

Money Saving Ideas for Gardeners

Late summer is a great time to assess your garden and start planning for next year. One thing to consider as a money-saving tool is to convert an existing flower garden into a vegetable garden. Even if you're starting from scratch, your whole family can enjoy fresh fruits, veggies and herbs throughout the summer for much less than store-bought produce.

Do your research.

Whether you scour the Internet or seek advice from your local garden center, find out what plants grow well in the climate, sunlight and soil available to you. If you've never gardened before, it can be especially wise to seek advice from friends or neighbors who are more experienced to help prevent expensive mistakes.

Make a planting plan.

Planting a vegetable garden according to your tastes can drastically reduce your grocery bill when it comes to produce. For example, if you're spending \$10 per week on fresh herbs, then you might be smart to cultivate those, rather than the cabbage you can get for \$0.22 per pound. Simply look at your groceries and do the math. You'll get the most bang for your gardening buck by growing the more expensive items at home.

Avoid overplanting.

Not only do you spend more on seeds or starter plants, you'll also get less yield if you overcrowd your vegetable garden. For example, you can get more production out of six tomatoes planted three feet apart than out of 12 tomatoes planted 18 inches apart. Remember, more is not always better!

Use good soil.

A high-yield garden needs direct sunlight and good quality soil. If it clumps and sticks together when you squeeze a handful, it's too thick to allow roots to grow freely. Cut it with compost to loosen before planting. If you have the space, consider making your own compost from the organic waste you create at home anyway. Coffee grounds, fallen leaves and plant cuttings can all make for great - and free - compost.

Whether you enjoy growing herbs, tomatoes or berries, strategic planning and proper care for your garden can ensure you and your family enjoy fresh produce for a fraction of the price!



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