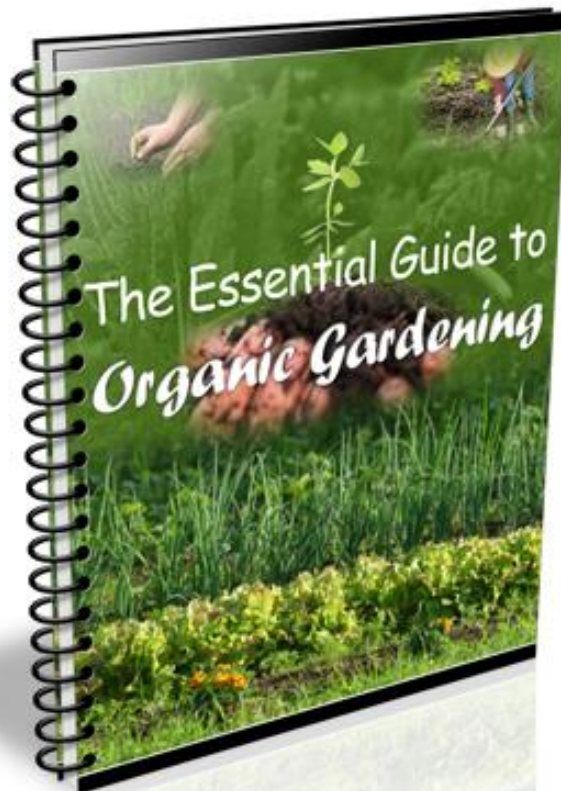


# The Essential Guide To Organic Gardening

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Why garden organically?..... 4  
Planning Your Organic Vegetable Garden..... 5  
Growing Your Organic Vegetable Garden..... 5  
Why Grow an Organic Herb Garden?..... 7  
Growing an Organic Herb Garden..... 7  
You Have Organically Grown Herbs, Now What?..... 8  
Organic Garden Fertilizers..... 11  
Organic Gardening Compost..... 13  
Why Use Organic Pest Control?..... 15  
How to Control Garden Pests Organically..... 15  
How to Bring Your Organic Plants Indoors; for Easy Year Round  
Growth..... 17  
Organic Container Gardening..... 19  
Organic Hydroponic Gardening..... 21

## **WHY GARDEN ORGANICALLY?**

By gardening organically, the dependence on chemicals is removed. By eliminating chemicals used in regular gardening, your vegetables will be healthier because they will get the nutrients by natural means. Unlike traditional gardening; organic gardening will help to prevent potentially harmful toxins from entering your body. Lastly, it is much more environmentally friendly.

The biggest problems, with using modern gardening products, are the man-made chemicals. The modern gardening products such as fertilizers, pesticides, etc. contaminate the health of humans and the health of the environment. The reason behind this is because the chemicals do not just stay on the soil.

These chemicals seep into the ground and poison water supplies, gardens, your home, and as mentioned, your health. The use of modern gardening products containing man-made chemicals are responsible for the reduction of the Earth's ozone layer; and they also have been linked to serious health problems, including cancer, in humans.

When you decide to garden organically, you can eliminate the concern for destroying the environment, but more importantly, you can eliminate the concern for you and your family's health and well-being. When you use modern gardening products; the toxic chemicals are transferred to you and your clothing. Obviously, these toxic chemicals could then be transferred to your children or significant other.

Not to mention, if you plant vegetables non-organically, toxic chemicals will be absorbed by your vegetables; and in turn, will be ingested by you and your family. In fact, one common ailment which affects avid gardeners is dermatitis. By gardening organically, you can eliminate getting dermatitis of the hands.

By deciding to garden organically, you'll help prevent the poisoning of groundwater and prevent adding further toxins to the soil. When man-made chemicals are used for gardening, it poisons other plants. Because these man-made chemicals poison the water and other plants, it can be dangerous, or even deadly, to little creatures that rely on the water to drink or

plants to eat. Lastly, the chemicals used will evaporate into the atmosphere and return in the form of contaminated rain and/or snow.

## **PLANNING YOUR ORGANIC VEGETABLE GARDEN**

By deciding to grow your vegetable garden organically, you're ensuring your vegetables are in their purest form, as nature intended. Modern gardening products, with chemicals, actually change the taste of vegetables. Fertilizer with man-made chemicals can also ultimately lead to severe health problems.

The first step to growing an organic vegetable garden; is to find an excellent location and adequately allocate the proper space to your organic vegetable garden. The amount of space you decide to use for your organic vegetable garden must be sufficient, but not in excess; you do not want wasted space or wasted vegetables, because you grew too many. Another important factor to consider, when planning your organic vegetable garden, is to ensure the soil has enough drainage. You should also try to keep it in as close proximity to a water source that you possibly can.

A useful tip, when planning your organic vegetable garden, is to literally map out your garden; before you plant any seeds. After you measure the space you plan on allocating to your organic vegetable garden, you can draw your garden on a piece of graph paper. If you are so inclined, you can draw your garden to scale; on the graph paper. Either way, it will make your planting much easier, if you have a well-designed and drawn out plan to work from, while planting.

## **GROWING YOUR ORGANIC VEGETABLE GARDEN**

You must start with clean soil. You should test the soil before you plant a single seed. After all, if your soil is contaminated; all the benefits of having an organic garden are nullified. The seeds you plant must also be derived from plants grown organically. If your seeds do not come from organically grown plants; the plants you grow will already be

contaminated. The seeds would be carrying traces of the chemicals used to grow the non-organic plants.

A critical step, when it comes to growing an organic vegetable garden is soil preparation. Organic soil preparation is much slower than if you would use fertilizers with man-made chemicals. The fertilizer you use must be completely chemical free. Your best bet, to ensure your fertilizer is chemical free, is to purchase it at an organic garden center. You can even use items you would normally throw away; to help enrich your soil. This will be covered more in-depth in a later section.

You should make sure organic fertilizer is mixed into your soil at least three weeks prior to planting any organic seeds. As mentioned, the organic fertilization process takes a little more time, but is well worth the effort. You must be sure all chunks of the organic fertilizer are properly broken down and blended 100% into the soil.

### **Irrigation of your organic vegetable garden**

It's important your organic garden gets plenty of water. You should be prepared to water your garden extensively at least once a week. You can forgo the irrigation if you get lots of rain. However, the key is how much rain your garden received. The rain should have been a slow, steady, soaking, rain. It's critical that the moisture penetrate completely through the soil and makes its way to the entire plant root.

### **Using organic mulch in your organic vegetable garden**

Using mulch is excellent for your organic vegetable garden. The mulch helps the plants retain moisture. Mulch also helps to suppress weed growth. Mulch, as it decomposes, provides constant nutrient rich food to your plants. Leaves, grass clippings, and wood shavings are excellent choices for mulch. You can also purchase organic mulch. Be sure it does not contain any type of chemicals; or else it will not be organic mulch.

## **WHY GROW AN ORGANIC HERB GARDEN?**

Herbs are excellent flavor enhancers for our meat, pasta, and vegetable dishes. Not only do herbs add flavor to our food, they also can provide to us added nutrients. By growing our own organic herb garden, we can have fresh, chemical free, herbs any time we want.

By growing an organic herb garden, we can more fully appreciate the full taste of the herbs. When the chemicals are used in the herb growing process, the natural taste of the herbs is altered. Once you use herbs from your own organic herb garden, you will taste what you have been missing.

## **GROWING AN ORGANIC HERB GARDEN**

Like discussed in the organic vegetable garden section; when it comes to planting an organic herb garden, the type of seeds used are of the utmost importance. You must be positive the seeds are completely and totally organic seeds. To get the full benefit of organic, the seeds have to be chemical and pesticide free.

An organic herb garden, just like an organic vegetable garden, should be mapped out on a piece of graph paper. This is especially useful for herbs; because some organic herbs will actually flourish more bountifully if they are planted next to other certain herbs. You can do some further research about this, or you can ask the staff at an organic garden supply store, to assist you with this.

When it comes to choosing which herbs to grow; in your organic herb garden, you have a large amount to choose from. Some of the more popular herbs include the following: Basil, chives, chamomile, parsley, oregano, lemon balm, and you can even grow catnip. The organic seed packets should provide the proper growing instructions; including when to plant them and precise directions how to plant them for maximum growing results.

### **Organic herb garden growing tips**

Your organic herb garden will require plenty of water to flourish. You need to make sure you do not either over water

or under water your organic herbs. Your organic herb seed packets should provide watering instructions. It's strongly suggested you invest in a soil moisture testing kit. This kit will give you an accurate reading of how much moisture is in the soil.

Your organic herb garden would also greatly benefit from mulching and composting. It's highly advantageous if you make your own organic compost. It's very easy to make your own organic compost. (This is discussed more in-depth later on.)

## **YOU HAVE ORGANICALLY GROWN HERBS, NOW WHAT?**

This section will cover some possible uses for your home grown organic herbs. The most common and easiest uses for your organic herbs is to dry them. To get optimal results for your dried herbs, you should pick them early in the day, when it's cooler outside. To harvest your organically grown herbs properly for drying, you want to have a sharp pair of scissors or a sharp knife. Be sure to cut relatively large stems from your organically grown herbs.

Next, you have to wash the herbs gently. Remember, fresh herbs are delicate. After a gentle washing, place them on some paper towels, or a clean cloth. You want the paper towels or cloth to absorb all the excess water from the organic herbs.

After the excess water is gone, you want to lash them together in bundles. Once you have them tied into bundles, you want to hang them up. It's best if you can hang them somewhere where they won't be obtrusive to you or your family. It's worthy to note; you should try and find a location which is a low moisture area, to get best results. You want to try and find somewhere in your house that is dry and arid. For example, the bathroom, or a wet, dank, basement or laundry room wouldn't be ideal places to hang your organically grown herbs to dry. You may hang your organically grown herbs in direct sunlight. However, don't be surprised if the natural color fades out some.

Once your organically grown herbs are 100% dried out, you can crush them up and put them in jars. The shelf life for organically grown, dried, herbs is approx. a year.



You can also freeze your home grown, organic, herbs. Freezing organically grown herbs is another excellent way to preserve the flavor and freshness of your herbs. To prepare them for freezing, you would harvest them the same way as you would to dry them. You would also wash them as previously described. Once washed, you want to lay them on paper towels or a clean cloth. However, the difference is, you want to turn them occasionally, while they are drying. It's extremely important all the excess water has been absorbed out of them, when you are freezing them.

You should leave the flowers and leaves intact on the stem of your organically grown herbs. When freezing organic herbs; they retain their flavor best, if the flowers, leaves, and stems are left intact; when put into the freezer.

Once the excess moisture is completely gone from your organic herbs, place them in freezer bags. It's a good idea to use a marker and write the date on the freezer bag. This is because frozen organic herbs are most flavorful if they are used within 6 months of freezing. When you want to use your frozen organic herbs, take them out of the freezer bag. Then just crumble off some leaves and put the unused portions into the bag and back into the freezer

Another popular use for organically grown herbs is to use them in herb vinegar. Herb vinegar is excellent to use on salads or a cooking additive when preparing vegetables. The flavor combinations are only limited by the herbs you grow and your imagination.

**The supplies you'll need for making herb vinegar are as follows:**

- Sterilized glass jar, with lid
- Your home-grown, organic herbs
- Vinegar

Just about any vinegar will do. White, wine, and cider vinegars are all fine choices. The only word of caution is that cider vinegar has a strong "bitey" flavor already. Therefore, you'll have to compensate for that flavor when trying different flavor combinations of the herbs you want to use.

**Herb vinegar preparation:**

Harvest and wash your organically grown herbs, as discussed above. After they are washed, place them inside the jar. Pour in your choice of vinegar(s). Fasten the lid tightly to the jar.

Let your herb vinegar stand for a few weeks. After you've left them sit for a few weeks, strain out the herbs. Once the herbs are strained, you're ready to use it for cooking or salad dressing.

Lastly, you can use your organically grown herbs to make organic herb oil. Organic herb oil is excellent to use on salads and to cook with. Organic herb oil also makes a fantastic dip for bread. Believe it or not, you can also bathe with organic herb oil. Organic herb oil can also be used to moisturize your skin.

A HUGE word of CAUTION, when it comes to herb oil: You MUST keep it refrigerated. Herb oil is the ideal place for certain, including fatal, bacteria to live, grow, and thrive in. It is imperative you refrigerate your herb oil. It is also imperative you only keep the unused herb oil for 2 weeks, if fresh herbs were used, in the preparation of the herb oil.

After 2 weeks, throw it away! If you didn't mark a date on the jar and don't know how long it's been in there, throw it away! Someone forgot to put it back in the refrigerator, throw it away! No exceptions!

If you prepare your herb oil with fully dried out herbs; you can store the unused herb oil, in the refrigerator, for up to 4 weeks. Once again, when the four weeks are up, throw it away. If you didn't mark a date on the jar and don't know how long it's been in there, throw it away! Someone forgot to put it back in the refrigerator, throw it away! No exceptions!

**The supplies you'll need to make herb oil are as follows:**

- **A sterilized jar, with lid**  
Your home-grown, organically grown, herbs (either fresh, frozen, or dried. Remember, if you use dried herbs, you'll be able to store the unused portion in the refrigerator longer.)
- **Oil**  
You can mix the herbs with any oil you prefer. If you're going to use the herb oil primarily for

cooking, it's highly recommended you use extra virgin olive oil.

#### **Herb oil preparation:**

Pour the oil of your choice into your jar. You want to make sure the jar is filled about half way full with oil. Next, put your herbs into the oil. After all your herbs are in, fill the jar completely up with oil. Lastly, place the lid onto the jar tightly. Label the date and refrigerate promptly.

As you can see, there are many uses for organically grown herbs. You will save money by not having to buy your favorite herbs at the store anymore. You can just grow them yourself. You'll also notice a huge taste difference of your organically grown herbs, compared to store bought ones.

## **ORGANIC GARDEN FERTILIZERS**

When it comes to organic gardening, it is suggested you fertilize your soil at least two times per year. By fertilizing the soil, you are ensuring the soil gets the added nutrients it needs to allow your organic garden to flourish. What makes organic fertilizer different from regular fertilizer is the lack of man-made chemicals used to produce it.

#### **Types of available organic fertilizer:**

##### **1. Organic animal based fertilizer**

To sum up what this fertilizer is composed of can be reduced to one word: Manure. This type of organic fertilizer is usually comprised of any one of the following: Cow manure, horse manure, chicken manure, bat excrement, and even rabbit manure. Organic animal fertilizer should be decomposed or aged; prior to mixing it with the soil for your organic garden. This should be done in order to eliminate the dangerous bacteria, such as the infamous E. coli, or other harmful pathogens.

Once the manure has been properly broken down through decomposition, you can apply it as a liquid

or solid form to your organic garden. It is important that the organic animal manure is blended completely and wholly into the soil. For optimal results, it is advised you blend your organic animal fertilizer with your soil at least 3 weeks in advance to planting your organic garden. This will allow it to fully enrich the soil and eliminate the bad odor you would have to endure while gardening.

## **2. Organic plant based fertilizer**

The most common ingredients used for this type of fertilizer are comprised of the following: Seaweed, worm castings, compost, and what is commonly referred to as "green manure." Most of the time, organic plant fertilizers are also comprised of kelp and seaweed. Scientific research has discovered that seaweed is extremely beneficial as an organic fertilizer. Seaweed is full of nutrients such as copper, zinc, and manganese. These nutrients are heavily responsible for maximum growth; because they provide soil with micro nutrients. These micro nutrients are what is responsible for giving your organic garden maximum growth.

You can also use worm casings, also known as worm composting, to fertilize your organic garden. This type of fertilizer is easily made or can be bought from an organic garden supply store. To make your own worm casing fertilizer, you need to begin with the correct type of worms. You can obtain these worms from an organic garden supply store.

You will also need a covered tub. Lastly, you will need some lightly moistened vegetable matter. In fact, you can even use old newspapers instead. The beauty of this method of fertilization is the simplicity and the lack of effort. The worms are your employees and do all the work for you for, and they do the work for free. If that's not enough to convince you to try this organic method of fertilization, consider this; the organic fertilizer you get is nutrient dense and you get it for virtually no cost.

"Green manure" is another form of organic fertilizer you can use. Green manure is a cover crop which is grown, chopped down, and mixed into the soil. It then decomposes into the dirt. This process enriches the soil because the decomposing vegetable matter replenishes the soil with nutrients. One such cover crop you can use is soybeans. The cover crop has to be, what is referred to as, a "nitrogen fixing crop."

As you can see, there are a variety of ways to further enrich your soil organically. It's highly suggested you use any one of the above mentioned to ensure you have a bountiful, organic garden.

## **ORGANIC GARDENING COMPOST**

Making organic compost for your organic garden is an excellent way to give your plants the much needed natural nutrition they need, to ensure maximum growth. Compost is nothing more than broken down natural materials. By using compost, you're improving the retention of moisture for your plants, it helps improve the structure and integrity of the soil, and lastly it aids in the "breathing" of your soil, by improving soil ventilation.

When it comes to making organic compost, the best news is that it can be made with virtually no cost and very little effort on your part. You can use food scraps, egg shells, leaves, grass clippings, bush trimmings, flowers, weeds, animal manure, and any other organic matter that will break down naturally.

Materials needed to make organic compost aren't hard to obtain. In fact, you probably already own them. You need a sturdy pitch fork, rake, and a shovel. You will use these tools to turn and spread out your organic compost pile.

You will also need a good location for your compost pile. You do not want your compost pile to be placed next to any type of structure. For example, keep your compost heap away from fences, a shed, your house, trees, etc...A compost pile isn't

the most visually appealing site either. Therefore, you also want to try and put it somewhere out of sight. You wouldn't want it in the front yard right next to your door. You also want to put it somewhere that attracts worms, bugs, and other insects. These tiny creatures will help to speed up the decomposition process.

You will also need some organic material to decompose. This was touched on a little bit above. Such items as grass clippings, weeds, bush trimmings, etc...These items are what provides your compost pile with nitrogen; which, in turn, creates nitrogen rich food for your plants.

You will also need some dried straw and dried leaves. These natural materials will add carbon to your organic compost. Remember, plants need carbon dioxide to survive. The carbon is needed to create the carbon dioxide.

You should also add potassium and phosphorous to your organic compost. These will make sure the soil is chemically well balanced.

Once you have an organic compost pile, it is highly suggested you spread and turn the pile every other week. By doing this, you will speed up the rate in which decomposition takes place. The easiest way to know the decomposition process has completed, is to look at the compost. When the color turns a dark, rich, color; you know it is finished and ready to be put on your organic garden. Also, when you pick it up in your hands, it will have a very distinct "earthy" and sweet smell to it. The smell will be very prevalent if you crumble it in your hands.

There is one thing worth mentioning about compost piles: They should never have a bad odor. This is a common misconception about compost piles. A compost heap, which has a bad odor, is one which isn't being properly taken care of. If your compost pile does begin to smell bad, it could be because it has too much water or not enough oxygen. This can be fixed by aerating the compost pile. Spread it out, turn it over.

You can use such kitchen items as egg shells, potato peelings, wilted lettuce, etc...You should not use meat scraps, dead vines, grease, or bones. These types of organic materials can contaminate your organic compost.

Hopefully, you'll see the benefit to using organic compost on your organic garden. Organic compost is a quality source of nutrition for your organic garden. Again, best of all, it's very low cost.

## **WHY USE ORGANIC PEST CONTROL?**

When it comes to gardening, one of the worst things for both humans and the environment are the pesticides used. Plain and simple, pesticides are toxic. Pesticides were invented to kill harmful insects. The problem with this is; they don't target just harmful insects. Pesticides are toxic to all living things, including people. The toxins used to create pesticides are extremely harmful to pets and children. Medical science has linked a whole laundry list of health problems with the toxins used in pesticides. Illnesses such as: learning disorders, cancer, asthma, birth defects, toxicity of the central nervous system, and many more. Worst of all, contamination from pesticides into the world's water supply has already taken place.

These pesticides don't just disappear. They become part of nature's food chain. The contaminated water is absorbed into the plants in that water. These plants are consumed by the fish that also live in that water. The toxic chemicals are then absorbed into the bodies of the fish. These fish are caught and consumed by people. Of course, these toxins are absorbed into our bodies. Obviously, the same chain of events happens to land based plants and animals. Now that you know this, the question becomes; do you want to add more toxins, to your body, by using pesticides on your vegetable garden?

## **HOW TO CONTROL GARDEN PESTS ORGANICALLY**

One of the easiest ways to control garden pests is to use the method commonly referred to as "companion planting." There are certain plants that act as a natural insect repellent. By planting these plants with your other plants, you'll keep the insects away. Examples of such plants include the following: garlic, onions, and marigolds. You can either plant them next to your other plants, or plant them in a perimeter around your

organic garden, to act as a natural barrier. You could also do both of these; to ensure maximum effectiveness for organic pest control.

### **Use soap as an organic pesticide**

You can either purchase special insecticidal soap, or make your own. Making your own is economical and easy to do. You squeeze a few drops of liquid dish soap into a cup of water. You then spray the mixture on your plants, and then rinse it completely off. This form of repellent is especially effective against aphids, thrips, and spider mites. You have to make sure the leaves, stems, and flowers, of your plants are completely sprayed and covered. One word of caution; if you use the wrong type of liquid dish soap, one which contains triclosan, most commonly found in antibacterial liquid soap, it is probable you will damage the leaves of your plants. You may also damage the plants if you use too much liquid soap. Remember; only use a few drops of soap, per cup of water.

### **Pick off and remove the bugs**

If the thought of touching bugs with your bare hands freaks you out, get yourself a pair of gardening gloves. This method involves going to your garden when the bugs are most likely to be active; such as early in the morning or late at night. Once you're in your garden, look for harmful insects on your organic plants, and physically remove them from your plants. When you remove a bug, make sure it is a harmful bug and not a helper bug.

Mainly, you're going to be on the lookout to remove tomato hook worms, potato bugs, Japanese beetles, slugs, or any other insect pests common to your particular area. If you wish to not only remove these pests from your garden, but from this planet, put them in a container of soapy water. As mentioned previously, be careful when killing bugs. You don't want to kill helper bugs.

### **Fill your organic garden with helper bugs**

There are bugs that will eat the harmful insects that find their way into your garden. These little allies will take care of your harmful insect problem; naturally. Such helper bugs include the following: Lady Bugs, lacewings, and the mighty, praying mantis. You can purchase them in large



quantities at an organic garden supply store. Take them home and let them loose in your garden, sit back, and allow them to go to work for you. Other powerful allies you can have in your garden are spiders. They will catch and eat the harmful flying insect pests. If you see webs in your organic garden, don't disturb them. Let the spiders help you out.

You can also use physical barriers. One such method is to use old coffee cans. Simply cut the tops and bottoms off of them and push them into the ground. You should place these barriers around young plants. This will prevent hook worms from getting to them. You can also use diatomaceous earth around your organic plants. By doing this, you will help to prevent a slug infestation. If you typically have grass hopper problems, you can utilize fine netting to help keep them out.

By using the above organic methods for pest control, in your organic garden, you will help to prevent adding further toxic chemicals into your body. You will also help the planet by not adding more toxic chemicals into the environment.

## **HOW TO BRING YOUR ORGANIC PLANTS INDOORS; FOR EASY YEAR ROUND GROWTH**

Most organic plants can be grown almost effortlessly indoors. The best part about growing your organic plants inside is the control you'll have over their growing environment. For example, they will be better protected against harmful garden pests and insects. You can grow your organic plants year-round by growing them inside.

### **How to transition your outside organic plants for inside growing**

This is not as complicated as you may believe. One of the most critical components to this process is choosing hardy plants to bring inside. By the time the spring and summer growing seasons are finished, you'll know which plants are good candidates to be brought inside.

You must prepare these plants for the indoors, before the first frost hits. The first step is to extract these plants

out of the soil. You're going to need to ensure when you extract the plants, the entire root is intact. This means you're going to have to dig deeply into the soil, to make sure you get the whole root. Once you have your organically grown plants extracted, roots and all, transplant them into new potting soil right away. Ideally, the root balls should have 2 inches of potting soil surrounding them, inside the pot.

You'll want to carefully inspect your organically grown plants, to be sure there are no harmful insects clinging onto them. If you find any, pluck them off and spray your plant with the insecticidal soap; this was previously discussed in the organic pest control section. Once insect inspection is completed and any pests are taken care of; give your organically grown plant a good watering.

There is a hardening off process that you must prevent, prior to transporting your organic plants inside. You can do this by placing them in an area which does not get a lot of direct sunlight. You should tend to your organic plants for a week. You are training them to get used to the lack of direct sunlight. During this week of training, you must keep them watered, trimmed, and properly pruned.

Once the one week training period is over, you may bring your organically grown plants inside. Typically, the rule of thumb is to give your new indoor plants five hours of light a day. If you don't have anywhere, in your living space, that gets this type of lighting, you'll have to give them artificial light. You can accomplish this with a fluorescent light, which is positioned approximately 6 inches suspended above your organically grown plants. You should leave this light on, for the plants, 14 hours a day.

You must also make sure your organically grown plant is protected from the cold, while it is inside. Don't let the temperature your plants are exposed to, drop below 60°. If your organic plants experience too frigid of a temperature, they will not fare very well. Also, be sure you keep your organic plants out of drafty areas.

Your organic plants should also have a lot of moisture. You need to keep them damp by using gravel trays and keep their pots in water. Keeping your organic plants growing inside, year round, is easy to do. The most essential part to keeping them indoors; year round, is to try and replicate optimal

growing conditions, they would experience outside, while they are inside. If you bring your organically grown herbs inside, it's important to know they prefer humid environments.

If you follow the steps outlined above, you will be able to have strong, healthy, organic plants growing year round. Any time you want to have a vegetable garden, if you don't have room inside; remember you can have one inside. It just takes some planning and the proper steps need to be followed.

## **ORGANIC CONTAINER GARDENING**

If you do not have enough yard for a regular organic garden; you can still grow plants and vegetables organically; by doing container gardening.

### **What to use as a container**

When it comes to what to use for a container, when growing an organic container garden; you are only limited by your imagination. Keeping true to the concept of organic; some organic gardeners only use natural containers. For example, they would select containers constructed out of wood or clay. However, you do not have to be obliged to this concept.

If the container can hold dirt and can accommodate getting wet, it can be used. For example, an old pail, wheelbarrow, and even a worn-out shoe could be utilized for your organic container gardening needs. The only other stipulation to the type of container used, besides holding dirt, and being able to get wet; is the container must also have proper drainage holes. Most organic plants will not do well if they get too much water. That's why it's essential, the container be able to drain water properly. If the container isn't suitable for this; you can always drill holes into the bottom of it

Whatever container you choose to use, for your organic plants, it's important to put about an inch of broken clay pot pieces or gravel into your container. If you're so inclined, you may also add leaf mold or pieces of ripped out newspaper, on top of the gravel. The reason for using leaf mold is to ensure the soil retains some moisture. The gravel further aids in proper drainage of water from the container.

### **What type of soil should be used when growing an organic container garden?**

When growing an organic container garden, you should begin with 100% organic soil. Organic soil is soil which has no man-made chemicals in it. You can purchase organic planting soil from an organic garden supply store.

The biggest disadvantage to having an organic container garden is the lack of subsoil. The organic soil you choose must be able to retain water, and not let your organic plants get too wet. A good way to ensure your organic plants don't get excessively wet is to use peat moss as an additive to your organic soil. The best type of soil mixture, to provide to your organic container garden plants, should be comprised of all the following ingredients: organic soil, compost (see the previous section on making your own organic compost), composted manure, and peat moss.

### **What type of organic plants can you use in your organic container garden?**

You can plant the same organic plants in a container garden that you could plant in a regular organic garden. For example, you can plant any of the following; Beans, tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, herbs, or eggplant. This, by no means, is an exhaustive list of what can be planted; in an organic container garden. The only word of caution; the container has to be able to hold whatever plant or vegetable you put into it. Remember, a cucumber will still occupy the same amount of space, in a container, on your porch, as it would a hole in the ground.

Just as you should start your regular organic garden with organic seeds, you should do the same when growing an organic container garden. When it comes to pest control and organic container gardening; the same methods can be used as mentioned in the previous organic pest control section. Best of all, pest control in an organic container garden requires much less effort.

Even if you don't have a large yard for an organic garden, you can still grow chemical and pesticide free vegetables and plants... All you need it is an area that receives adequate light, a sheltered area, and a container large enough to hold

the organic plant of your choice. Thanks to organic container gardening; you can enjoy fresh vegetables year round.

## **ORGANIC HYDROPONIC GARDENING**

The best part about hydroponic organic gardening is you don't need soil to grow an organic garden. However, this concept can be confusing. As discussed previously, part of what makes organic gardening; organic gardening, is using organic soil. If you don't have organic soil, how could it be an organic garden? This section will show you why hydroponic organic gardening can be advantageous over regular organic gardens.

The key to organic hydroponic gardening is the water. The organic plants get their nutrients from the water, not soil. Organic plants, even hydroponic ones, can't grow until they have a solid substance to put their roots into. You can grow organic plants hydroponically by putting them in vermiculite and perlite. A word of caution is in order: When handling vermiculite, the utmost care must be taken. This is because vermiculite is a form of asbestos. You can also use organic materials such as straw, cotton, plant fiber, or any number of other organic materials.

### **Preparing the water for your hydroponic organic garden**

Since the water is the sole source of your organic plants nutrition and not soil; your organic plants must have nutrient rich water to feed their roots. Since the goal is to grow an organic garden, all nutrients dissolved, in the water, must be organic. One such nutrient commonly used in organic hydroponic gardens is what is referred to as "compost tea." Compost tea is created when compost is put into water. The water is infused with the organic compost material. Once the organic compost has been fully saturated by the water, the water is then strained. It is necessary to strain the water because any solid compost material remaining must be removed. What's left, after the water has been strained, is an organic, nutrient rich, water; which your organic plants will love to drink.

You can also make what is commonly referred to as manure tea. However, it can be dangerous to make your own manure

tea. There is a risk of getting bacterial contamination on your organic hydroponic garden vegetables. You could actually contaminate your vegetables with lethal strains of E. coli. The manure used for manure tea should be thoroughly broken down through decomposition. You can also create manure tea with sterilized manure. The process to make manure tea is the same as you would use to make compost tea. Other common organic materials, which can be combined with the water, include seaweed and fish emulsion. The benefits of using seaweed were discussed in depth in the organic fertilizer section.

The other advantage to hydroponically growing your organic garden is you won't waste water. The nutrient rich water can be continuously used on your plants. In other words, unlike a traditional organic garden, the water used is not wasted. The nutrient rich water, used to feed your hydroponic organic garden, isn't used one time and then thrown away. You should keep recycling the nutrient rich water to feed your plants; over and over again.

As you can see, an organic hydroponic garden can be a more practical, viable, solution compared to growing a regular, organic garden. It is true; you won't get the same "earthy" experience a regular organic garden would provide. After all, there is no "earth" to dig in. However, you will still get the same delicious, chemical free, home grown, organic vegetables.

Hopefully, this guide has convinced you to garden organically. As discussed, not only is it beneficial to your health; and the health of your loved ones, it will also be beneficial to the environment. Organic gardening does not really require much more additional effort than it takes to grow a non-organic garden. However, the benefits you get in return, for going organic, are numerous.