

A FREE BEGINNER'S GUIDE · ST. LOUIS, ZONE 7A

Grow a Little

How to start growing some of your own food in one or two raised beds, from picking a spot to cooking what you harvest.

Hand and Timber Garden

Locally built, St. Louis, MO
handandtimbergarden.com

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A garden that grew one bed at a time. Start with one or two, and add more as you learn what you like to grow.

CHAPTER 1

Why grow a little of your own food

You don't need a farm, or even a big yard, to grow real food. One or two raised beds can put fresh vegetables on your table for most of the year and teach you a skill that lasts a lifetime.

You know what's in it

Store produce travels a long way, and you rarely know how it was grown. When you grow it yourself, you choose the soil, the water, and whether anything gets sprayed. Our beds are built from untreated wood, so nothing from the frame ends up in your food either.

It tastes better

A tomato picked warm off the vine, or lettuce cut ten minutes before dinner, tastes like a different food from what's on the store shelf. Once you've had it, it's hard to go back.

What one or two beds can really do

This guide isn't about feeding your family entirely from the backyard. It's about growing some of it. Here's what a beginner can expect from one or two beds:

- Salads most weeks in spring and again in fall
- Cherry tomatoes, beans and zucchini through the summer
- Fresh herbs whenever you're cooking
- Enough extra to freeze or pickle a few batches

A practice garden

Think of your first beds as a place to practice. Some seeds won't come up and some plants won't make it, and that's normal. Every mistake in a small bed is a cheap lesson that makes next season better.

Start small, learn what you like to grow and eat, and add more when you're ready.

> **How to use this guide.** Chapters 2 and 3 get your bed set up. Chapters 4 through 6 cover what to plant and when. Chapters 7 and 8 take you from daily care to the kitchen, chapter 9 is for gardening with kids, and chapter 10 helps you plan your second season.

CHAPTER 2

Picking your spot

Where you put your bed matters more than anything you plant in it. A good spot gets plenty of sun, sits close to water, and is somewhere you'll walk past every day.

Sun

Most vegetables need **6–8 hours of direct sun** a day. Before you choose, watch your yard for one full day and note where the sun lands in the morning, at noon and in late afternoon.

- Tomatoes, beans, zucchini, cucumbers and basil want the full 6–8 hours.
- Lettuce, spinach and kale can get by with 4–5 hours, and a little afternoon shade helps them in summer.

Water and convenience

- **Within reach of a hose.** If watering means dragging a hose across the yard, it won't happen in August.
- **Close to the house.** A bed you see from the kitchen window gets checked, picked and weeded. One at the back of the lot gets forgotten.

What to avoid

- **Under large trees.** They shade the bed and send roots up into good soil.
- **Low spots** where water stands after a rain.
- **Near black walnut trees.** They're common in Missouri, and their roots and leaves release a compound that stunts tomatoes and other vegetables. Keep beds well outside the tree's canopy.

Setting up the spot

- **Level the ground first.** The bed should sit level before it's delivered, so soil and water stay even across it.
- **Run the long side east to west** when you can, so the whole length gets sun. Then put tall crops on the north side, as the layouts in chapter 6 show.
- **Leave a path.** Give yourself 2–3 ft around the bed for a wheelbarrow or mower. Grass, mulch or gravel around the bed are all fine. It's a matter of looks and upkeep and doesn't change how the bed grows.

What size to start with

One or two beds is the right start. Chapter 6 compares our four sizes, 3×6 or 3×8 ft at 18 or 24 in. deep, and shows what fits in each.

CHAPTER 3

Filling and testing your soil

Good soil is the reason raised beds work. In a bed, you choose exactly what your food grows in, instead of fighting Missouri clay.

What to fill with

- **A blend of topsoil and compost,** roughly 60% topsoil and 40% compost. Many local landscape suppliers sell a ready-made "raised bed mix" or "garden blend."
- **Buy in bulk, not bags.** One cubic yard equals about thirteen 2-cubic-foot bags, and bulk costs far less.
- **Avoid fill dirt and clay subsoil.** They pack down hard and drain poorly.
- **Don't fill the whole bed with bagged potting mix.** It's expensive at this volume and breaks down quickly.

How much you'll need

Bed	Standard fill (all soil blend)	Hügelkultur fill
3×6 ft, 18 in. deep	About 1 cubic yard	Not used. The bed is too shallow.
3×8 ft, 18 in. deep	About 1.3 cubic yards	Not used. The bed is too shallow.
3×6 ft, 24 in. deep	About 1.3 cubic yards	About ⅔ cubic yard of soil blend, plus 3–4½ cubic feet of aged manure (2–3 bags)
3×8 ft, 24 in. deep	About 1.8 cubic yards	About 0.9 cubic yard of soil blend, plus 4–6 cubic feet of aged manure (2–3 bags)

The hügelkultur amounts assume 8–12 in. of logs on the bottom, 2–3 in. of aged manure over them, and 12 in. of soil blend on top. The logs take the place of about half the soil.

Filling the bed

1. Line the bottom with plain cardboard or landscape fabric. Either one smothers the grass and weeds underneath, and the bed works the same with both.
2. Fill to within 1–2 in. of the top. The soil settles a few inches in the first season.
3. Water the bed well and let it settle for a few days before planting.
4. Each spring, top it up with 1–2 in. of fresh compost.

The self-watering bed: hügelkultur (24 in. beds)

Hügelkultur is a German method that uses buried wood to hold water. The wood works like a sponge, soaking up rain and feeding it slowly back to the roots. As it breaks down over the years, it feeds the soil too.

1. Line the bottom with cardboard or landscape fabric.

2. Fill the bottom 8–12 in. with logs and thick branches. Older wood that has started to rot works best.
3. Fill the gaps with leaves, grass clippings or small twigs.
4. Soak the whole layer with a hose.
5. Spread 2–3 in. of aged manure over the wood. It feeds the soil and makes up for the nitrogen the rotting wood uses as it breaks down. Use aged manure only, since fresh manure can burn plants.
6. Add 12 in. of your soil and compost blend on top.

Avoid black walnut, painted or treated wood, and fresh cedar, which breaks down too slowly. Expect the bed to settle more than usual for the first couple of years, so top it up with compost each spring.



The log layer going into a 24 in. bed, before the manure and soil go on top.



24 in. beds freshly filled with a soil and compost blend, inside a garden enclosure.

Testing your soil

A soil test tells you your soil's pH and whether it's short on any nutrients. Most vegetables grow best at a pH between 6.0 and 7.0.

- University of Missouri Extension tests soil through your county extension office for a small fee.
- Test in your first spring, then every three or four years.
- The results come with plain-language advice on what, if anything, to add.

CHAPTER 4

Our growing calendar

In the St. Louis area you get three planting windows a year, not one. Timing matters more than almost anything else for a beginner, and it's the easiest thing to get right.

We're in USDA zone 7a. Our last spring frost usually falls between **April 1 and 15**, and our first fall frost between **October 22 and 31**. Every date in this guide works from those two windows.

Season 1: Cool season (plant late February to mid-April)

Some crops like it cool and can handle a light frost. Plant them while the weather is still chilly, and they'll be ready before summer heat hits.

- **What to plant:** Peas, spinach, lettuce, radishes, kale
- **Harvest:** April through June
- **Tip:** Raised beds warm up and drain faster than the ground in spring, so you can often plant a little earlier than an in-ground garden.

Season 2: Warm season (plant late April to mid-May)

Warm-season crops are killed by frost and sulk in cold soil. Wait until the frost window has passed and nights stay above about 50°F.

- **What to plant:** Tomatoes, bush beans, zucchini, cucumbers, basil
- **Harvest:** Late June through September, and tomatoes often run until frost
- **Tip:** Late April is fine for beans and tomatoes. Wait until early May for basil and cucumbers, which hate cool nights.

Season 3: Fall (plant mid-August to mid-September)

Most beginners stop in August. Don't. Fall is one of the best times to grow greens in St. Louis, because the cooling weather makes them sweeter.

- **What to plant:** Lettuce, spinach, radishes, kale
- **Harvest:** October through November. Kale often keeps going into December.
- **Tip:** August heat is the hard part. Keep new seeds moist with a light watering every day until they sprout.

> **If a late frost is coming.** If the forecast calls for frost after you've planted, cover the bed overnight with an old sheet or blanket and take it off in the morning. Covering the bed's wood frame keeps the sheet off the plants.

Planting calendar (print this page)

Crop	Plant	Harvest
Peas	Late Feb to late March	May to June
Spinach	March to early April, and late Aug to mid Sept	April to May, and Oct to Nov
Lettuce	Mid March to mid April, and mid Aug to mid Sept	Late April to June, and Oct to Nov
Radishes	Mid March to April, and late Aug to Sept	April to May, and Sept to Oct
Kale	Mid March to early April, and early to mid Aug	May to June, and Oct to Dec
Tomatoes	Late April to mid May	July to frost
Bush beans	Late April to July	July to September
Zucchini	Early to mid May, and again late June	Late June to August
Cucumbers	Early May to June	July to August
Basil	Early to mid May	June to September

CHAPTER 5

Ten easy crops to start with

These ten crops are forgiving, grow well in a raised bed, and turn into food you'll actually cook. Pick three or four for your first season, not all ten.

Each crop has the same five parts: how to plant it, how much to plant, when it's ready, what to do with it in the kitchen, and the mistake beginners make most.

Peas (snap or snow)

- **Plant:** Late February to late March. Push seeds 1 in. deep and 2 in. apart along a trellis at least 4 ft tall. Put the trellis on the north side of the bed so it doesn't shade everything else.
- **How much:** A 4-ft row is plenty for snacking and a few stir-fries.
- **Ready:** May into June. Pick snap peas when the pods are plump and snow peas while they're still flat. Pick every two days to keep them coming.
- **In the kitchen:** Eat raw as a snack, stir-fry for 2 minutes, or blanch and freeze.
- **Common mistake:** Planting too late. Peas quit when June heat arrives.

Spinach

- **Plant:** March to early April, or late August to mid-September. Sow seeds ½ in. deep, about 3 in. apart.
- **How much:** One 2×2 ft square gives a family regular salads.
- **Ready:** In about 40–45 days. Pick outer leaves once they're 3–4 in. long, or cut the whole plant.
- **In the kitchen:** Fresh in salads, sautéed with garlic, or added to smoothies and eggs. Blanch and freeze any extra.
- **Common mistake:** Planting in late spring. Spinach goes to seed ("bolts") as days get long and hot.

Lettuce and salad greens

- **Plant:** Mid-March to mid-April, or mid-August to mid-September. Barely cover the seeds, about ¼ in., since they need light to sprout.
- **How much:** Sow a small patch every two weeks instead of the whole packet at once. That gives a steady supply instead of 20 heads ready the same week.
- **Ready:** 30–45 days for leaf lettuce. Cut outer leaves in the morning and let the center keep growing.
- **In the kitchen:** Wash, spin dry, and store in a bag with a paper towel. It keeps about a week in the fridge.
- **Common mistake:** Planting everything at once.

Radishes

- **Plant:** Mid-March through April, or late August through September. Sow ½ in. deep and 2 in. apart.
- **How much:** A 1×2 ft patch every two weeks.
- **Ready:** In 25–30 days, the fastest crop in the guide and a favorite for kids. Pull when the roots are about 1 in. across.
- **In the kitchen:** Slice raw with butter and salt, roast to mellow the bite, or quick-pickle. The young greens are good sautéed.
- **Common mistake:** Leaving them in too long. Oversized radishes turn woody, split, and taste hot.

Kale

- **Plant:** Mid-March to early April, or early to mid-August. Use small plants from a garden center, set 15–18 in. apart.
- **How much:** Two to four plants feed a family through the season.
- **Ready:** In about 50–60 days. Pick the lower, outer leaves and leave the top center growing. Fall kale often lasts into December.
- **In the kitchen:** Strip out the stems, then sauté, add to soups, or rub with olive oil and salt for a raw salad. Kale chips bake at 300°F for about 20 minutes.
- **Common mistake:** Ignoring green caterpillars (cabbage worms). Check under the leaves once a week and pick them off, or cover the plants with garden netting.

Cherry tomatoes

- **Plant:** Late April to mid-May, using small plants from a garden center. Set them deep, with the soil up to the first leaves, because buried stem grows extra roots. Put a 4–5 ft cage or stake in on planting day.
- **How much:** Two plants keep a family in tomatoes all summer. Give each a 2×2 ft square.
- **Ready:** July until frost. Pick when fully colored and slightly soft.
- **In the kitchen:** Eat fresh, roast at 400°F with olive oil and salt, or make salsa. Freeze extras whole in a bag for sauce in winter.
- **Common mistake:** Adding support after the plant has sprawled, and watering unevenly, which splits the fruit. Water deeply two or three times a week and mulch.

Bush beans

- **Plant:** Late April through July, once the soil feels warm. Sow 1 in. deep and 4 in. apart. They need no trellis.
- **How much:** A 2×2 ft patch, with a new patch every three weeks until July.
- **Ready:** In 50–60 days. Pick when pods are about as thick as a pencil, every two or three days.
- **In the kitchen:** Steam, or sauté with garlic. Blanch in boiling water for 3 minutes, cool in ice water, and freeze.
- **Common mistake:** Letting pods get big and lumpy. The plant slows down once seeds mature.

Zucchini

- **Plant:** Early to mid-May. Sow 2–3 seeds 1 in. deep in one spot and keep the strongest plant. Sow a second round in late June.
- **How much:** One plant, two at most. Each needs about a 3×3 ft space.
- **Ready:** In 45–55 days. Pick at 6–8 in. long, and check daily.
- **In the kitchen:** Grill, bake, or make zucchini bread. Shred extras and freeze in 2-cup bags for winter baking.
- **Common mistake:** Missing a few days and finding a baseball bat. Also watch for squash vine borers, common in Missouri: a plant that suddenly wilts in late June or July is the sign. That's why the second planting in late June is worth it.

Cucumbers

- **Plant:** Early May through June. Sow 1 in. deep, about 12 in. apart, along a trellis so the vines climb instead of sprawl.
- **How much:** Two or three plants.
- **Ready:** In 50–60 days. Pick slicing cucumbers at 6–8 in. and pickling types at 3–4 in.
- **In the kitchen:** Slice into salads, or make refrigerator pickles: cucumbers, vinegar, water, salt, dill and garlic in a jar. They're ready in a day and keep about a month in the fridge.
- **Common mistake:** Uneven watering, which makes cucumbers bitter. Also check for yellow-and-black striped cucumber beetles and pick them off.

Basil

- **Plant:** Early to mid-May, using small plants set about 12 in. apart.
- **How much:** Two to four plants, enough for fresh use and a few batches of pesto.
- **Ready:** About 30 days after planting. Once a plant is 6–8 in. tall, pinch off the top just above a pair of leaves so it grows bushy.
- **In the kitchen:** Make pesto with 2 cups of basil, ⅓ cup walnuts or pine nuts, ½ cup Parmesan, 2 garlic cloves and ½ cup olive oil. Freeze it in ice cube trays for winter.
- **Common mistake:** Planting too early, since cold nights blacken the leaves. Pinch off flower buds as they appear, or the leaves turn bitter.

CHAPTER 6

Sample bed layouts

A good layout puts tall plants on the north side so they don't shade the rest, and keeps everything within arm's reach. Every layout here fits one of our standard beds, so you can copy it square by square.

Which bed is right for you

All four sizes are 3 ft wide. That's the farthest most people can reach across comfortably, so you can tend the whole bed from one side without walking around to the other or stepping in the soil.

Bed	Growing area	Good for
3×6 ft, 18 in. deep	18 sq ft	A first bed, small yards, a kids' bed
3×8 ft, 18 in. deep	24 sq ft	Most beginners, plenty of room for 3–4 crops
3×6 ft, 24 in. deep	18 sq ft	Less bending, small yards, hügelkultur
3×8 ft, 24 in. deep	24 sq ft	Less bending, tomatoes, hügelkultur

For how much soil each bed takes, see the table in chapter 3.

All ten crops in this guide grow well at either depth. An 18 in. bed is deep enough for most vegetables, and it takes less soil, so it costs less to fill. The 24 in. beds sit higher off the ground, so they're easier on your back and knees. They also have room for the German hügelkultur method: logs and branches buried in the bottom soak up water and feed it back to the roots, so the bed partly waters itself through July and August.



An 18 in. deep bed, freshly planted in spring.



A new 3×8 ft bed, 24 in. deep, ready to fill. The center brace keeps the long sides straight once the bed is full of soil.

How to read the layouts

Each square is 1 ft by 1 ft. The top row is the back of the bed, which should face north. A plant name across two or more squares means one plant gets all that space.

Layout 1: Spring salad bed (3x6)

Plant late February to mid-April. Harvest April through June.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Back (north)	Peas	Peas	Peas	Peas	Peas	Peas
Middle	Lettuce	Lettuce	Spinach	Spinach	Kale (2 plants)	
Front (south)	Radishes	Radishes	Lettuce	Spinach		

- Peas climb a trellis along the back edge.
- Re-sow a radish square every two weeks.
- In June, swap in beans and basil. Plant this same layout again in late August, without the peas, for fall greens.

Layout 2: Summer kitchen bed (3x8)

Plant late April to mid-May. Harvest July through September.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Back (north)	Tomato 1		Tomato 2		Cucumber	Cucumber	Zucchini	
Middle					Beans	Beans		
Front (south)	Basil	Basil	Basil	Basil	Beans	Beans		

- Each tomato gets a 2×2 ft square and a cage.
- Cucumbers climb a trellis along the back edge.
- The zucchini will spill over the end of the bed, which is fine.
- Four basil plants sit in front, where they get full sun.

Layout 3: Kids' snack bed (3x6)

Crops kids will pick and eat right there in the garden. Plant peas, radishes and lettuce in March, then add the rest in May.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Back (north)	Peas	Peas	Peas	Peas	Cucumber	Cucumber
Middle	Cherry tomato		Radishes	Radishes	Lettuce	Lettuce
Front (south)			Radishes	Radishes	Beans	Beans

- Radishes are ready in about four weeks, which keeps kids interested.

- Peas and cucumbers share the back trellis: peas in spring, cucumbers in summer.
- An 18 in. bed is a good height for younger kids to reach.

Layout 4: The starter pair (two 3x8 beds)

Two beds let you grow something almost all year without crowding.

- **Bed one:** Use the spring salad layout from March to June, stretched to 8 ft with two more squares of lettuce and spinach. In late August, plant it again with fall greens.
- **Bed two:** Use the summer kitchen layout from May to September.

This is how most people learn fastest. You'll go through all three seasons in your first year, with only two beds to look after.

CHAPTER 7

Watering and everyday care

A raised bed needs about 10–15 minutes of care on most days. Do a little often, and small problems never turn into big ones.

Watering

- **Use the finger test.** Push a finger 2 in. into the soil. If it's dry at your fingertip, water.
- **Water deeply, less often.** A long soak two or three times a week beats a quick sprinkle every day, because it pulls roots down deep.
- **Water in the morning, at the base of the plants.** Wet leaves overnight invite disease.
- **Aim for about 1 in. a week** from rain and watering combined. In July and August heat, raised beds dry out faster and may need water every day or two.
- **Make it easy.** A soaker hose snaked through the bed on an inexpensive hose timer does the job for you. A 24 in. hügelkultur bed needs noticeably less watering.

Mulch

Once your plants are a few inches tall, spread 2 in. of straw or shredded leaves over the soil. Mulch keeps the soil moist and cool, and blocks most weeds. Use straw, not hay, which is full of weed seeds.

Weeding and feeding

- **Weeding:** A raised bed gets far fewer weeds than the ground. Pull them while they're small, a few minutes twice a week.
- **Feeding:** The spring compost top-up covers most crops. Tomatoes and zucchini are heavy eaters, so give them a balanced organic fertilizer once a month from midsummer on.

Five problems beginners hit most

What you see	What's usually going on	What to do
Holes in leaves, or bugs on the plants	Caterpillars, beetles or aphids	Check under leaves weekly. Pick off bugs, spray aphids off with water, or cover plants with garden netting.
Plants droop on hot afternoons	Normal heat stress if they perk up by evening	Water if they're still drooping the next morning. A zucchini that wilts and stays wilted may have vine borers (chapter 5).
Seeds never came up	Planted too deep, soil dried out, or soil too cold	Re-sow at the depth on the packet and keep the soil moist until they sprout.
Tomatoes with black, leathery bottoms	Blossom end rot, from uneven watering	Water deeply on a regular schedule and mulch. Later fruit usually comes in fine.

Lettuce or spinach shoots up tall and turns bitter	Bolting, triggered by heat and long days	Pull it and plant something else. Grow greens again in fall.

A simple weekly routine

- ☐ Check soil moisture every day or two, and water when it's dry
- ☐ Pick anything that's ready
- ☐ Look under a few leaves for bugs
- ☐ Pull small weeds
- ☐ Note what you planted, picked and saw in a garden journal

CHAPTER 8

From harvest to kitchen

Growing it is half the lesson. The other half is picking it at the right time, keeping it fresh, and turning it into meals. This is where you taste the difference.

You also know exactly what went into this food: your soil, untreated wood, and only the sprays you chose to use, if any.

When to pick

- **Pick greens in the morning.** They're crisp and full of water then. Afternoon-picked lettuce wilts fast.
- **Pick often.** Beans, zucchini, cucumbers and peas make more when you keep picking. Leaving them on the plant tells it to slow down.
- **Pick tomatoes fully colored.** They taste best ripened on the plant. If a storm or frost is coming, pick them early and let them finish on the counter.

Keeping it fresh

Crop	Where to keep it	How long
Lettuce, spinach, kale	Fridge, in a bag with a paper towel	About 1 week
Radishes	Fridge, with the greens cut off	1–2 weeks
Peas	Fridge	A few days, as they lose sweetness fast
Beans	Fridge, unwashed, in a bag	About 5–7 days
Zucchini and cucumbers	Fridge	About 1 week
Tomatoes	Counter, out of the sun, never the fridge	Several days
Basil	Counter, stems in a glass of water like flowers	Several days

Saving extra in small batches

You don't need a canner or a pantry full of jars. These three methods handle what a beginner's bed produces.

- **Freeze it.** Blanch beans for 3 minutes, and peas, spinach and kale for about 2 minutes, in boiling water. Cool them in ice water, dry them, and freeze flat in bags. Tomatoes can be frozen whole without blanching, and zucchini can be shredded and frozen raw.
- **Make refrigerator pickles.** Heat 1 cup vinegar, 1 cup water and 1 tablespoon salt until the salt dissolves. Pour it over sliced cucumbers or radishes in a jar with fresh dill and a garlic clove. They're ready the next day and keep about a month in the fridge.

- **Freeze herbs.** Basil turns black when dried or refrigerated. Blend it with olive oil, or make pesto, and freeze it in ice cube trays.

These methods are not the same as canning, which has its own safety rules. When you're ready to learn that, University of Missouri Extension has tested recipes.

Four easy recipes from your bed

Garlic greens (spring and fall)

Warm 1 tablespoon olive oil in a large pan. Add 2 sliced garlic cloves for 30 seconds, then a big handful of spinach or chopped kale. Stir for 3–5 minutes until wilted. Finish with salt and a squeeze of lemon.

Roasted cherry tomato pasta (summer)

Toss 2 cups of cherry tomatoes with olive oil and salt. Roast at 400°F for about 20 minutes, until they burst. Stir into hot pasta with torn basil and Parmesan.

Summer garden skillet (summer)

Sauté sliced zucchini and trimmed beans in olive oil for 5–6 minutes. Add a handful of halved cherry tomatoes for 2 more minutes. Season with salt, pepper and chopped basil.

Pesto (summer)

Blend 2 cups of basil, ⅓ cup walnuts or pine nuts, ½ cup Parmesan, 2 garlic cloves and ½ cup olive oil. Use it on pasta, sandwiches or eggs, and freeze the rest.

CHAPTER 9

Gardening with kids

Kids eat what they grow. A child who planted the peas will eat them straight off the vine, even if they won't touch peas at dinner. A raised bed is the perfect size for kids: clean edges, soft soil, and everything within reach.

Give them their own space

Let each child own a few squares of the bed. They choose what goes in, make their own plant labels, and are in charge of watering and picking. Ownership keeps kids coming back long after the first week.

Jobs by age

Age	Jobs they can handle
3–5	Water with a small watering can, push big seeds like peas and beans into the soil, pick cherry tomatoes
6–9	Plant seeds at the right depth, pull radishes, hunt for bugs under leaves, measure how much plants grew
10 and up	Plan their own squares, keep a garden journal, harvest and cook one of the recipes in chapter 8

Crops that keep kids interested

- **Radishes:** ready in about four weeks, the fastest payoff in the garden
- **Peas:** fun to climb, and sweet enough to eat raw
- **Cherry tomatoes:** a snack they can pick all summer
- **Bush beans:** big seeds for small hands, and fast to sprout
- **Lettuce:** cut it, and it grows back

Layout 3 in chapter 6 puts all of these in one 3×6 bed.

A kid's garden journal page

Print a page like this for each week, or staple a few together into a booklet.

Date	What I planted	What I saw (draw it!)	What I picked	What I ate

> **Safety notes.** Wash everything before eating, even straight from the bed. Kid-sized gloves and tools make the work easier and safer. Teach kids to ask before eating anything from the garden.

CHAPTER 10

After your first season

Your first season is your best teacher. What you write down this fall makes next year easier, better and more fun.

What to write down

- What grew well, and what struggled
- What your family actually ate, and what went to waste
- What you wish you'd planted more or less of
- When things were ready, so you can plan around it next year
- Bugs or problems, and what worked against them

Putting the bed to rest

- **Pull spent plants** after the first frost. Compost healthy plants, but put diseased tomato leaves in the trash.
- **Cover the soil** with 2–3 in. of shredded leaves over the winter. It protects the soil and breaks down into compost by spring.
- **Or keep growing.** Fall kale, spinach and lettuce keep producing into late fall, and kale often lasts into December.

Plan next year's bed

- **Move crops around.** Don't plant tomatoes in the same spot two years in a row. With two beds, swap the spring and summer layouts each year.
- **Top up the soil** with 1–2 in. of compost in early spring.
- **Try one or two new crops.** Good next steps are garlic (planted in October and harvested the next June), peppers, and carrots, which do especially well in a 24 in. bed.

When to add another bed

It's time for another bed when you run out of room, or when spring crops are still growing and you want to start summer ones. Two beds let you grow all three seasons without crowding, as Layout 4 in chapter 6 shows.

New beds are built to match the ones you already have, and many of our customers grow their gardens one bed at a time.

HAND AND TIMBER GARDEN CO.

Start with a Hand and Timber bed

Every bed is built by hand, one at a time, from untreated local juniper. There are no chemicals, sealers or stains next to your food, and the wood stands up to soil and Missouri weather.



A bed taking shape in the shop, built on its side.

Standard beds

All beds are 3 ft wide, the farthest most people can comfortably reach across.

Bed	Price
3×6 ft, 18 in. deep	**$395**
3×8 ft, 18 in. deep	**$425**
3×6 ft, 24 in. deep	**$445**
3×8 ft, 24 in. deep	**$500**

> **Starter pair:** Take $50 off when you order any two standard beds.

Custom sizes are built on request.

How to order

Message us your yard size and which bed you're thinking about. We'll answer within 24 hours.

Phone or text 314-341-2238

Email jeremy@handandtimbergarden.com

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We deliver within about 50 miles of St. Louis. The ground should be level where the bed will sit, and you fill it with soil, as covered in chapters 2 and 3.