

Vegetable gardening is a hobby for many in Utah. Research shows that gardening reduces stress, makes us healthier by working in the garden and through eating what we grow. However, traditional large gardens are slowly becoming less common with younger generations. They still have the desire to grow crops, but homes with yards are becoming quite unaffordable. Many purchasing town homes or condos that do not have much private outdoor space available. Although this can be discouraging, all is not lost for those who want to garden who may not much or any space to do so.

Many areas, including Nephi, have community gardens that do not charge much. You are expected to maintain your assigned plot. If you want a bigger growing area, you can sometimes get more than one plot.

Growing vegetables on a driveway or back patio in raised bed planters or large buckets is also an option. You can grow a surprising amount of produce this way. There are many books available explaining how to do so. For example, I know a local gardener who can get up to 60 lbs. of produce from one 25-gallon bucket. He uses succession planting, transitioning from cool season crops to warm season back to cool.

Local garden centers often give away or sale used nursery pots inexpensively that are great for upcycling to grow vegetables. If you grow in pots or raised beds, you must use artificial potting soil in the pots and a commercial raised bed mix in the raised beds. These mixes are sharply draining, where as soil from your yard is not. Using yard soil in these usually makes for failure in containers especially.

Some vegetables and many herbs can be successfully be grown indoors as long as a few concepts are followed. One is that natural light from windows alone is usually not sufficient for these plants, especially in the winter. And so, I like to grow my indoor vegetables next to a window (a south or west window is preferred) with supplemental florescent or L.E.D. lights six inches above the tops of the plants. The extra light increases growth and productivity, but may keep plants more compact since they are not stretching for light.

You can build a wooden or PVC light stand frame quite inexpensively and mount florescent shop light to it. The lights are hung from chains so that they can be moved up or down according to plant needs. Although L.E.D. bulbs work well, they can be expensive. Florescent bulbs are much less money and are fine. You also do not need to spend lots of money on special grow light bulbs. There are many commercial light kits available locally and online. Vegetables that I have grown indoors include salad greens such as lettuce, mustard greens and arugula. I have also grown dwarf tomatoes that only grow 12 – 18 inches high that are great indoors also. They must be started from seed that is available online. A few dwarf tomato varieties include Micro Tom, Tiny Tim, Red Robin and Red Velvet.