

Start A Survival Garden | Complete Guide For Preppers

In this guide on how to start a survival garden we'll go over all the basics you need to know to get you started in the world of prepper farming.



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When SHTF, and there is no food at your local supermarket, even the most carefully planned stash of canned foods and dry goods will eventually run out.

If you have no idea how to grow your own food you're, well... at a disadvantage, to put it nicely.

If you live in a suburban or rural area and have even a modest amount of outside space, you should consider starting a *survival garden*.

What, exactly, is a survival garden?

The concept of a survival garden is simple. Grow the food that you and your family need to live. Survival gardening is nothing new. People have been doing it since before the wheel was invented.

But let's be real. A survival garden is not something you "put in" over a weekend or even the course of a summer.

Sure, with the help of a rototiller and a truckload of well-composted manure, you can certainly get a lot of crops in the ground pretty quick. But a survival garden is more complex; involving perennials, succession plantings, and potentially small animals.

And one thing needs to be really clear: *a survival garden is completely different from a typical summer backyard garden.*

A survival garden is a lifelong project.

By the time you need to survive off of your own food production, you better know what you're doing.

Remember, your long term goal is to produce as much survival food as possible in the space that you have.

If society collapses, you need to have a farming system in place that allows you to produce abundant harvests year after year.

You need to learn not only how to grow enough calories, but also how to keep your soil healthy when there are no fertilizers at the farmer's coop or hardware store.

In this informative guide on how to start a survival garden, we'll go over all the basics to help you get going in the world of prepper farming.

Consider this a crash course introduction on everything you need to know to start and maintain a survival garden.

Grab a cup of coffee, settle in, and get ready for an in-depth explanation of how to create the best survival garden for when SHTF.

In a hurry? If you just want to get to our conclusions, here are our top picks and recommendations!



\$19.00



\$217.99



\$276.12

Table Of Contents [show]

Part One: How to Start a Survival Garden

Once you've made the decision to start a survival garden, you need to set realistic goals and expectations for yourself.

Unless you grew up in a farming family, you probably have no idea what you're getting into.

As previously mentioned, a garden that is meant to fully sustain you in times of crisis is a lifelong project. You won't get there overnight – especially if you are starting from scratch.

You need to have patience.

That being said, if you have, access to a tractor or rototiller (or the physical stamina to do the clearing work yourself), and a way to bring in a load of compost - you *can* get started **right now**.

There is no need to wait until you have the “perfect plan” or even to know what you are doing.

As you cultivate your knowledge and experience, you will expand and grow your garden.



Things to Keep in Mind as you Start Planning your Survival Garden

#1. Start Small and Plant for Productivity

Before you ever put your first seed in the ground, you need to pull out a notebook and start thinking. What exactly do you want to grow?

The obvious answer to this is “Everything!” if the idea is to survive off your harvest.

But now is the time to think strategically. In one 10 ft. long garden bed you can harvest many more pounds of potatoes than you can corn. Carrots will keep a lot longer than lettuce will.

The idea is that you plant out your survival garden with crops that will produce as much **survival food** as possible.

Having said that, when starting your survival garden, it is very important to start small.

If you do not know what you are doing, you need to take advantage of the fact that S*** has NOT hit the fan, and take some time for learning. It's important to be enthusiastic, but it's also important to be *realistic*.

The first year you plant, try sticking to crops that are easy to grow, productive, and that you will actually enjoy eating.

Some really great crops for a beginning survival gardener include:

- Potatoes
- Zucchini
- Peas
- Carrots
- Green Beans
- Cucumbers

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#2. Know Your Zone and What Plants Need

Before you invest in seeds, set yourself up for success by doing your research first.

The importance of understanding how the weather where you live impacts the growth of your survival garden cannot be underestimated.

If you live in a northern climate, you need to know your approximate last frost date in the spring and first frost date for the fall. You need to be aware of the average rainfall or groundwater levels to anticipate meeting watering needs.

Average daily temperatures throughout the growing season will also have a big impact on when you should plant and how your plants will grow.

In warmer climates, you may get to grow year-round. Some plants may tend to bolt with high heat or stunt with lower temperatures.

All of this you need to know before you get those seeds in the ground.

Find where you live on a hardiness map and figure out which zone you are planting in. This will allow you to choose plants and varieties that are most likely to thrive in your location.

Once you know that what you want to plant is appropriate for the zone, you need to *investigate the specific needs of each vegetable you are planting.*

Seed packets will give you basic information to help you get the seed planted, but you should dig a little deeper to make sure you know how to help each plant thrive.

Be sure to look up the following information regarding each type of vegetable you want to plant:

- How much water or soil moisture does it need?
- What type of soil will it thrive in?
- How long do the plants take to produce a harvest?
- How much space do the plants need?
- Will the plant thrive in full sun or should it have some shade?
- Are they vining plants that need trellising?

The answers to these questions will help you plan out your backyard survival garden layout.



#3. The Best Survival Garden Layout

The thing about survival gardens (and gardening in general) is that each one will be unique to its space and the gardener who is working the land.

When you start planning out the space where you are going to start your survival garden, take a look around, and do an inventory of what the space has to offer.

- Do you have any existing trellises or vertical space for vining plants such as fences, outside walls of your home, or outbuildings?
- Where are the sunniest areas?
- Where are the areas with the most shade?
- Does the light orientation (sun/shade) change throughout the growing season?
- What kind of soil does the land have? Are there any areas of possible soil contamination?

Lots of folks like to put in traditional straight rows of crops organized by variety.

Other folks like to do a non-traditional layout that takes advantage of natural features and structures that are already present on the property. Still, others like to build wide raised garden beds.

There are a lot of gardening techniques and philosophies that impact what your survival garden layout will look like.

You have to decide what works best for you and the space you have available

#4. Pest Control and Fertilization

If you plant it, they will come.

Bugs are an inevitable part of the gardening experience. You need to know how you're going to handle them *before* they become an issue.

And if you want to actually harvest produce from your garden, you're going to want to fertilize your plantings.

When you start your survival garden, you should have a plan for how you are going to deal with these two fundamental issues.

You can opt to apply a chemical pesticide or use quick-acting synthetic fertilizers, but as prepper farmers, it is recommended that you *avoid these products*.

While they may seem like an easy option, they will probably not be available after SHTF.

True survival gardens should be managed as if those products do not exist.

Why?

Because if the day comes that you have to survive on what you can grow, those products probably won't be available. It's best to never become dependent on them.

watch the video below for some DIY plant fertilizer ideas for your prepper survival garden.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnNJwQ86c4w>

#5. What to do with Your Survival Garden Harvest

Part of the process of planning your garden is dreaming about eating the fruits of your labors.

There is nothing more delicious than a sun-ripened tomato or a freshly picked cucumber. Green beans from the garden cannot be beaten for their amazing flavor and texture.

But remember, in your survival garden you want to harvest *as much food as possible*. This food will need to be put up to get you through the winter or scarce times.

Have you ever thought about what you might do with 50 lbs of zucchini all at once or 30 lbs of green beans a week? What will you do with your harvest of beets and carrots?

Part of the planning process for starting a survival garden is estimating how much you will be eating fresh and then *having a plan* for what to do with the bulk of your harvest.

You basically have five main options for preserving your survival harvest for later: root cellar storage, canning, drying, fermenting, and freezing.

We'll delve deeper into this subject later on.

*If you would like to learn more about storing food long-term, check out our guide on how to build your **survival food stockpile**.*

#6. Planting Perennials

The presence of perennials is *obligatory* in a true survival garden.

If you have space, you need to consider adding fruit and nut trees, medicinal plants, and other productive perennials as permanent fixtures in your survival garden and home landscaping.

In fact, you should *plant as many as you possibly can* in the space you have available to you.

It may take a few years to reap a harvest, but the benefits of perennials are countless and invaluable.

Imagine having an almond or chestnut harvest every year? Or being able to pick up bushels of apples or pears in your root cellar?

And don't forget, when SHTF, medicines may not be readily available.

Did you know that the vast majority of pharmaceuticals are derived from plants?

You'll be grateful for your collection of medicinal plants and herbs found in your survival garden when that day comes.

Perennial plants give abundant harvests with a minimum of labor-intensive care. What they mostly need is time.

The perennials that you will want to consider planting have a lot to do with the hardiness zone where you live.

Do some research to find which productive plants grow best in your area and what their growing needs are.

Part Two: Planting and Maintaining your Survival Garden

Now that you've read through a basic overview of what you need to think about when starting a survival garden, let's explore a little deeper into the following subjects:

- Maintaining Soil Health
- Crop Rotation and Companion Planting

- Pest Control
- Creating Fertility
- The Best Survival Garden Crops
- Choosing Seed
- Processing and Storing Harvests
- Saving Seeds
- Incorporating Small Animal Production

Keep in mind that this guide to starting a survival garden is meant to push you in the right direction and give you the inspiration you need to get started.

There are *entire books* written on each of the topics we will be discussing below.



Maintaining Soil Health

YOUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON THE HEALTH OF YOUR SOIL.

Did you notice that sentence was written in all caps and in bold?

~~That's because it is the most important thing you need to keep in mind as you~~
develop your survival garden.

Have you ever seen the 2015 survival film 'The Martian'? Without giving away any details, a guy stranded on Mars grew potatoes in Martian soil and poop. He survived.

The point is, that with enough organic matter, even the most barren sand can become productive soil for planting. Once you have healthy soil, you have to be constantly vigilant to maintain it.

History is ripe with examples of people who didn't maintain the health of their soil, only to come face to face with tragedy. Have you ever heard of the **Dust Bowl**?

It's also full of examples of societies that have maintained their soil health and have thrived. How do you think some **Asian civilizations** managed to survive for over 3,000 years?

You get the point.

When it comes to making decisions about how you are going to plan your survival garden, *you need to make soil health and maintenance a top priority.*

Be aware of the potential factors for erosion on your property.

Pay careful attention to the topography of your land. Pay special attention to rainwater runoff and drainage patterns. Even a small change in elevation can lead to dramatic soil erosion if poorly managed.

Investigate the potential for salinization on your land.

Depending on where you live, poor watering techniques combined with poor soil conditions can lead to irreparable damage from **salinization**.

Understand the importance of Organic Matter.

The most important factor in maintaining the health of the soil in your survival garden is the amount of **organic matter** that is present in the ground. With enough organic matter, you can prevent erosion or salinization problems.

Simply put, *organic matter is the stuff that is on its way to breaking down and becoming fertile soil*. This includes the debris left over after harvesting, mulch you may add to your crops, or compost, for example.

Organic matter also includes the “living” part of your soil that lives to break all that good stuff down – the fungi, bacteria, microscopic critters, and even worms that churn everything together.

Even if your backyard survival garden is small, in prepper farming you will need to be vigilant about maintaining the organic matter found in your soil.

Here are some ways you can easily do that:

- Adding well-composted manure to your planting area.
- Mulching around your plantings
- Creating compost from leftover crop residues that you then add back into your soil when planting.

- Using permanent paths and beds.
- Minimizing tilling.



Crop Rotation and Companion Planting in your Survival Garden

Another way to protect your soil and produce as much food as possible is to practice crop rotation and companion planting.

Crop rotation refers to two different practices.

1. Not planting the same crop in the same place year after year.

Different crops have different needs. Some plants, like beans, will actually improve your soil. Other plants are heavy feeders and need a lot of fertility.

A lot of crops are light feeders. Rotating the plantings in your survival garden (no matter how small the garden space) will help prevent exhausting your soil's resources.

2. Planting your crops strategically so you can replant after harvesting the first crop.

This can also be referred to as *succession planting*. This allows you to take complete advantage of the growing season to maximize your harvest.

You can easily plant warm weather tomatoes after harvesting a crop of cool weather radishes in the same space. This does require you to have a nursery established, essentially letting you “replant” with transplants.

But if calculated correctly, you can harvest up to four crops in the same space in one growing season!

Companion planting is a concept that embraces the idea that you can grow different crops together so that they help each other grow.

It might sound a little hippy woo-woo, but it actually works. It just requires you to think outside the box a little bit.

Did you know that you can plant tomatoes right up on the edge of a perennial asparagus patch?

After you harvest your last asparagus spears, plant the tomatoes (and maybe even a basil plant or two) and you will notice fewer asparagus beetles and vigorous tomato growth.

The complex relationship between different kinds of plants, their roots, and the enzymes they put into the soil contribute to overall soil health and balanced use of the nutrients and fertility.

The other important thing companion planting does?

It helps minimize the need for pest control. Certain plants have odors that repel the pests of other crops. The carrot fly, for example, is repelled by leeks.

The onion fly that commonly attacks leeks, is repelled by carrots. Plant the leeks and the carrots together and you most likely won't see either of the two pests.

Pest Control

Pests are, unfortunately, a very real threat to your survival garden. When you see your potato's getting invaded by potato bugs, it's likely your first instinct will be to run to the hardware store to find the best insecticide available.

But remember, in prepper farming, it's best not to become dependent on those products.

When SHTF and there is no pesticide at the hardware store (or there is no hardware store, for that matter) – what are you going to do?

It's best to use this time of ease and abundance to prepare for rough times ahead.

Learn how to maintain your survival garden without any kind of purchased chemicals. This will save you a lot of headaches in the future.

Aside from practicing companion planting, you should learn some basic pest control techniques.

Do you know that the most effective form of pest control (and fungal control, for that matter) is simple soap, oil, and water? Really. It's that simple.

Mix one cup of any oil (soy, corn, canola, etc.), with one tablespoon of a base liquid soap. Add two tablespoons of that mixture to one quart of water.

Shake and spray on the pests that are invading your garden.

There are a lot of **basic remedies** for common pests and other plant problems that you should have no problem making after SHTF.

You should also consider planting certain insecticidal crops such as the pyrethrum daisy, marigolds, hot peppers, and garlic.

These plants can be easily processed into potent pesticides and just their presence in the garden will keep a lot of pests away.



Creating Fertility

Creating fertility in your survival garden goes hand-in-hand with conserving the health of your soil.

Consistently adding high-quality organic matter into your garden beds assures healthy soil *and* abundant fertility for your growing plants.

Fertility must be balanced to provide appropriate levels of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, and calcium. Too much or too little can be bad for your soil and damaging to your plants.

It's also possible to not have the nutrients in the *right proportions* that plants need to grow their best.

Another factor that could cause you problems is the general acidity of your soil. This can impact the accessibility of those valuable minerals.

And to top it off, certain plants need certain nutrients in specific combinations while other plants will need something else.

Understanding **nutrient balance** will take years of learning, observing, trial, and error.

But seriously, don't be intimidated by what seems to be an overly scientific study of fertility.

With enough high-quality, well balanced, and fully finished compost you can correct nearly any problems that may present themselves in your plantings and soil.

The Best Survival Garden Crops

Ok, so now we get to the part that you are probably dying to know.

What do I plant in a survival garden?

The answer to this is a bit complex. Remember, a survival garden is not your ordinary backyard garden. Your goal is *to grow as much food as possible* in whatever space you have.

Even if you are just getting started, you can easily grow an impressive amount of food in a small space with very few crops.

All of the previously mentioned, easy-to-grow crops for the beginning survival gardener are typically generous producers. They are staples in most gardens

for a reason!

But as time goes on, and your garden expands, you will want to seriously consider your crops for their bulk, calorie count, and production of organic matter to return to the soil.

What do you need to eat to survive?

Humans need to eat a mix of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. We also need a complex mix of vitamins, minerals, and amino acids to keep us healthy.

There is an entire field of study dedicated to the nutritional needs of humans. This article is not going to go into the fine details of a balanced survival diet.

Why?

Because when survival is on the line, you will eat whatever you can.

All the same, the best plants for a survival garden should cover all of your basic nutritional needs.



High Calorie, Nutrient Dense Foods for a Survival Garden

In addition to the easy-to-grow vegetables mentioned at the beginning of this informational guide, consider growing:

- **Sunflowers** – If you have the space for them, sunflowers produce seeds that have a high fat, protein, and mineral content. In a post SHTF society, you could easily cold **press oil** from your sunflower harvest. They are also very useful for companion planting, providing structure for vining plants
- **Fava Beans** – Fava beans are very high protein. They also enrich the soil and provide a lot of organic matter.

- **Sweet Potatoes** – Sweet potatoes provide fewer calories than regular potatoes but are still a vitamin dense carbohydrate. These are easy to grow and provide essential vitamins A & C, together with B family vitamins and valuable carotenoids. The leaves of the sweet potato can be used as fodder for small animals.
- **Jerusalem Artichokes** - The long-storing tubers produced by this plant are similar to potatoes but provide more vitamins and minerals. The leaves and flowers of the plant make an excellent pesticide.
- **Amaranth or Quinoa** – These "new" grains kept native people alive for millennia. They are incredibly rich in vitamins, minerals, and proteins. The leaves of the plants can even be eaten fresh like spinach.
- **Corn** – Corn was another staple in the indigenous diet. It provides complex carbohydrates, vitamins, and essential minerals. It's also fantastic for companion planting. The "three sisters" planting combination is a well-known combo for proven productivity.
- **Winter Squash** – These plants take up a fair amount of space, but their fruits provide vital vitamins and minerals. They are also long storing and energy-dense.

- **Herbs and Seasonings** – This can certainly include garlic and onions, but should also include crops such as oregano, parsley, celery, and basil. These herbs can be dried down and preserved to “spice” up your food later on.
- **Leafy Greens** – This is a large family of crops that can include lettuce, spinach, bok choy, kale, or collard greens. Leafy green vegetables are an important source of vitamins, minerals, and (surprisingly) protein despite not being carbohydrate dense. You should not dedicate a large amount of space to your leafy greens, but they are important to include for the sake of balanced nutrition.



Piteba Oil press and easy fill set

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Nearly all of these crops provide abundant organic matter for composting back into your soil, while simultaneously providing nutrient-rich, calorie-dense survival food.

This list is by no means complete. Every year you will want to experiment with different crops and different varieties to discover what grows best in the amount of space that you have.

Trial and error are an important part of developing your survival garden.

You will eventually discover which crops work best in the space that you have available to you.

Choosing Survival Garden Seeds

You may have never thought of it before, but *the seeds you plant are just as important as the vegetables you harvest.*

Many garden seed companies sell seed for patented varieties or varieties that are F1 Hybrids. If you save seeds from these plants, what grows from those seeds will look nothing like what you expect.

It's also common for many companies to sell GMO (genetically modified) seed that has a "terminator" gene in it, making the seeds in your harvest useless for replanting.

Make sure you **order seeds that are clearly labeled "open pollinated"**. This often shows up on labels as OP.

What does that mean?

Open pollinated seeds grow into plants and produce vegetables from which you can continually harvest the seed and replant, year after year.

This is a survival garden, right? One would assume that commercial seed distributors won't exist after SHTF.

That's why you will want to get in the habit of planting **open pollinated varieties** and harvesting your own seed for the next planting season.



16,500 Non GMO Heirloom Vegetable Seeds Survival Garden 40 Variety Pack

\$19.00 

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Processing and Storing Survival Harvests

The most satisfying part of having a survival garden is putting up your harvest.

There are essentially five ways to preserve your food for long term storage.

1. Freezing

2. Canning

3. Cold Storage

4. Dehydrating

5. Fermenting

Remember, a survival garden is meant to sustain you after society collapses.

Just like you don't want to get dependent on using chemical fertilizers or insecticides, you don't want to be dependent on freezing your harvest. Even though it is admittedly very useful while it is an option.

Besides, freezing is impractical for most of the crops you'll be harvesting. Considering that, let's assume that freezing is simply not an option (unless you have long winters, but we won't go into that here).

So, how do you preserve your survival garden harvests?

Canning:

First off, let's be honest about canning. It is a relatively modern addition to the world of food preservation.

In this day and age, it's incredibly practical. When done right, it's especially safe for being off-grid. We can store our harvests for years without fear of spoilage or contamination.

But we need to be realistic here.

There is a small but very real problem with canning that does not make it a preferred method for post-apocalyptic food preservation.

Canning requires canning lids and jars.

After SHTF, canning will most likely become an impractical method of food preservation due to shortages of canning supplies.

If you cannot imagine life without canning, you should add **canning lids** and jars to your list of survival garden supplies.

You may even want to purchase a couple of blocks of canning wax and study up on the old-time methods of sealing canning jars with paraffin.

With a hefty stockpile, and taking extreme care of your supplies, you should be able to continue canning years after new canning supplies can no longer be purchased.

Modern canning is easy but requires careful attention to detail. Here is a great **how-to guide** to get you started.



Ball Wide Mouth Mason Jar Canning Lids 12 Dozen or 144 Lids Total

\$78.95 

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Cold Storage:

This is probably the most practical method for storing your survival garden harvests. Food kept in cold storage will not last indefinitely, but it allows you to keep your crops fresh until the next harvest comes in.

What is it?

The Root Cellar

The root cellar is the *ideal solution* for storing your survival garden harvest.

They have existed practically since humans invented agriculture, particularly in cold climates with strong winters.

Root cellars can be inside your home (usually in the basement), or they can be detached. They can be as simple as a hole in the ground or they can be complex feats of engineering. What they all have in common is that they are underground, or partially underground.

A root cellar takes advantage of the earth's natural cooling and humidity levels to keep your harvest fresh.

Root crops are particularly suited for long term cold storage. You can store winter squash, certain kinds of fruits, vegetables such as cabbage, onions, and garlic. Vegetables that you have processed through fermentation will also hold up well in a root cellar.

It is very important when you are selecting the varieties of crops you will be planting that you select varieties that are meant for long term storage.

Certain varieties of carrot, for example, have been bred to be eaten fresh and will not hold up in a root cellar.

Each crop has its particular way of preparing it for long term storage.

Crops like apples last longer with careful packing and preparation. Others, like potatoes, just need the dirt shaken off. If you plan to use a root cellar to store your harvest, be sure to investigate the best methods for each crop.

To find our best recommendations on survival food storage options, check out our guide on the [best emergency food storage containers](#).

Dehydrating:

Another efficient way to store your survival garden crops is through dehydrating them.

When you dry down your beans, your corn, or your amaranth seed, you are participating in an age-old food conservation process.

Dehydrating is great because it can be done for free and reduces the bulk of your crop. If done right, it will keep your food preserved for years.

Literally, anything can be dehydrated. Fruits, vegetables, culinary and medicinal herbs, even root cellar staples like carrots or potatoes, can all be dried down.

If you want to get fancy, you can invest in a [high quality food dehydrator](#).

But remember, when nothing is normal anymore, you might not want to count on an electrical dehydrator.

Luckily, there are endless **designs of food dehydrators** that rely on solar energy or **wood heat**.

If you live in an area that is particularly sunny and warm, you could simply place your harvest on sheets of metal up on your roof or across a table outside.



Excalibur 3926TB Electric Food Dehydrator Machine with 26-Hour Timer, Automatic Shut Off and Temperature Control, 600-Watt, 9 Trays, Black

\$276.12 

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How to dehydrate your food:

Dehydrating your survival garden harvest is easy, though a bit labor-intensive. If you are not using an electric dehydrator, make sure you can count on a spell of dry sunny weather.

1. Finely slice the fruits and vegetables you are going to be drying down.
2. Evenly place each slice over the surface of your drying racks or sheets of metal.
3. If you are not using an electric dehydrator, you should flip each slice of food when it is halfway through the drying process. This allows for faster, more even drying.
4. When you have dried down your food successfully (this will look different for each kind of vegetable) you should store it in an airtight container.

Fermenting:

Fermenting harvests is another of the principal manners of food conservation that people have practiced going back thousands of years.

If you have a good root cellar, you can keep your fermented foods for up to nine months or a year (be sure to check on them periodically after the 6-month mark).

It is a natural choice for conserving your survival garden harvests.

The most well-known example of fermented food is sauerkraut. Lots of people eat that stuff but have no idea what it is or how it is made. They're shocked to find out that it is fermented cabbage.

The really cool thing is that *fermenting actually adds to the nutritional value of your stored food.*

That's definitely a plus if you are eating exclusively out of your survival garden

Fermenting is not the ideal way of conserving food for a lot of crops, though it works fantastically for others.

Try fermenting:

- Beets
- Carrots
- Cabbage
- Large Radish Varieties
- Onions
- Garlic

You can make some especially delicious recipes combining ingredients.

So how do you successfully ferment your summer harvest?

There is a little bit of science to it, but anyone can do it.

1. Start by carefully washing the vegetables to be fermented.
2. Chop them to the desired size and pack into the container of your choice.

Glass or ceramic is best.

3. Fill the container with salt brine.

4. Weigh down the veggies inside so that nothing is poking through the surface of the water.

5. Let sit at room temperature for 2 – 4 weeks then store in a cool location.

If you want to learn more about fermentation, check out this more [in-depth explanation](#).

Seed Saving

As mentioned, saving your seed from one planting season to the next is a fundamental aspect of maintaining your survival garden year after year.

You want to be as independent as possible in your food production, right?

So why get in the habit of buying seeds every year when you can harvest them from your own plantings?

[Saving seed is easy](#), and every survival gardener needs to know how to do it.

- Investigate the best techniques for saving the seed from the different crops you have planted.
- Identify the healthiest plants of each crop, and dedicate them for seed production.
- After cleaning and processing your seed, dust it with finely powdered activated charcoal or ash (to keep the bugs, fungus, and mold out)
- Store your survival seeds in tightly sealed containers in a cool, dry location.

- Make sure to harvest enough seed each season to provide seed for the next five planting seasons. This may sound excessive. but it's useful if you lose an entire crop to bugs, drought, or for whatever reason. You *always* want to save more seed than you could possibly use.
- As you replace old seed with fresh seed, trade your varieties with other survival garden enthusiasts! Open pollinated seed is a great barter item. Spreading around your favorite varieties also works as an insurance policy. If you do lose your seed, you can easily get it back if lots of people are growing it.



Incorporating Small Animal Production

Finally, the last thing that you will want to consider when starting your survival garden is how to incorporate small animal production.

Wait a minute... Aren't survival gardens, well... gardens? Wouldn't having animals turn it into a survival *farm*?

For many people, having small animals can be an intimidating "leap" into a level of food production that they are just not ready to take on.

Producing small animals is beneficial for your survival garden, even if you are a vegetarian.

There are two principal benefits of small animal production:

1. Animals process garden waste into high-quality fertilizer.
2. Depending on the animal and the way you care for them, they can provide **natural insect control and tilling services.**

If you choose to 'harvest' and process the meat from your small animal production, you can count on a steady supply of critically important protein and B vitamins that can otherwise be a challenge to produce.

The best animals to consider for a small space are rabbits, chickens, and guinea pigs.

Each of these animals can be accommodated into even the smallest of backyard survival gardens. They are also typically permitted under urban or suburban zoning regulations.

Rabbits, chickens, and guinea pigs are easy to feed without relying on commercial concentrated animal feeds. They also provide a quick return on your investment, both in fertilizer and in offspring.

If you have space and zoning allows, you may even want to consider investing in a goat or two or maybe even small breed pigs.

Goats can provide a source of milk and cheese. Small pigs, if well controlled, are excellent tillers of the soil.

Each animal has its specific needs and can contribute to a survival garden in different ways.

You may even want to consider starting your survival garden with a flock of chickens *before* you ever put the first seed in the ground.

Why?

After a year of raising hens, you will have a pile of nicely aged chicken manure to add to your first garden beds. Eggshells can even be saved and ground up to use in natural pest control remedies.

There are endless reasons why *every survival garden should eventually have some kind of small animal production.*

Do your research to make the best decision for your situation.

*Once you have your survival garden crops harvested, be sure to check out our guide on the **best methods for survival food preservation**. These will ensure your prepping is not in vain and you'll have plenty of food if SHTF.*

Part 3: Tying Everything Together in Your Survival Garden

As you can tell, starting a survival garden gives you a lot to think about.

Don't be intimidated by the overwhelming amount of information out there. Every single section that's written in this informational survival gardening guide is the subject of literally dozens of books.

If you want to start a survival garden, *just do it*.

Stick that shovel in the ground, and plant your seeds.

Do not set yourself up for failure by having unrealistic expectations or by trying to do everything at once.

As you gain experience and knowledge, you will gradually work your way toward self-sufficiency.

Survival Garden Frequently Asked Questions

Can I have a survival garden if I live in the city?

Technically speaking, it would be incredibly difficult to grow 100% of the calories that you need to survive in an urban environment.

All the same, there are excellent techniques for growing a lot of food in tight spaces.

Research the different ways of growing food such as vertical farming and container planting.

Urban survival gardeners can also band together and establish a community garden space.

This may require some organizing on your part and meetings with local politicians, but the benefits of having more space to plant far outweigh the headaches of not having enough space to grow your food.

You should also take up urban foraging. Many **trees** and plants in public spaces produce incredible amounts of food that simply go to waste.

How much food do I need to feed a family of 4?

So here's the deal.

After SHTF, even with the most abundant survival garden ever, you will need to change your expectations on how much and what you will need to eat to survive.

You will be eating a more basic, unprocessed diet.

You will also need to eat *more* if you consider the increase in physical activity that survival requires.

Adult males over the age of 18 will need **around 3000 calories a day** if they are highly active. Adult females will need around 2000, if not more. Children will need slightly less.

You will need a lot of food for four people for an entire year.

That is why it is so important that your survival garden should produce calorie dense foods.

Is it really possible to grow all the food my family needs to survive?

Growing all of the food that your family will need to survive in your survival garden is a pretty tall order.

But it can be done. Take a look at the modern settlement of [Tristan da Cunha](#). This small community is essentially self-sufficient and has been for a couple hundred years.

You can also take a look at [Native American](#) history.

Obtaining enough food for your family to thrive should include foraging and gathering of wild foods.

It should also include the practice of bartering excess crops and seeds for foodstuff that you do not produce yourself.

A survival garden is just one (very important) aspect of what will eventually be an entire way of life dedicated to providing food for your family.

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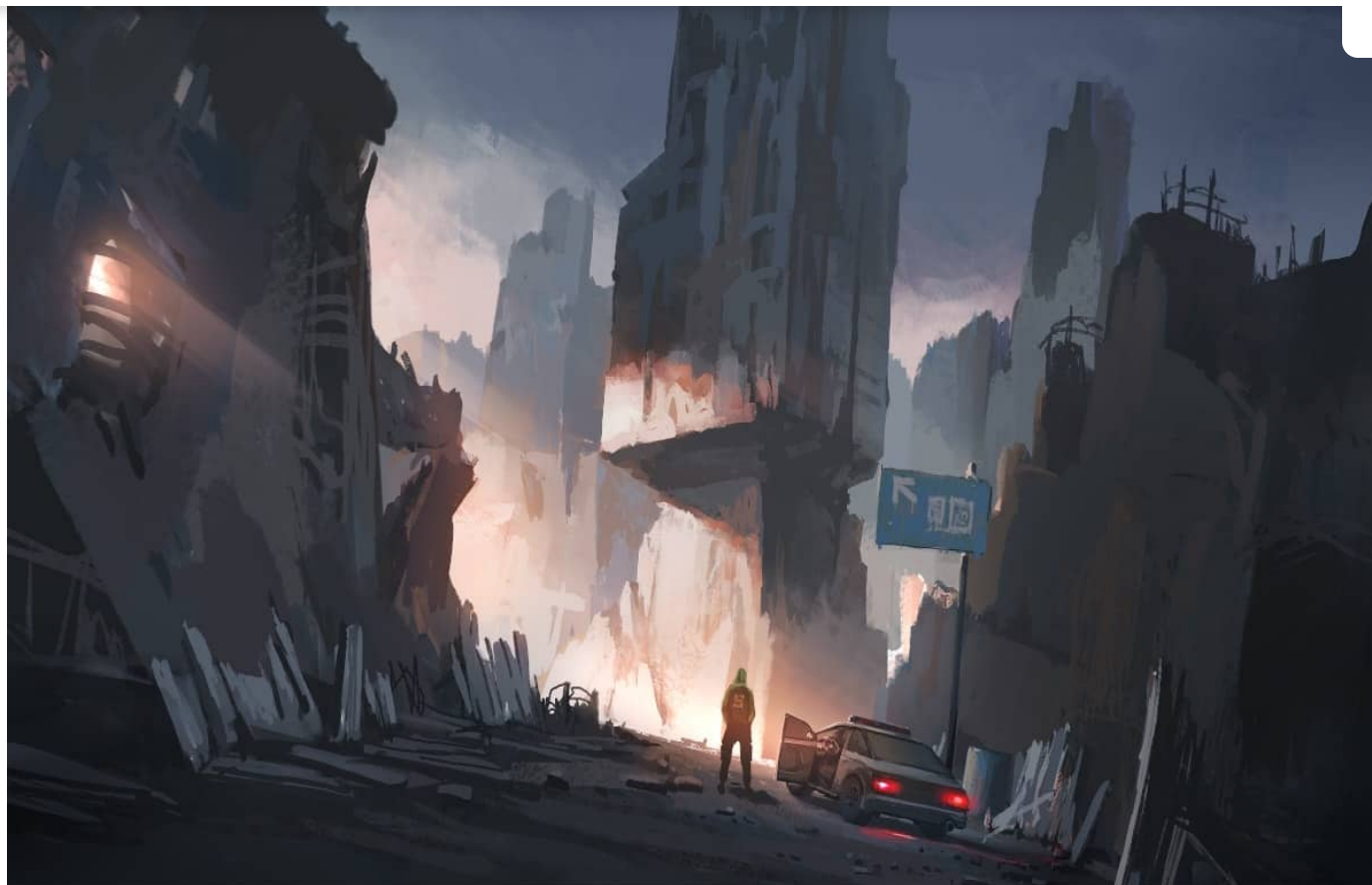
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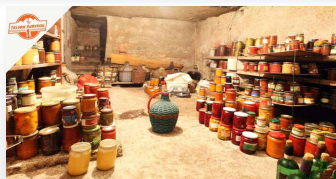
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