

GREENWorks

Ideas for a Cleaner Environment

A publication of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Concord, NH (603) 271-3710

January 2023

Home Gardening: Grow Your Own Groceries

If you're looking for a change in your life that will reduce your reliance on wasteful packaging, curb your carbon footprint and improve your health, then consider growing your own food or herb garden from home. You can begin to add fresh herbs and vegetables in your home cooking by growing your own ingredients! As a bonus, this practice will also reduce your need to buy products in plastic and excess packaging and cut out the carbon emissions from the trucks transporting fruits, veggies and spices to your local grocery store.

According to the University of Michigan Center for Sustainable Systems, the [U.S. food system accounts for 10% to 30% of a household's carbon footprint](#). Transportation of food accounts for about 5% of that. Eliminating the transport of food for one year from just one household could save the greenhouse gas equivalent of driving 1,000 miles; then there is industrial food production, which accounts for nearly 70% of food system emissions.

However, food production and transportation might not even be the least eco-friendly part about buying groceries. According to the EPA, [82.2 million tons of packaging and containers were discarded in 2018](#), accounting for nearly a third of all municipal solid waste. Almost 15 million tons of that packaging was plastic and less than 15% of that plastic was recycled, meaning that most of it will be sitting in landfills for centuries to come.

Growing your own ingredients and reducing the need to buy them from the grocery store can put a big dent in those environmental impacts. If you want to get started, start small with just a few herbs or produce. Plant them in cups or reused packaging inside your kitchen. Try to grow the plants from what you already have: spuds, basil leaves, fruit seeds, etc. Otherwise, look for seeds, and even comprehensive gardening starter kits, to get your garden off the ground.

While starting a garden at home can be a little time consuming, it doesn't have to be complicated! In fact, this could be a great way to get the entire family involved in the project. From choosing the herbs or spices that are your favorite to finding brand new recipes to incorporate them into.

Here are some more tips to help you get started:

- Find an area of your home that gets a lot of sunlight.
- Water your plants frequently, especially when they are just starting to grow.
- Buy pots or reuse some old containers as planters.

- Consider building a window box for your garden.
- Make sure to keep your plants away from any pets.
- Explore online tutorials like [Living Well's "Your Ultimate Guide to Growing Herbs Indoors."](#)

You can get your garden started any time indoors, and move it outside in the summer if you prefer!

###