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Tips and Tricks for Starting a Backyard Garden

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Selecting a Garden Site

- Pick a site convenient for you to maintain.
- Some wind is good but avoid areas exposed to strong wind.
- Be mindful of possible pollution sources and avoid them.
- Your Garden will need 6 to 8 hours of sunlight a day.
- Look for areas where plants already do well- this can indicate high organic matter content and high nutrient content.
- Avoid spots where water puddles during and after rain, such as low spots at the bottom of a hill.
- Avoid clay soils and add organic matter to sandy soils.
- Plant away from trees, they will compete with your vegetables.



Planning the Garden

- Start small- you can always expand later.
- Be mindful of who will be using the garden.
- Select crops you use often.
- Know your crops:
 - When to plant and harvest
 - How to plant
 - Consider disease resistant varieties and varieties that grow well in your area
- Consider including:
 - Plants that attract pollinators and other beneficial insects.
 - A rotation to reduce pest problems and increase fertility.



Managing the Garden

- Water regularly:
 - Vegetables need about one inch of water a week.
 - Rain can provide some water.
 - Avoid letting plants stay wet to prevent disease or fungus problems.
- Fertilize your crops:
 - Add compost to the soil before you plant.
 - Slow release fertilizers and organic matter sources can add nutrients over a longer period of time.
 - Many vegetables require more nutrients when flowering or when fruit are forming.
- Manage your weeds with mulch and by removing them quickly, before they can produce seeds.
- Understand which insects are beneficial and which are pests.
- Attract beneficial insects that prey on pests with flowers like marigolds and yarrow.
- Use chemical controls as a last resort.
 - Keep them away from children.
 - Avoid spraying plants in bloom with insecticides because these will also harm pollinators.
 - Make sure your product matches the pest and vegetable you want to treat.
 - Apply only where needed and as directed.



- Watch out for furry pests
 - Plant some things they don't like to eat, for example deer don't like plants that are furry or prickly.
 - Blood meal or hot pepper sprays can keep pests away, but have to be reapplied regularly.
 - Hanging objects like flags or CDs may scare pests off as they move in the wind.
 - Fencing can be used to keep them out, but deer require much more fencing than rabbits.

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