

WHAT CAN YOU GROW IN YOUR SPACE?

20 vegetables at a glance

Container sizes are beginner-friendly recommendations. Harvest times vary by variety, weather and starting method.

CROP	 POT	 SPACE	/ SQ FT	 SUN HRS	 HARVEST	 UP?	VALUE
Leaf lettuce	2-3 gal	6-9"	4	4-6+	30-60	-	●●●●●
Spinach	2-3 gal	4-6"	4-9	3-6+	40-50	-	●●●●●
Arugula	1-3 gal	3-4"	9-16	3-6+	35-60	-	●●●●●
Kale	5 gal	12-18"	1	4-8+	50-70	-	●●●●●
Swiss chard	3-5 gal	6-9"	2-4	3-6+	55-65	-	●●●●●
Bok choy	2-3 gal	6-10"	4	4-6+	40-50	-	●●●●●
Radish	1-2 gal	2-3"	16	4-8+	22-35	-	●●●●●
Carrot	3-5 gal	2-3"	16	4-8+	60-95	-	●●●●●
Beet	3-5 gal	3-6"	4-9	4-8+	55-65	-	●●●●●
Green onion	1-2 gal	2-3"	16	6-8+	25-90*	-	●●●●●
Bush bean	3-5 gal	3-6"	4-9	6-8+	50-60	-	●●●●●
Pole bean	5-10 gal	4-6"	row	6-8+	60-75	YES	●●●●●
Pea	3-5 gal	2-4"	8-9	6-8+	50-70	YES	●●●●●
Tomato	5-20 gal*	18-24"	1/2-4sf	6-8+	65-90*	YES*	●●●●●
Pepper	5+ gal	14-18"	1/1-2sf	6-8+	65-95*	SUP	●●●●●
Eggplant	5-7+ gal	18-24"	1/2-4sf	6-8+	60-90*	SUP	●●●●●
Cucumber	5-10 gal*	6" up	1-2	6-8+	50-70	YES	●●●●●
Zucchini	10+ gal	24-36+"	1/4-9sf	6-8+	40-60	LIMIT	●●●●●
Kohlrabi	3-5 gal	4-6"	4-9	4-8+	45-60	-	●●●●●
Broccoli	5-7+ gal	18+"	1	6-8+	60-100+*	-	●●●●●

* See the detailed guidance inside. POT = recommended size. SUP = support; LIMIT = limited vertical benefit.

BEGINNER

Lettuce / radish / chard

LESS SUN

Spinach / arugula / bok choy

GROW UP

Pole bean / cucumber

FASTEST

Radish / baby greens

TINY SPACE

Lettuce / chard / peppers

CONTAINER SIZE

Don't ask for the smallest pot

Ask what size gives you a good chance of success.

MINIMUM

It can work.

Compact cultivars; attentive care. Faster drying, more frequent watering, possibly smaller yields.

RECOMMENDED

Start here.

The beginner sweet spot: efficient footprint, manageable weight, useful moisture reserve and strong plant performance.

IDEAL

More forgiving.

Choose when space and weight allow. Especially useful for large fruiting crops and hot, exposed sites.

CROP	MINIMUM	RECOMMENDED	IDEAL / NOTE
Leaf lettuce	1/2-1	2-3	wide, shallow
Spinach	1-2	2-3	wide trough
Arugula	1	2-3	surface area
Kale	2-3	5	one mature plant
Swiss chard	2	3-5	longer season
Bok choy	1-2	2-3	dwarf types
Radish	small	1-2	6-8" deep
Carrot	root-led	3-5	depth is critical
Beet	1-2	3-5	8-10" deep
Green onion	1	1-2+	go wider
Bush bean	2	3-5	several plants
Pole bean	5	5-10	stable trellis
Pea	2	3-5	compact types
Pepper	2-3	5	7-10 for bells
Eggplant	3-5	5-7	compact types
Zucchini	5	10+	footprint matters
Kohlrabi	2	3-5	compact roots
Broccoli	5	5-7+	one per pot

TOMATO: TYPE CHANGES THE RULE

Dwarf/patio: 5 gal recommended. Determinate: 10 gal. Indeterminate: 15 gal, ideally 15-20+ with strong support.

DEPTH + WEIGHT MATTER

Carrots need a pot about 2" deeper than the mature root. Large wet containers are heavy: check balcony load, drainage and wind exposure.

SPACING

Productive, not overcrowded

Fit enough plants to use the space well - without inviting competition, disease or poor airflow.

16 / SQ FT	9 / SQ FT	4 / SQ FT	1 / SQ FT
about 3"	about 4"	about 6"	large crops
• radish • carrot • green onion	• spinach • beet • bush bean • kohlrabi	• leaf lettuce • bok choy • young chard	• compact kale • trained crops*

LEAFY GREENS HAVE TWO ANSWERS

SPINACH	Baby: up to 9 / sq ft	Larger: about 4
SWISS CHARD	Young: up to 4 / sq ft	Mature: about 2
KALE	Full size: about 1 / sq ft	Baby leaf: much denser
LETTUCE	Young leaf: about 4 / sq ft	Heads: give more room

THE BIG-CROP REALITY CHECK

TOMATO 1 plant / 2-4 sq ft Tight single-stem training needs pruning, support and airflow.	EGGPLANT 1 plant / 2-4 sq ft Compact cultivars can use less.
CUCUMBER 1-2 / sq ft, trellised Sprawling plants can occupy 4-9 sq ft.	ZUCCHINI 1 plant / 4-9 sq ft Productive, but not compact.

CLOSER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER
Dense planting needs fertile soil, dependable water, enough light, airflow and regular harvest. Struggling plants often need more space - not more fertilizer.

LIGHT + TIME

Will it produce well?

No vegetable loves deep shade, but some crops tolerate limited direct sun far better than others.

 3-4 HOURS	 4-6 HOURS	 6-8 HOURS	 8+ HOURS	
WORTH TRYING	GOOD RANGE	MOST CROPS	WARM CROPS	
lettuce spinach	+ bok choy + kale	beans / peas peppers / tomato	tomato / pepper beans / eggplant	
FAST ABOUT 3-5 WEEKS	Radish 22-35 d	Baby lettuce 25-30 d	Baby arugula 3-4 wk	Green onion sets 25-35 d
MEDIUM ABOUT 5-8 WEEKS	Spinach 40-50 d	Bok choy 40-50 d	Bush bean 50-60 d	Kohlrabi 45-60 d
LONGER SPACE MUST EARN ITS KEEP	Carrot 60-95 d	Tomato 65-90 d*	Pepper 65-95 d*	Broccoli 60-100+ d*

READ THE CLOCK CORRECTLY

Usually from seed
radish / carrot / beet / beans / peas / greens

Often from transplant
tomato / pepper / eggplant

Less light often means a later harvest. Treat maturity dates as estimates, not deadlines.

GROW UP, NOT OUT

A support is not always a climber

True climbers turn a narrow strip of soil into several feet of productive growing space.



POLE BEAN
NATURAL CLIMBER
trellis / netting / strings



CUCUMBER
VINING TYPES
rigid trellis / A-frame



PEA
TENDRILS
fine netting / wire mesh



TOMATO
TRAINED UPWARD
stakes / strings / tall cage

SUPPORT ONLY

PEPPER
Stake or cage when fruit loads branches.

EGGPLANT
Stake to prevent leaning or splitting.

DETERMINATE TOMATO
A cage supports the bush; it is not a vine.

BUSH BEAN
Usually self-supporting; shelter from wind.

CAN ZUCCHINI GROW VERTICALLY? SORT OF.

Zucchini does not climb. You can tie its stem gradually to a sturdy stake and reduce the footprint somewhat, but it will not behave like a cucumber vine.

OUR RATING: LIMITED

PLACE + SECURE YOUR TRELLIS

PLACE TALL CROPS

In the Northern Hemisphere, the north side often prevents shading. Observe your actual balcony light first.

PLAN FOR WIND

Mature vines become wind sails. Anchor containers, stakes, trellises and railing planters securely.

GOOD PAIRINGS

Pole beans + greens. Cucumber + radish succession. Tomato + low-growing lettuce early in the season.

WORKSHEET

Plan the space you actually have

A sparse first draft beats an overfilled perfect plan. Measure, observe the sun, then choose.

1 MY SPACE

LOCATION

USABLE WIDTH X DEPTH

2 LIGHT CHECK

DIRECT SUN HOURS

WINDIEST / HOTTEST AREA

3 MY CROP SHORTLIST

CROP	WHY I WANT IT	POT / SQ FT	SUN OK?	UP?

4 CONTAINER DECISIONS

[] MINIMUM

Only if space forces it

[] RECOMMENDED

My default choice

[] IDEAL

When weight + room allow

5 SKETCH THE LAYOUT

Remember:
Tall crops away from shorter crops. Leave room to water.
Anchor trellises. Plan the next sowing.

FIRST ACTION

WHAT WILL I MEASURE, BUY OR SOW FIRST?