

6 Tested Tips For Your Self-Sustaining Garden

Anyone looking for a survival diet must consider a self-sustaining garden.

You'll be prepared for any impending disaster by growing enough vegetables that you and your family can live on. If you're living off-grid, survival gardens bring food security. An added bonus: Self-sustaining gardens benefit the environment, by contributing to plant diversity. So where do you start?

Tip 1: Plan Your Garden

Know your goals. Make a list of the produce your family eats and how much. You need to grow at least as much as you consume and, ideally, a little more. Some plants are lost to disease, weather, and pests. Your crop yield can also change, depending on the season, soil, watering, and weather. You also want to consider crops, such as tomatoes, that produce many vegetables or fruit on one plant. You won't need as many of those as other crops, such as carrots, which only produce one vegetable per plant. Use a garden planner to determine row length and crop yield. Research different crop varieties, keeping in mind your climate and the length of the growing season where you live.

Find the right location. Consider sun exposure, remembering that certain plants are more durable than others. Begin with a basic summer garden. Depending on your choices, the general rule is to plant in the spring, after the last frost has lifted. You don't need a huge yard but you need space to grow enough food, depending on the size of your family. It generally takes a quarter-acre to 2 acres of land to feed a family of four. You can start on the small side, if necessary,

and expand gradually. The bottom line is the larger your family, the more land you'll need.

Tip 2: Choose the Right Plants



Once you've determined where to locate your plot, it's time to decide on which plants to grow and how many. You definitely want low maintenance crops for your self-sustaining garden.

Potatoes are high on the list for many survivalists. Spuds are low-calorie, but they are a good source of vitamins C and B6, as well as phosphorus, potassium, and niacin. Some experts say potatoes are so important you should dedicate 30% of your garden space to growing them. Taters can withstand some periods of dry weather, but if it hasn't rained for quite some time, you will need to water them. Deep watering is best.

[Squash](#) is another excellent plant for your survival garden. While it's kind of a "love it or hate it" vegetable, it is self-sustaining and nutritious. And winter squash has a long shelf life and can last in a cool, dry place for weeks or even months.

You may want your plants to end up outside, in the garden, but some of them need to be started [indoors](#). These include bell pepper, cabbage, carrots, and radishes. Tomatoes are also great for a survival garden, as each plant produces several fruits. Tomatoes are also self-fertile, meaning each flower

can pollinate itself.

Tip 3: Extend the Growing Season

When you rely on your garden for your food supply year-round, make the most of the growing season. Mid to late summer is the best time to start a second planting season. It's also known as succession planting. When one crop is harvested, another is planted in its place. This can actually help protect and build your soil base all year long. Getting your garden ready for the extended season isn't hard, as long as you're [prepared](#).

Deciding what to plant for the cooler weather depends on where you live. The climate could make the decision for you. Hardy vegetables tolerate a hard frost (25-28 degrees Fahrenheit) and taste best when they mature in cool weather. Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, spinach, and turnips are on that list. Planting in the correct season leads to a bountiful garden. Keep an eye on the timing of your second season plants so you can plan menus. Shorter days and cooler temperatures slow down plant metabolism so they take longer to reach maturity, sometimes as long as three weeks.

Tip 4: Compost Your Waste



When living in survival mode, there's no garbage pick up and no landfills, so you put everything to use. All living things die and decompose, so use them to feed the plants in your garden. Grass clippings, vegetable stalks, and leaves, even

kitchen scraps like eggshells can be used as compost. Add a shovelful to your planting holes each spring to provide

nutrients to the crops. Use it as mulch to retain moisture around the plants and keep weeds away.

The benefits of compost are many. It acts as a soil conditioner. If you're having trouble getting certain fruits and vegetables to grow, it could be due to poor soil structure. Compost adds essential nutrients to the plants and helps the dirt hold in moisture. As plants thrive, you need to water less often. And composting gives you a way to recycle kitchen scraps and garden waste, reducing the need to find a place for your trash.

Tip 5: Commit to All Organic

If you're living off-grid, besides being self-sustaining, your garden must be organic. No chemicals, pesticides, or anything artificial. Chemicals cause damage to both the environment and your family's health. Besides, you're also in survival mode so where would you get them? Go all natural!

Manage weeds in your garden with mulch. This keeps the soil cool and moist and prevents light from reaching the weeds. Some mulch attracts certain insects, which seek out and eat weed seeds. For those that survive, old fashioned weed pulling is the answer. If you're unable to pull out the root, at the very least, cut off the top of the weed. You can also put the kibosh on weeds by close plant spacing. This keeps the sunlight out by shading the space between the crops.

Fertilizer is food for your plants. Many elements and minerals will help your garden grow but the three vital nutrients are nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Mix used coffee grounds with yard waste like dead leaves or dry straw and grass clippings to add nitrogen to the soil. Dry out your eggshells and crush them up when you get a few dozen. You can mix them directly into the soil or add to your compost. There is a very small amount of nitrogen and phosphorus here, but mostly you are getting calcium. And add fruit, such as banana peels, to

compost to fertilize your garden with potassium.

Tip 6: Keep Pests and Disease Under Control

Some of the smallest pests can cause the biggest damage to your plants. You want your family to enjoy the vegetables you've grown, not the bugs. The best way to keep the aphids away is to grow healthy, disease-free crops. Using the previous tips on fertilizer, weed control, and composting can help accomplish this. Regularly inspect plants for damage and remove or pinch off diseased plants or leaves. Water regularly. Attract healthy insects, including wasps and ladybugs, that prey on damage-causing bugs such as aphids. Planting chives, cilantro, dill, or fennel will bring ladybugs to help keep your garden healthy. They also act as a deterrent for the bad bugs. And consider using substances that we consume regularly, but pests can't handle. Flour, salt, and beer can be toxic to insects, slugs, and snails.

If "ready for anything" is your goal, a self-sustaining garden is a must. You and your family need to eat and, as you've learned, you *can* do it yourself!



**Do You Have These 3 Healing Plants
In Your Garden?**

Watch Video