



MEDIA RELEASE

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Grow Your Own Produce Section

Fresh, incredible flavours right from your own backyard

TORONTO, Ont. — With the growing popularity of the eat local movement, there is a resurgence in people growing their own fruits and vegetables mere steps away from their kitchen doors.

Rows of tomatoes, patches of strawberries, climbing vines of peas, fragrant (and delicious) herbs ... the variety and selection of what can be grown in Canada is diverse. The health benefits are two-fold — nutrient-rich food and calorie-burning exercise — it will save you money and it is pretty easy to get started, says Niki Jabbour, an expert in growing edibles who will be presenting two seminars at [Canada Blooms](#) on March 13th.

“Anyone who has enjoyed the sun-sweetened flavour of homegrown tomatoes, the fresh snap of French filet beans, or the cool crispness of baby cucumbers will understand the benefits of a vegetable garden,” says Niki, a best-selling gardening author and one of the gardening enthusiasts behind [savvygardening.com](#). “Even a small planting is a rewarding way to shave some serious dollars off your grocery bill, enjoy the great outdoors, stay fit and eat healthier. Plus, if you have children or grandchildren, it's a fun way to introduce them to the wonder of nature and where our food comes from.”

Niki offers the following tips for getting your own vegetable garden started.

Pick the right site. The best place is a spot that receives plenty of sunshine — at least eight hours each day — and has decent soil. If your soil is less-than-ideal, don't panic! Instead, build a raised bed to grow your vegetables, filling it with quality garden soil and compost.

Start small. I always tell novice veggie gardeners to keep it small! A manageable 4-by-8 foot raised bed or even a few pots of edibles will be much easier to care for than a large garden. Start with a handful of your favourite crops and once you've got a handle on planting, tending and harvesting, you can always decide to go bigger the following year.

Keep your soil healthy. Healthy soil is the key to a productive vegetable garden and I keep my garden in top shape by working in several inches of compost each spring and between successive crops. Organic fertilizers, like fish emulsion or liquid kelp, can be used to boost crops during summer, and a mulch of straw or shredded leaves beneath crops will keep soil cool and moist.

Plant your menu. Grow what you like to eat, but my favourites include 'Sungold' tomatoes, 'Lemon' cucumbers, 'Emerite' pole beans, 'Super Sugar Snap' peas and 'Peppermint' Swiss



Chard. Use quick growing veggies like leaf lettuce, arugula, radishes or spinach to fill in empty areas of the garden. They'll germinate within days and be ready to harvest after just a month. Most herbs are also very easy to grow and if you like to cook, you can save money by growing your own parsley, basil, thyme and oregano.

Protect your harvest. Gardeners who wrestle with rabbits may wish to try growing vegetables and herbs in tall containers on their sunny decks and patios. A simple barrier like a fence or sturdy chicken wire can also be used to surround raised garden beds. For a small garden, use lengths of PVC conduit to form 'hoops' over the bed and top with chicken wire or bird netting to exclude rabbits and deer. In my own 2000 square foot vegetable garden, I have an electric fence - a simple wire - that surrounds the plot and keeps the veggies safe from Bambi.

Add some colour. I like to include colourful annual flowers like nasturtiums, zinnias, sunflowers and sweet alyssum in the vegetable garden. Not only are they gorgeous, but they'll attract pollinators and beneficial insects, which can help ensure a bumper crops of homegrown veggies.

Co-located with the National Home Show, Canada Blooms takes place March 13th to 22nd, 2015, at the Direct Energy Centre at Exhibition Place in Toronto. For more information or for tickets, please visit canadablooms.com. Follow Canada Blooms on Twitter [@CanadaBlooms](https://twitter.com/CanadaBlooms) and Like it on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CanadaBlooms).

About Canada Blooms

Canada Blooms is an annual world-class festival that connects people to the joys and benefits of nature through experiences with gardens and flowers by promoting, educating, inspiring and celebrating all aspects of horticulture. A not-for-profit organization that gives back to the community throughout the year by funding community garden projects around Ontario, Canada Blooms is also dedicated to providing the community with horticulture expertise, education and resources on an ongoing basis.

Now in its 19th year, Canada Blooms was founded by Landscape Ontario and The Garden Club of Toronto. Each year it is supported by a committed group of partners, sponsors and volunteers. Canada Blooms has been named One of Ontario's Top 100 Events by Festivals and Events Ontario and One of North America's Top 100 Events by the American Bus Association.

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