the plants' needs.

To give your plants the best chance of thriving, you'll want a specific place you can control. Decide if you'll use one room, spread them around the house, dedicate a windowsill or perhaps build a smaller controllable environment within your home. Also, be aware of your home's humidity, especially during dry winter months, since plants need a moister environment. Plants do best in stable, consistent temperatures in the 60s to 70s with good air circulation to prevent mold or fungus growth.

If you're planning to use mostly natural light from your windows, consider the amount of sunlight they permit and at what time of day they allow for more or less light. Generally, a south-facing window will give you the most sunlight. This position will likely change throughout the seasons, so be aware of how light exposure varies and affects plants.

## Prepping your garden

The supplies you'll need depends on your budget and how involved you want to be. Some products do nearly all the work for you. You can also find those that offer simple setups but allow you to be more engaged with the process. If you have specific plants in mind, research what particular items

you'll need to support the best growing environment for your plants.

Containers should be big enough to accommodate how large the plants will grow, the depth needed for roots and how far seeds must be planted from each other. When growing plants indoors, you also need to consider drainage so that excess water doesn't build up and cause problems like root rot or bacterial growth. You don't need fancy, expensive containers. Depending on the individual plant, you can even repurpose old plastic containers.

The soil you use for growing indoors is different from ordinary garden soil. Use potting mix or soil made specifically for seedlings and the indoors. These soil varieties are made to drain better than garden soil and aren't likely to contain organisms such as fungus or bacteria.

If you're growing plants throughout the winter, you'll need a light source to make up for the lack of natural sunlight. Grow lamps are specifically designed to provide the right type of light to help plants grow. Common types of grow lamps are LED or fluorescent. Consider which plants will need more or less light exposure and place them at appropriate distances.

Since your plants won't get rain, you're in charge of making sure they have enough—but not too much—water. Always check how soil moisture levels before watering, ensure appropriate drainage and be aware of the plants' needs. Self-watering containers, drip systems and hydroponic kits can be helpful.

## Caring for your garden

Edible plants generally take more effort than putting seeds in the soil and forgetting them, especially indoors where you have



## Tips for Indoor Gardening With Kids

Gardening can be a fun and educational project for kids of all ages. It provides them the opportunity to learn about how plants grow as well as healthy eating and nutrition. It also helps them develop responsibility and other life skills.

Explore a few suggestions for growing an indoor garden with your child.

- 1 Use a chart to help keep your child on track. Include what the plants need and how often plus what your child should look for when tending to them.
- 2 Have your child create a journal about the experience. To make it more fun, your child can take photos or draw pictures of the plants as they grow.
- 3 When the plants are ready to harvest, work together so that your child experiences the reward for the efforts.
- 4 Involve your child in finding or choosing delicious, healthy recipes to make with the vegetables and herbs grown.
- 5 Work together to prepare the produce for storage.

to create the environment. Every plant is different: some may require pruning, adjustments to watering and soil and various harvesting or replanting times. Keep a journal, binder or some type of tracking system to remind you when to care for them and how to do so, and to track your successes or failures for next time.

You might decide to use an indoor growing system that does most of the work

for you. Consider how much time and effort you and your family want to invest. If you decide to use a growing kit, you still want to check and track your plants' progress to be involved in or aware of the process and make sure everything is working correctly. Be sure to always follow all directions for appropriate use.

In terms of harvesting, some plants need to be completely picked and then

replanted. Other plants, especially herbs and leafy greens, can be harvested as you need while the plant grows and regrows where it was cut.

Finally, keep in mind your family can do everything right and still fail. It can be frustrating, but indoor gardening is a learning process. You can try new things next time for better results and a garden that contributes to a sustainable lifestyle. ■

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