



### Do I Need to Feed My Planter?

Any plant that lives in a container will require nutrients from adding fertilizers. In the course of their lives, plants need more nutrients than what is found in the planter.

Store bought herb and veggie planters normally contain a 'slow-release' fertilizer. This means feeding your plants is already done for you!

If you reuse a planter for more veggies, you'll need a nutrient top-up. There are many options at hardware stores and you can even make your own compost tea by soaking compost, leaves/weeds in the water you use for the planter!

## CONTAINER GARDENING

### Location

When you bring a veggie planter home, your first thought might be: "Where should this go?"

The answer will depend on what veggies are in your planter. This chart shows the sun requirements of the common fruits and veggies you may have now, or in the future.

And don't forget one of the best features of a planter garden: it can be moved! If you need to relocate a planter, ensure you're not drastically changing conditions (e.g. sun) as that can shock the plant.

What if you have a mix of high sun, low sun? Turn the shade plants away from the light. If the plants are wilting or leaves look "sunburned" then the

Low Sun 3-4 hours/day	Swiss Chard, Lettuce, Parsley, Arugula, Kale, Cabbage
Medium Sun 4-6 hours/day	Beets, Carrots, Peas Potatoes, Broccoli, Radishes, Turnips
High Sun 6-8 hours/day	Peppers, Tomatoes, Beans, Eggplant, Strawberries, Cucumbers, Squash

soil is too dry or your plants are getting too much light.

### Care

Check for dead stems or weak growth and remove it to help prevent disease and mold. You can pinch off dead leaves but plants often put out new growth! Some plants, like tomatoes, benefit from being trimmed (pruned) so they put energy into fruits instead of leaves. Pinch off the side shoots or tallest stem a tiny bit to get a bushier plant. Use herbs the same way, by pinching or snipping off the biggest leaves to let new ones grow.

### Water

Depending on the location of your planter, you will likely find it dries out quickly. It is important to check the soil in the planter every day to gauge when to water, especially on hot days. One of the best ways to know if your planter needs water is to stick your finger 2 inches (5 cm) deep into the

While we like to enjoy the look of a plant ready to eat, don't admire it too long without eating it! Fruits and veggies can spoil quickly if we don't use them.

Many of these plants will start to die back by the end of the summer. Don't be afraid to remove plants past their prime (like lettuce) and replace it with plants from a garden centre or seeds that will sprout if you keep them warm and moist.

soil. If the top two inches are dry, it is time to water!

When it is time to water, do so thoroughly. Your planter has drainage holes in the bottom to stop water from pooling. Slowly water the planter until you see water coming out of the bottom.

## CREATING PLANTERS

If you're happy with your veggie garden planter, you might decide to add more planters to your space or reuse this planter next year. Here are some tips for new or reusing planters:

**Planters:** Just about any container can be made into a planter! Repurpose old items, check out garage sales, get creative! (*If you want to grow heat-loving plants, choose a darker container that attracts more heat*).

**Drainage:** Increase or add drainage by drilling, punching, or carving at least 1/2 inch (1 cm) diameter holes.

**Light:** Ensure you have the right amount of light for the plant you'd like to grow.

**Food:** You need to feed your soil to feed your plants. Slow-release fertilizers are available from most hardware stores. You could instead use a liquid fertilizer mixed with water every two weeks.

**Plants:** Decide what you want to plant before looking at a nursery or seed packages. Consider the number of pots, sizes, and locations. Take a picture of your planters and bring it with you when plant shopping.

**Neighbours:** When choosing plants for your planter, make sure that they get along. The plants in one pot should require the same amount of light and moisture.

**Plant Tags:** When buying plants, read the tags! They tell you how much light, water, and food they needs. The tag also lists the plant's shape and size, which are important to consider for small and medium planters.

**Potting Soil:** Don't fill your planter with anything but good potting soil. It is specially designed to hold water, nutrients, and reduce disease. And don't be shy about filling up the planter. More soil equals a better ability to retain water and provides a larger margin for error for both watering and feeding plants.

**Patience:** Unfortunately, when we have more plants, we see more plants die. Even expert gardeners sometimes kill plants without meaning to! If you see dead parts on a plant, pinch them off and see if the plant puts out new growth. If the plant continues dying, remove it. Try to find out what the problem was (too dry? too wet? too hot?) and make adjustments.



Container gardening examples

*Credit: Laura Fullerton*

## Seed Saving

Regardless if your plants were grown in a container or a garden bed, many varieties have seeds that are easy to collect and preserve for the next growing season.

Some seeds only require drying out before they are ready to be stored. These include: peas, beans, marigolds, radishes, dill, cilantro, and nasturtiums.

Other seeds need to experience a fermentation stage, including tomatoes and squashes. This can be replicated by soaking them in water for two days. The seeds that sink should then be dried for later use.

Label and date all seeds types and store in a cool, dry area.





## Preserving the Harvest

Freezing, canning, cold storage (e.g. root cellar or similar), and dehydrating are tried and true ways to keep your harvest in your kitchen throughout winter. Here are some guides help you preserve the harvest:

1. Bernardin Guide to Home Preserving by Bernardin
2. The Ultimate Guide to Preserving Vegetables by Angi Schneider
3. The Farm Girl's Guide to Preserving the Harvest by Ann Accetta-Scott
4. Homegrown Pantry by Barbara Pleasant

## ABOUT US

Georgian Bay is part of Lake Huron and the Great Lakes Basin. It is known as Spirit Lake (*Mnidoo-gamii*) by the Anishinabek peoples and was named a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization in 2004.

The Georgian Bay Biosphere is a non-profit charity that works to protect the environment, create vibrant communities, and support a healthy economy. Working with many partners across the region, GBBR relies on grants, contracts, memberships, and donations to do our work.

Join us today! [gbr.ca](http://gbr.ca)

Sustainable food systems are an important part of being a UNESCO biosphere reserve. A key factor in sustainable food systems is knowledge sharing and building capacity for people to grow their own food. Since 2008, GBBR has led and partnered on food and garden programs with dozens of partners.

Gardening is a rewarding experience with many benefits. It is a powerful way for people of all ages to connect with nature, it can have significant environmental benefits, and can even be an economical option for fresh produce.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

1. The Georgian Bay Biosphere  
[www.gbr.ca/gardens](http://www.gbr.ca/gardens)
2. The Old Farmer's Almanac  
[www.almanac.com](http://www.almanac.com)
3. Ontario Seed Company  
[www.oscseeds.com](http://www.oscseeds.com)
4. Family, Food & Garden  
[www.familyfoodgarden.com](http://www.familyfoodgarden.com)
5. West Coast Seeds  
[www.westcoastseeds.com](http://www.westcoastseeds.com)
6. Planet Natural Guide  
[www.planetnatural.com](http://www.planetnatural.com)

## HAPPY GARDENING

Gardening on any scale is healthy for our bodies and minds. We wish you lots of luck, fun, and success with your garden!

Please take a minute to share a picture of your garden with us. We'd love to see your green thumb!



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