

Gardening

The thing to remember while gardening is to start small. A small plant bed, about 25 or 30 feet square is perfect, is just enough room for about 30 plants. This will give you a chance to try out your green thumb and if you find that you enjoy your garden you can always expand and increase your plantings.

The next thing you will want to do is choose a site. Gardening must be done in an area that gets at least six hours of sunlight. Try and stay away from large trees that will take your plants water and nutrients, and at least three feet from any fences or buildings. In hot climates it is a good idea to choose a place that will have shade from a part of the intense afternoon sun. It is possible to have a healthy garden with even ten to twelve hours of sunlight, but the type of plants must be adaptable. While soil can always be improved, a site with good soil is a plus. Avoid areas that have rocky soil, steep slopes, or areas where water stands.

Now comes the fun part: start digging. Gardening is not a clean hobby; you're going to have to get some dirt under your nails. First remove the rocks, debris, and any grass and weeds then dig the spot up about one foot deep. Level up the dirt and add compost or minerals if the needed. If your soil is too acidic, add lime; if it is too sandy, add peat moss. Plants will thrive in neutral to acidic soil with a little added fertilizer.

If you buy seeds then plant them according to the directions. If picking plants, choose ones with green, healthy looking leaves and stems and healthy roots. Put the smaller plants towards the front of the bed and larger ones in the back. The key to a successful beginning in gardening is planting at the right time. Make sure and wait until the frosts are over before planting. If you are planting seeds the package will usually tell you exactly when you can plant them to achieve maximum growth.

Once you have started and gotten into gardening, making sure your plants receive enough water is essential to their growth. Hand watering works well if you only have a few plants. Other options include sprinklers or sprinkler hoses. Watering is more effective during the cooler parts of the day. The type of plant will depend on how much water is needed, but most require about an inch per week. During the hottest periods plants will be need watering about three times per week.

One of the most helpful things to add to a garden is mulch or compost. Just a few inches of organic mulch will improve fertility and help the soil hold moisture. Wood chips, grass clippings, leaves, manure, and pine needles are all

things that can be used as mulch.