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How to planting

Starting a garden from scratch can seem overwhelming, but breaking it down into smaller steps makes it more manageable. Begin by deciding on the type of garden you want - vegetable, herb, or flower - and choose plants that your family will eat or be willing to try. Consider annuals for their colorful blooms during the summer but replanting each spring, or perennials with shorter bloom times but returning year after year. Start small with just a few plants and observe your yard to determine which spots receive full sun versus partial shade. Most vegetables and flowering plants require 6-8 hours of direct sunlight daily. Check plant tags or consult with local garden center staff to understand how much sun each plant needs. Choose a relatively flat spot for your garden, as it's easier to maintain and less expensive than dealing with sloping terrain. Ensure easy access to a water source. Remove any weeds and sod in the area you plan to plant, either by cutting under the sod or using the lasagna gardening method, which involves layering newspaper, compost, and potting soil. To prepare your soil, have a soil test done through your cooperative extension office, which will provide you with information on what your soil lacks and how to amend it. You can also use DIY kits to get an idea of your soil's nutrient levels. Residential soil often needs a boost, especially in new construction, so adding organic matter like compost is a simple solution. If you're makin new beds for your garden, consider not diggin at all and just leavin the organic matter on top where it'll turn into humus over time. Earthworms will do the hard work of mixin it in with the subsoil for ya. If you do decide to loosen up the soil beforehand, make sure its moist enough to form a ball in your fist but not so wet that it falls apart when dropped. Use a spade or fork to gently turn over the top 6-8 inches and mix in any organic matter at the same time. When preppin beds, avoid walkin on them as it can compact the soil; instead, use some plywood boards to distribute your weight evenly. For beginners, its best to start with easy-grow plants like calendula, cosmos, or geraniums that are perfect for annuals, and black-eyed susans, daylilies, or pansies for perennials. Some veggies like cucumbers, lettuce, peppers, or tomatoes also work well, but make sure to check if theyre ready to be planted based on your climate and soil conditions. Don't forget to follow seed packet instructions when growin from seeds, especially when it comes to planting time, depth, and spacing. If you're feelin adventurous, try startin some seeds indoors a few weeks before the last frost date using containers or flats designed for seedlings and special seed-starting soil mixes. Just remember to keep the seeds moist but not wet, or they might rot! If all this seems like too much work, consider buyin young plants that you can just transplant into your prepared bed based on tag instructions. To determine when to water your plants, consider factors like soil type, humidity, and rainfall. Start with once a week, adjusting based on weather conditions and moisture levels. Check the soil depth; if it feels dry at 3-4 inches below the surface, it's time to water. Water slowly and deeply, avoiding runoff, and mulch around plants to retain moisture and suppress weeds. For optimal results, choose mulches that suit your garden type, use organic options to nourish the soil, and keep up with regular gardening tasks such as pruning and weeding. Garden planning is a great starting point, allowing you to decide what to grow where and avoid cluttered gardens. This approach also enables you to create colour schemes and structures that will keep your garden looking great throughout the year. More gardening tips on planning: Learn how to plant, prepare soil, and add mulch or fertiliser. To ensure plants thrive, make sure to weed and prepare soil before planting, and look up online instructions if unsure about a particular technique. Overwatering can be detrimental, so soak the rootball every week instead of watering daily. When starting a new veg patch, consider starting small and working on one area at a time. You can use cardboard or black plastic to suppress weeds while you work on another section. Keep an eye out for pests, as some populations can become infestations. Monitor aphids, slugs, and snails to keep your plants safe. More tips on dealing with pests: controlling slugs organically, dealing with aphids, and organic pest control. Composting kitchen and garden waste is beneficial for the environment, wildlife, and your garden. Let the waste break down for a year before using it as a mulch around plants. More gardening tips on composting. Pruning can seem intimidating, but learning proper pruning techniques will reward you with healthy, well-groomed plants that flower and fruit better. Follow guidance on when to prune, how to make cuts, and shape the plant. We have many pruning guides and videos to help you get started. Lastly, be kind to wildlife by avoiding pesticides and other harsh chemicals in your garden. Instead, create a welcoming environment for insects and their larvae. Wildlife can be beneficial to gardens, as they help control pests and pollinate crops. Birds eat slugs, snails, aphids, and caterpillars, while bees pollinate food crops. A diverse range of wildlife, including frogs, toads, hedgehogs, butterflies, and birds, can coexist with a garden. Creating habitats for wildlife and learning to share the space is key to enjoying the garden. By doing so, gardeners can experience the benefits of having these creatures around. It's the ideal time to select the perfect location for your garden, considering the requirements of various fruits and vegetables. Most fruiting plants need at least five hours of direct sunlight per day, while greens, herbs, and root veggies can tolerate partial shade. Southern gardens may benefit from late afternoon shade, whereas northern gardens require full sun. Think about accessibility and site protection to prevent neglect and wildlife damage. Consider the layout, bed size, and type to maximize growing space. Raised beds or self-watering containers can be effective solutions for small spaces. Work your magic in your garden. Basic gardening tools are a must-have; check out "The Best Garden Tools Help Make Gardening Easier" for my favorite picks. Steer clear of cheap plastic tools and opt for real metal ones instead. Invest in tools that fit your size to avoid injuries. Good tools save time, effort, and your back. Keep them clean and sharp like a good knife. Learn how to keep your tools in top shape on "Cleaning and Sharpening Garden Tools". Before starting, you need to know about your soil. Is it acidic, alkaline, or neutral? What's the mix of sand, clay, silt, rocks, and organic matter? Check for contamination risks and nutrient levels. Good soil has plenty of organic matter. You can spot these characteristics by looking at the soil or use home tests or lab tests. Lead contamination is a problem in some areas; most crops prefer pH 7 (neutral) soil. Balanced nutrients and organic matter are key. Preparing your soil is crucial. Sod needs to be cut, tilled, or smothered with wet newspaper/cardboard. Fall is best for preparing, but spring works too. Most plants love deep, well-drained, fertile soil rich in organic matter. Straw mulch helps prevent weeds and enriches the soil over time. Start a garden and enjoy healthy, vibrant soil that improves year after year. I add different types of organic matter like compost, worm castings, and mulch each year to feed my plants, soil, and microbes. Check out "Feed Your Plants, Soil and Microbes" for more tips. For the best seed selection, especially heirlooms, grow your own transplants from seed. My favorite seed sources are in "Best Heirloom Seeds". Dave's Garden Watch Dog is a great resource for researching companies before ordering. The seed starting calendar helps determine which plants thrive directly seeded or as transplants. When buying plants or seeds, opt for pots that match the plant's size to prevent root bound stress. Be cautious of seasonal plant sales in parking lots as they may be exposed to baking asphalt or chemicals like neonicotinoid pesticides. Regular watering is key, but also consider potentially harmful chemicals on treated plants. Before planting, familirize yourself with basic guidelines such as seed depth (3 times the diameter) and transplant containers' depths. Wait until frost danger passes for heat-loving plants, and harden off young transplants outside. Utilize printable calendars to plan your seed sowing and 5-Minute Gardener resources like the USDA school garden program's handy pdf for planting depth, spacing, germination days, and harvest times. Make time for your garden or adapt with low-maintenance items like sprouts or herbs. Water plants around one inch per week, avoiding overwatering which can lead to seedling rot. Use organic methods like compost tea for extra nutrition and healthy microbes while watering. Well-nourished, healthy plants tend to have minimal pest issues, and most problems have an eco-friendly solution. Harvest crops promptly at maturity for best quality, especially for leafy greens that are typically 'cut and come again'. Finding the Right Spot for Your Garden: A Guide to Success When it comes to gardening, having the right spot can make all the difference. Make sure you leave enough space between plants to allow them to grow and thrive. Research your plant variety online or check the packaging for specific spacing requirements. Next, choose a spot that gets plenty of sunlight. Most plants need at least 6 hours of direct sunlight per day. Some plants, like begonias and lettuce, do well in partial shade, while others can tolerate full shade. Finally, select an outdoor growing spot with good drainage. Avoid areas where water tends to collect, as this can lead to root rot and other problems. By following these simple tips, you'll be well on your way to creating a thriving garden that brings joy and nourishment to your life. The rain stops are generally poor planting spots. You can amend poor draining spots by mixing sand into the soil. For pots, you'll need to adjust watering. Annuals like marigold or coriander might dry out in warm climates, so keep an eye on them. To start, test your soil's pH for outdoor planting. Many plants do better in slightly acidic soil. You can buy a testing kit from a home improvement store and adjust the soil as needed. This isn't necessary for potted plants, which will use potting soil instead. Mix limestone into the soil to raise the pH or add sulfur/aluminum sulphate to lower it. If your yard has poor soil in certain areas, consider moving your plant. For pots, choose between plastic and clay - each has its own advantages. Plastic pots are lightweight, retain moisture well, and are easy on plants' roots, but might lead to overwatering. Clay pots provide better air circulation, which can be beneficial for some plants. Ceramic pots offer a middle ground, resisting water slightly better than clay. Whatever pot you choose, make sure it has drainage holes in the bottom. If not, add a layer of pebbles at the base to keep roots dry. The ideal pot size is one that matches your plant's size or allows for some growth - too small and the plant may struggle, too large and water can collect and rot the plant. Finally, opt for an organic potting soil mix specifically designed for potted plants, avoiding dirt from your yard. 1. Prepare the pot by moistening the soil slightly and following the manufacturer's instructions for water addition. 2. Carefully transfer the plant to its new container, supporting the root ball during the lift process. Ensure the stem remains undamaged. 3. Prune any damaged or problematic roots before planting, taking care not to break up the root ball as much as possible. 4. Create a garden bed by clearing away other plants and spreading a layer of gardening soil. 5. Dig a hole that is 2-3 times wider than the plant's root ball to allow for proper growth space. 6. Place the plant in the hole, ensuring the root crown is at the correct depth in the soil. You'll need to dig a hole that's deep enough for your plant's root ball, which can be around 8 in (20 cm) depending on the type of plant. If you're planting trees or large bushes, the hole will need to be even deeper. Research online to find out what specific growing conditions your plant needs. Some plants like tomatoes and potatoes require more depth, with soil going up as high as the lowest leaves. Place the plant in the hole, centering it so the stem is straight, and fill it with soil. Compact the soil gently by pressing down on it with a tool, making sure to cover the roots completely. Avoid stepping on the soil, which can damage the roots. If needed, add some organic topsoil from a gardening store. Water the soil until it's moist but not waterlogged. This should help most plants adjust without drowning them. You may need more water for large trees and bushes, and you can test the moisture by rolling the soil between your fingers - it should form a ball that doesn't break when dropped. Apply an organic mulch around the plant to insulate it, retain water, and block weeds. Use something like pine bark, spreading a layer about 1-2 in (2.5-5.1 cm) deep and as wide as the leaves or branches reach. You can also keep plants with exposed roots in a water-filled bucket or wrapped in moist straw/newspaper until planting. Before transplanting, give your plant an hour of watering and leave it in its original container until ready to dig up. Then, add more water until the soil is moist - this helps protect the plant from transplantation shock. Once planted, keep adding water every week (about 1-2 in or 2.5-5.1 cm) unless your plants have different needs. Check the soil's dryness by touching it, and use a hose, watering can, or irrigation system for flowers, grasses, and small bushes. Potted plants will need more frequent watering. In warmer weather, you might need to water more often, especially for trees and large bushes that require deeper water penetration. Use a dripping hose for these types of plants, letting the water drip near them for about an hour. When nurturing your plants, it's essential to check the soil moisture by gently touching it with your finger. 5 Once you've established your flowers, you can start adding liquid fertilizer according to the instructions on the bottle. You can find these at gardening centers and apply them directly to the soil. Typically, you should begin fertilizing about a week after planting. Indoor plants may require additional doses every two or three weeks following their initial application, while outdoor flowers should be fertilized approximately every 2-3 months between March and September. For more extensive plants like trees, consider using slow-release fertilizer once a year. Simply spread the fertilizer evenly around the base of the plant, taking care not to touch the stem, then water it in. Mixing a small amount of fertilizer into the soil when planting can also be beneficial for most types of plants, including flowers and perennials. Larger bushes and trees usually don't need fertilizer during their first year. Instead, wait until spring after planting and apply it as needed.

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