

Food for Thought

May 2023

Why Plant a Garden?

You don't need a huge yard to experience the benefits of gardening. Container gardens are great for small spaces, and are perfect for balconies, patios, or places where you can't plant in the ground. You will be amazed by how much food you can grow in just a couple of pots! Starting a garden of your own whether it be in the ground or in containers has so many benefits:



1. **Gardening promotes a healthy lifestyle.** Digging, planting, and harvesting vegetables are all great ways to get kids active. Even young children can help by watering plants with a small watering can or digging or raking soil with child-sized tools. Gardening also teaches important lessons about nutrition and where our food comes from — and even kids who don't like veggies often get excited about eating the ones they've grown themselves!
2. **Gardening brings families together.** With hectic schedules and busy lives, it's more important than ever to make time for family activities. Kids, parents, grandparents and friends can all work together in the garden — there are things for everyone, young and old, to do and learn. A garden is a great way to continue or even start family traditions; children can learn to plant seeds from parents or grandparents, older kids can teach younger ones, and you might even be surprised when your child points out an insect that you wouldn't have noticed!
3. **Gardening is educational.** A garden isn't just a place to grow tasty fruits and veggies — it's also a hands-on classroom. In the garden, kids learn about plants, insects, nature and science, as well as curiosity, teamwork, and problem-solving. A plant needs care and attention to thrive — if you neglect it, it will wilt and die. Fortunately, though, plants are resilient and will usually spring back with a good watering. Children learn important lessons about responsibility from tending to a garden... and a harvest of delicious fruits and veggies is the best reward!
4. **Gardening is economical.** Plant starts and seeds are inexpensive, and garden beds can be built with recycled materials. With a bit of work, your garden will produce delicious fruits and vegetables, saving you money *and* trips to the grocery store! Many people don't know that SNAP/food stamps can be used to purchase food producing seeds and plants.

Choose a theme for your garden: Starting small with a theme garden such as a salsa or pizza garden will provide you with a nice variety of produce. These gardens contain the basic ingredients that go into salsa or pizza sauce as well as some basic toppings for your pizza.



Tomatoes, peppers, garlic, onions, and cilantro are all common ingredients in salsa and pizza sauce. Other garden vegetables, such as spinach and hot peppers, are sometimes added as toppings. It can be fun to grow these ingredients to make a fresh, tasty homemade salsa or pizza for you and your family to enjoy together!

You can enjoy your favorite salsa throughout the summer as your produce ripens and becomes ready for you to harvest.

Fresh Tomato Salsa

3/4 pound tomatoes, seeded and finely diced (1 1/2 cups)
1/3 cup chopped cilantro
1/4 cup finely chopped onion
1 small fresh jalapeño or serrano chile, finely chopped, including seeds, or more to taste
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice, or more to taste
1 teaspoon salt (optional)

1. Wash hands.
2. Wash ingredients prior to dicing and chopping. Dice and chop as directed.
3. Mix all the ingredients together in a bowl.
4. Season to taste with chile, lime juice, and salt.
5. Keeps in the refrigerator for up to two days. Before serving, stir well, and drain off any excess liquid if desired.

Mango Salsa

1 mango, peeled, pitted, and diced
2-3 Tablespoons red onion, diced
1 Tablespoon fresh cilantro, chopped
1/4 teaspoon sea salt
1 1/2 Tablespoons lime juice

1. Wash hands.
2. Wash mango, onion, and cilantro before cutting.
3. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and stir to mix.
4. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate.
5. Enjoy as an appetizer or snack with baked tortilla chips or cinnamon chips!



Sources: http://ucanr.edu/sites/Nutrition_BEST/Gardening/; <https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/gardening/creative-gardening/grow-your-own-pizza-garden/>; <https://extension.wsu.edu/snohomish/salsa-garden/> Retrieved 5/01/23

Eat Smart Idaho can help you learn how to eat well for less. For information on Eat Smart Idaho classes, contact the Nutrition Instructor in your county:

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