

# Growing Food in your Yard

Have a Yard?  
Interested in  
growing food?  
Yes! But...

## “I don’t have time”

*Lack of Time was rated as the top barrier in our study. Read on to learn how to overcome this barrier.*



## “I don’t know how”

*Many people think they lack the know-how to grow food. This guide shows several ways to gain knowledge.*

## “I don’t have enough space”

*Even if you want to keep some lawn, you might have more space than you think.*



## “It’s too expensive”

*Seeds don’t cost much, and maintenance costs for gardening can be very low.*

This guide is for people who have a yard and want to grow food. Based on our research on urban farmers in the Pacific Northwest Coastal Region, we have identified actions that can be taken to overcome some of the barriers that prevent people from growing food.

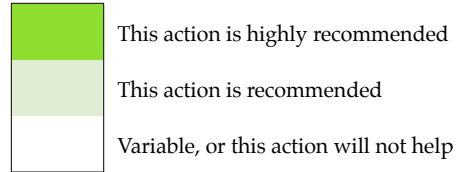
### **Growing organic food in your yard will help build towards a sustainable society in many ways, including...**

- Enhanced nutritional value of food
- Enhanced economic, environmental, and social health
- Increased food security by supplying an easy-access cheap source of fresh produce
- Improved relationships within communities from sharing food
- Creation of urban biodiversity and habitat

- Local job creation and economic development
- Diversion of urban organic waste from landfills if household organic waste is composted in the garden
- Reduced materials required for food packaging
- Decreased use of synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and genetically modified organisms
- Decreased use of fossil fuels in agricultural practices, food systems, and transport
- Less mining of phosphorous for fertilizers

# Recommended Management Models

This chart summarizes ways of growing food. Find your barrier to growing food on the left, then go across and find a matching solution. A faded green square means the action is recommended, and bright green means the action is *highly* recommended.



	1) Start and maintain your own garden	2) Get expert advice	3a) Support a Commercial Urban Farmer	3b) Hire a Commercial Urban Farmer
I don't have enough time				
I don't have enough space				
I don't know how				
It's too expensive				



## Management Options

### 1) Start and maintain your own food garden.

Gardening will give you more time outdoors, a connection to your food, and more control over your diet. Growing your own food is inexpensive and can help save on grocery costs. If you start small, you won't have to spend much time.

### 2) Get expert advice.

Urban Agriculture Consultants and Edible Landscape Designers can provide homeowners with advice to design and implement a garden that provides higher yields. Consultants offer a wide range of services from

simple suggestions to fully developed implementation strategies.

**3a) Support a Commercial Urban Farmer.** Under this option, a Commercial Urban Farmer uses a household's yard and water to grow crops that they harvest and sell. In return the yard owner receives a share of the food grown.

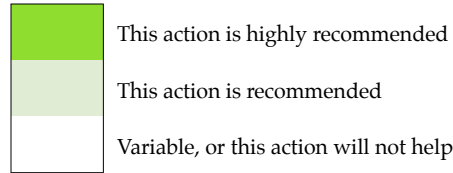
**3b) Hire a Commercial Urban Farmer to grow food in your yard.** In this model, the household keeps all of the food and the Commercial Urban Farmer is paid for their labor.

*Note.* Commercial Urban Farmers may have certain criteria (size, amount of sunlight) for the yards they farm, thus reducing the number of people that can benefit from this management model. Also, results from our study suggested there are often not enough Commercial Urban Farmers to meet demand.



# Recommended Actions

This chart summarizes actions that can be taken to overcome some of the barriers facing you. Find your barrier to growing food on the left, then follow across and find a matching solution. A faded green square means the action is recommended, and bright green means the action is *highly* recommended.



	1) Co-operate with others	2) Yard-share	3) Grow perennials	4) Mulch	5) Water more efficiently	6) Take a course or workshop	7) Use intensive gardening methods	8) Use permaculture principles
I don't have enough time								
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## Recommended Actions

**1) Cooperate with others.** Share resources such as tools and seeds. Get your neighbors and friends to help out in your garden.

**2) Yard-share.** Use a neighbor's unused yard to grow food, or find more space by joining a community garden. For yard-sharing in Canada please visit: [www.sharingbackyards.com](http://www.sharingbackyards.com).

**3) Grow more perennials.** Perennial fruit, nuts, berries, and herbs require less maintenance and increase property values.

**4) Mulch your garden.** Mulch is any material spread on the soil surface to conserve moisture, check weed growth, and protect the plant from excessive heat or cold. Common mulch materials are straw, cardboard, and wood chips.

**5) Water more efficiently.** Water during cooler times of the day. Use drip-irrigation or timer systems to save time and water, or dig a swale - a shallow trench laid out along the land's contours that allows water to enter the soil to keep moisture where you need it.

**6) Take a course or workshop.** Use books, websites, workshops, or courses on a variety of topics, including intensive gardening methods and permaculture principles.

**7) Use intensive gardening methods.** Use any gardening method that makes the most of limited space, including polycultures, interplanting, and biointensive methods.

**8) Use permaculture principles.** Permaculture is a set of techniques and principles for designing sustainable human settlements (Hemenway 2009). It is a design system where resourcefulness and minimization of inputs characterize the garden. Visit [permacultureprinciples.com](http://permacultureprinciples.com) for more background information, and [permies.com](http://permies.com) for interactive forums.

# Additional Resources

## Resource List

### Online Resources for the Pacific Northwest

[City Farmer](#)

[Cascadian Edible Landscapes](#)

[Seattle Tilth](#)

[Village Vancouver](#)

[Victoria Lifecycles Urban Agriculture Hub](#)

### Books for DIY Gardening

[Gaia's Garden](#) by Toby Hemenway

[Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades](#) by Steve Solomon

[How to Grow More Vegetables](#) by John Jeavons

[Maritime Northwest Garden Guide](#) by Seattle Tilth

[Square Foot Gardening](#) by Mel Bartholomew

[The Urban Homestead](#) by K. Coyne and E. Knutzen

[Your Farm in the City](#) by Lisa Taylor and Seattle Tilth



This guide was created by Maarten Dankers as part of a Master's Thesis in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability, conducted with Tara McNerney and Luke Callahan. A complete copy of our thesis can be found [here](#).

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