

Growing Hope  
Starting a Home Garden of Veggies, Flowers, and Herbs (Oh My!)

We know it can be a challenge to find yourself with more time than usual at home, but perhaps this is just the right time to try your hand at growing your own food, flowers, or herbs at home! Maybe you have always hoped to start a home garden but never had the time to dedicate to it. Now is a great time to grow at home – either on your own or with your family!

The Farm at Stonehill wants to support your home garden. Although people cannot volunteer at The Farm right now, we are still seeking ways “**to grow community around fresh produce.**” Here are some resources to get your home garden started! If you decide to embark on this home garden journey, we invite you to share your adventure with us on Instagram or Facebook.

#growinghope #Stonehillgrows



**WHY GROW?**

Perhaps the better question is, why not grow! What do you have to lose? After all:

- You're at home and have time available to care for a garden.
- Gardening would restore hope and tranquility by offering a chance to slow down and enjoy the outdoors.
- Growing your own food promotes self-sufficiency, a connection to food, exposure to something new, a sense of fulfillment, and the chance to try different foods and recipes.
- Gardening allows you to take on other projects, like starting a home compost pile, creating a rain barrel, and learning about food storage, such as pickling, canning, and making jams.
- Gardening protects the environment, pollinators, beneficial insects and animals, soil health, and more.
- You can practice creativity by taking photos of your garden, sketching, or keeping a garden journal.

## WHO CAN GROW?

Anyone – young or old, families, couples, and singles alike – who has the following:

- Seeds
- Soil
- Water
- Sunlight
- Time

Starting a home garden is a fun activity for the whole family to grow food and grow closer. The educational ties to gardening are also strong, particularly for young children who can connect gardening to math, science, art, history, and every other subject imaginable!

For children's activities and projects related to farming, [check out this site](#). If you're looking for a more formalized way to bring education into the home garden while your kids are away from school, look at the worksheets and academic games [here](#).

## WHERE TO GROW?

Determining the type of growing space you'd like to have, where to plant the garden, and how the garden will be laid out are all important steps in starting your home garden.

### Growing Spaces

You can have your garden outdoors in a raised bed or in-ground garden bed. Or, if you are limited by space, you can start a container garden or window box gardens. [This site](#) has some great ideas for how to start planting in those outdoor spaces at a reasonable price.

If you'd like to grow some plants indoors, you have that option, too! [This page](#) explains the best environment for indoor growing, and [this one](#) points out some household favorites that are easy to grow right in your kitchen. If you're being particularly thrifty with your food scraps, some can be planted to grow more food, as explained [here](#). If you're drawn to growing foods indoors with a kit, you can purchase some [like these](#).

### Planting Location

All plants, no matter which type of growing space you choose, need sunlight, soil, and water.

- **Sun:** The types of plants you'd like to grow will help you determine the [degrees of sunlight](#) they need, such as full sun, partial shade, or full shade. Based on the sun exposure in different parts of your yard or house, you can narrow down where to plant your garden.
- **Soil:** Healthy soil is what feeds your plants. So, knowing [what type of soil](#) you have and how to [make your soil healthier](#) is extremely important when starting a garden. [Compost](#) is a particularly helpful amendment for improving soil health. If you're worried about your soil being contaminated or need to know what nutrients might be lacking for your plants, you can do a soil test. Soil tests are available through [UMass Extension](#) or your local garden center. You can also get kits to [test the soil yourself](#).
- **Water:** Just like people, plants need to drink water regularly. Many different [methods for watering](#) a garden exist. If you're growing outdoors, be especially mindful of [conserving water](#). Knowing that your water is safe to give your plants is important, too. Check out [this site](#) and [this site](#) to learn about testing your water.

## Garden Layout

Once you've made sure your plants will have the right amount of sun, healthy soil, and water, you can start picking a layout for your garden. [Farmer's Almanac](#) has some great tips for deciding a layout and offers a Garden Planner program, which is free for a week. As you design the layout of your garden, keep [companion planting](#) in mind – some plants grow well together, and others do not.

## **WHAT TO GROW?**

Deciding what plants you'd like to have in your garden closely connects to knowing where to plant. You can choose to have a vegetable garden, fruit garden, herb garden, flower garden, or a little bit of everything! If you want to know some common, easy plants to start with, check out [this list](#). And [this one](#).

If you want to focus on a certain group of plants to grow, we've got you covered.

- **Vegetable Garden:** Everyone loves some curly kale chips or some vine ripe tomatoes to snack on over the summer. [This site](#) shares a good overview for veggie gardening. Check out [this site](#) to learn which veggies would be most cost-effective to grow at home. And [here](#) is a list of the best vegetables for beginning gardeners to grow.
- **Fruit Garden:** If your little one turns up his or her nose at broccoli and eggplant, they usually have a harder time resisting sweet, fresh fruits. [Here](#) are some favorite fruits people grow in a home garden. [The Learning Library](#) also has some great tips on growing fruit.
- **Herb Garden:** Herbs are a great addition to home gardens. They have culinary and medicinal qualities and add unique flavor to many favorite dishes. For a general herb gardening guide, visit [this page](#), [this page](#), and [this page](#). If you haven't grown herbs before, check out [this list](#) of herbs for a beginner's herb garden. Want to grow herbs indoors? Look [here](#).
- **Flower Garden:** [Flower gardens](#) not only bring beauty, joy, and hope to a garden, but they also bring pollinators! These helpful insects, birds, and small animals will pollinate your fruits and veggies, creating a bountiful harvest. [Here](#) are some favorite flowers that are easy to grow. Better yet, some flowers are edible, like the flowers listed [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)!



## **WHEN TO GROW?**

Knowing when to start planting your seeds may feel overwhelming, but if you use seeding and planting charts based on [your planting zone](#), it isn't bad. For example, if you live near Stonehill, you are in plant hardiness zone 6 and could use a planting chart like [this one](#). If you're interested in exploring [biodynamic gardening](#), you can even [plant by the moon](#)!

## HOW TO GROW?

### Preparing

- Determine what type of space you'd like to grow in, where the space will be, and what the layout will be (see "Where to Grow").
- Determine what seeds you'd like to plant, based on your growing space, interest, and taste buds (see "What to Grow").
- Obtain seeds. We recommend [Johnny's Selected Seeds](#), [High Mowing Organic Seeds](#), [Turtle Tree Seed](#), and [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#).
- Prepare [your growing space](#).

### Planting

- Some seeds can be started indoors and transplanted to your outdoor growing space later in the season. Other seeds can be direct seeded, or directly planted into the soil, outdoors. To learn about direct seeding versus transplanting, read up [here](#) and [here](#).
- If you start seeds indoors, try some of [these ideas](#) as alternates to seed starting trays.
- If you want directions about how to plant some common home garden varieties, check out [this site](#) and [this one](#).
- The seed companies you purchase seeds from, like Johnny's and High Mowing, also list detailed planting instructions.

### Caring

- Remember to give your plants plenty of [water](#).
- Be sure to [weed](#) and [mulch](#) your garden.
- If you have pests in the garden, fear not! [Farmer's Almanac](#), [Gardener's Supply Company](#), and [enki](#) can help.
- Looking for specific ways to care for your gardens?
  - Veggies [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)
  - Fruits [here](#)
  - Herbs [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)
  - Flowers [here](#)

### Harvesting

If you aren't sure when to harvest your produce, [The Farmer's Almanac](#) lists some helpful guidelines, and [Iowa State University](#) has a similar guide that also includes days to maturity. Follow these two sites, among others, to help you pick your produce and herbs when they're ready.

### Enjoying

- Once your produce is harvested, you can enjoy the fruits of your labor in a variety of ways! You can cook it, and make extra batches for the freezer, using recipes [like these](#).
- Learn the best way to store your produce once it's harvested to lengthen shelf life. Pages [one](#) and [two](#) help with storing in the short-term; pages [three](#), [four](#), and [five](#) have good tips on proper long-term storage (think root veggies over the winter).
- Learning how to preserve produce can be lots of fun, too. If you enjoy pickles on a sandwich, or jam on your toast, you can start making your own preserved produce from home-grown fruits and veggies! Check it out [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- Don't forget about the herbs from your herb garden! Some herbs are best enjoyed fresh, but others become even more flavorful when they're dried. Check out the best way to [dry](#), and then [store](#), your herbs. You can even experiment with [making your own herbal tea](#).

## **NEED A HAND?**

We hope you can utilize these resources to start your very own home garden and grow hope. If you need additional support, feel free to email us at [farm@stonehill.edu](mailto:farm@stonehill.edu) with your questions. You can also look into the tools and additional resources listed below.

### **Tools and Amendments:**

[Weeper Hose](#)  
[Drip Tape](#)  
[Vermont Compost](#)  
[Mulch](#)  
[Scuffle Hoes](#)  
[Broadfork](#)  
[Hori Hori Knife](#)  
[Garden Journal](#)

### **Other Resources:**

[Better Homes and Gardens](#)  
[Gardening Know How](#)  
[Gardener's Supply Company](#)  
[Garden Therapy](#)  
[Grow a Good Life](#)  
[Home for the Harvest](#)  
[Mother Earth News](#)  
[National Gardening Association](#)  
[Royal Horticultural Society](#)  
[Skippy's Vegetable Garden](#)  
[The Old Farmer's Almanac](#)  
[The Spruce](#)  
[University of Massachusetts Amherst](#)  
[Veggie Harvest](#)  
[You Grow Girl](#)

Thank you for helping us grow community around fresh produce! Enjoy your home gardens!

