



# GETTING STARTED WITH GARDENING

From Seed to Table

# COPYRIGHT

## **Healthy Kids Inc. Getting Started with Gardening-From Seed to Table**

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## A LITTLE ABOUT US

Kirk & Mandy Curry

Everyone has a garden story, right? We find that no matter where we go or what age group we are talking to, everyone has a story that involves gardening as a young kid.

Many may remember watching their grandfather in the garden or running out to the garden to grab food for dinner as a child. There is something about gardening that makes us feel connected with our ancestors and *brings us a sense of pride.*

Giving parents that sense of pride is at the heart of everything we do.

The photo above might look a bit polyanna-ish but our early days were anything but that. We went from chaos to corporate and back to chaos every single day. Our kids ate horribly and so did we.

From our desire to adopt a healthier eating lifestyle came the creation of Healthy Kids Inc. A meal planning system unlike any other in the country that is changing the way families eat.

We now devote our days to creating technology and tools that make rather rather complex (and time consuming) tasks like meal planning, cooking, and gardening really easy for busy families.

### **Helping you to tackle every step from seed to table- no skills required!**

You might be wondering, what could we possibly know about gardening?

Well, a lot actually. In fact, we created a tool much like the HKI meal planner to make gardening fail proof for busy families. Thousands of vegetables have been grown in containers using our technology. And Kirk is also a Master Gardener with a Science Background. He's a garden guru :)

We hope you enjoy this resource and we hope you will join our Facebook Community as we chronicle the next few months of growing so that you can follow along with us each step of the way- *from seed to table*.



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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Guide is for families that want to begin growing their own food. We highly recommend starting with container gardening (or including it in your strategy) so you will see a chapter of tips devoted to just that.

This is not a step-by-step guide. We have technology that can do that for you. This guide will give you the confidence to get started and give you some unique nuggets of information that can easily be shared with your kiddo's

The guide is laid out in a format that will answer the 5 most commonly asked questions about gardening that most of us have wondered...but never asked. Much of the information is also uniquely covered in videos that we have created just for you. We find visuals are so much more helpful in getting started and a great tool for teaching kids too.

**Real food CAN be Real easy to grow.** So without further ado, let's get started.





## 1. GROWING FROM SEED OR A SMALL PLANT?

**When you begin growing your own food, you will have the option of growing from seed or purchasing a small plant at a local nursery that is ready to be placed into your container/garden.**

We've done both and highly recommend growing from seed. Here's why:

Starting from seed takes a few more weeks, but it's a very inexpensive way to grow your own food. It also allows you to choose from a variety of vegetable options. Would you believe there are more than 10,000 varieties of tomatoes? Your local nursery may only have 3 varieties available in plants. So starting from seeds gives more options.

It also allows you to grow organic. Certified Organic seeds have not been exposed to any chemicals throughout the growth in the field, the harvesting of the seed, and processing.

And finally, growing from seed is a great way to introduce your kids to the full growing process.

If you're ready to grow from seed, we recommend starting with the easiest vegetables first. Below is a list of 5 easy (and quick) vegetables to start with.

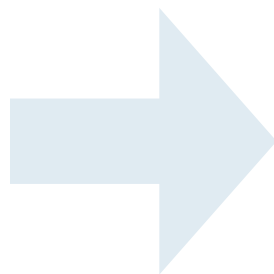
Radishes and spinach are often grown at schools simply because they have a very short growing process. Radishes only take about 4 weeks from the time you plant the seed, until it's ready to harvest. This timeline is perfect for those that want a speedy growing cycle.

Cucumbers are another example. They sprout from seed quickly, making it perfect for those that want to move the process along quickly. They can be grown indoors about 3 weeks before being moved outdoors, or they can be planted in the ground after the last spring frost has passed.

## 5 Quickest Vegetables to Grow from Seed

### 1. Cucumber

7-9 weeks seed to  
harvest

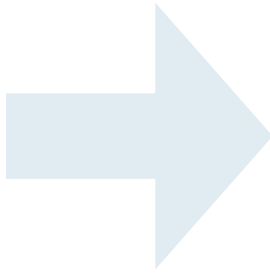


A bucket makes a great container to grow cucumbers in, just make sure your container is at least 8" deep. It will take around 9 weeks to harvest from seed.



## 2. Leaf Lettuce

7 weeks seed to  
harvest

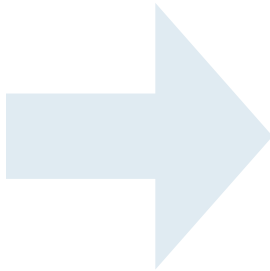


You can grow leaf lettuce in a jar, or any other small container that is at least 6" deep. It will take around 7 weeks to harvest from seed.



## 3. Turnip

4 weeks seed to  
harvest

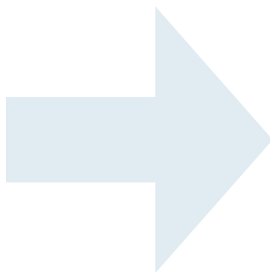


They grow quick, and can be harvested in as little as 30 days. Be sure to grow them in a container 10" deep.



## 4. Radish

4 weeks seed to  
harvest

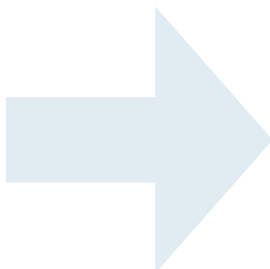


Take 4 weeks, seed to harvest. Grow in container in as little as 4" deep. Cut off the top of a used, cleaned and rinsed milk jug.



## 5. Spinach

7 weeks seed to  
harvest



Takes only 7 weeks from seed to harvest. It can be grown in a container that is at least 8" deep.



Not all crops are not easy or quick to grow from seed though. There are a few vegetables that can be highly difficult and frustrating to grow from seed. If you are pressed for time or patience, we highly recommend buying these four vegetables below as small plants from your nursery and not raise them from seed first. *You'll thank us later.*

## 4 Most Difficult to Grow from Seed



**PEPPERS:** Banana Peppers, Green Peppers...it doesn't matter. Peppers in general are tough to start from seed. They need a lot of warmth to germinate. In fact, it can take as many as 25 days to germinate if the temperature is too cool. They also have a longer growing cycle-taking 95-150 days from seed to harvest depending on the pepper type. Spare yourself the frustration and simply buy a few pepper plants to get started.



**HEAD LETTUCE:** Growing spinach, kale, and leaf lettuce is really easy but head lettuce is a bit more difficult. It requires cooler weather and a longer growing period. For new gardeners, you may want to skip this variety all together and start with leaf lettuce.



**CELERY:** Celery has a long growth cycle as well, taking around 120 days. It needs warmer temperatures for the seeds to germinate but once planted, does better in cooler conditions. It has a very particular soil requirement and poor soil preparation may deter the plant from maturing at all.



**EGGPLANT:** Eggplant is a warm season crop that likes lots of heat. It too has a long growing cycle of 19 weeks. If you haven't started these seeds indoors yet, then it's likely too late. If you want to grow Eggplant, then simply purchase a small plant to get started.

# GETTING STARTING WITH SEEDS

This video will walk you through the entire process of getting started with seeds.

## HOW TO GROW- STARTING FROM SEEDS VIDEO



[< Click Here to Play >](#)

## SUPPLY LIST TO GET STARTED WITH SEEDS:

- [Seeds of choice](#)
- Seed starter container (an egg carton or [small seed starter pots](#) will do) or [seed germination kit](#)
- Soilless mix like [Espoma Organic Seed Starter Mix](#)



2. SHOULD I PLANT SEEDS DIRECTLY INTO THE GROUND OR PUT THEM IN A SEED STARTER FIRST?



All seeds can be sown directly into the ground. Starting seeds indoors while temperatures are cold simply gives you a jump start on your growing season (and ensures your seedlings are strong and healthy before going to the great outdoors). Here are a few thoughts to keep in mind when making this decision:

1. **Starting indoors prepares your plant** so that it's mature enough to move to a larger container or garden space when the ground and temperatures warm up. For most plants, it takes 4-6 weeks to grow your seed to the size where it's ready to be planted outdoors.
2. **In some growing zones, the outdoor growing season just isn't that long.** For example, peppers grow more slowly and take as many as 19 weeks from seed to harvest, and in many cooler zones, the outdoor growing season just isn't that long. So starting seeds indoors allows you to begin your seeds inside without the threat of frost so that they can be transplanted outdoors as soon as the threat of frost has passed.
3. **Some seeds are best planted directly into the garden/container.** Root vegetables like carrots, turnip, radishes, and parsnips should be planted directly into the garden. They have a sensitive root system that doesn't transplant well. Leeks and corn are also best sown directly into the ground. Other vegetables with a quick growing cycle like cucumbers can be planted directly into the ground/container too, without being started indoors, as long as the threat of frost has passed.



3. WHEN SHOULD THE INDOOR SEEDLINGS BE TRANSPLANTED?

If starting from seed indoors, you will likely need to transplant your seeds twice.

Think of growing seeds like raising a baby. Many babies start out in a bassinet where they feel cozy and protected. After a short time, the baby begins to outgrow the bassinet and is ready to move to its crib. Then before you know it, your little baby has outgrown its crib and is ready for a full size bed.

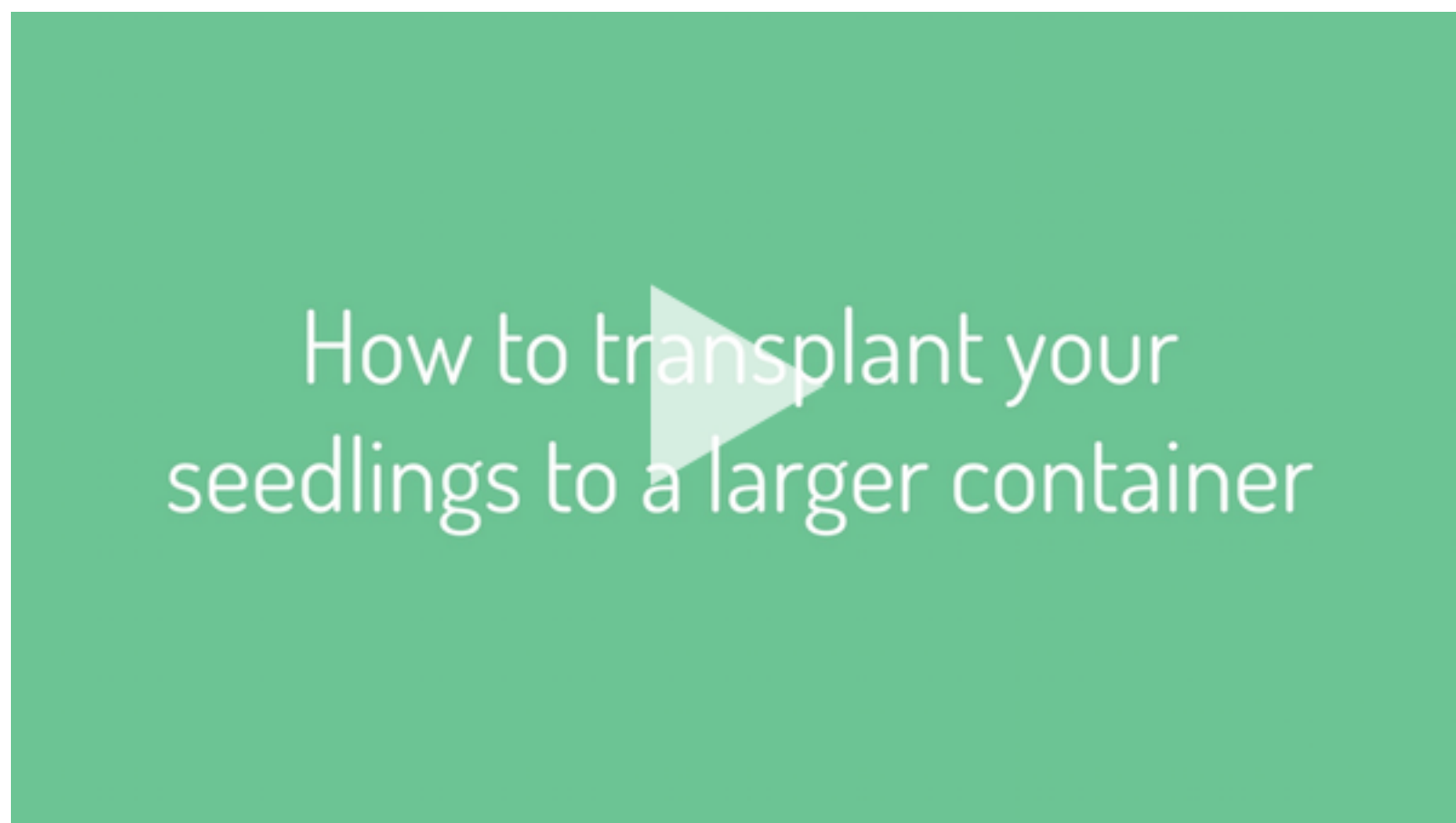
The same progression is true for plants.

When starting seeds indoors, you will want to start in small seed starter cells or even egg cartons or cleaned egg shells. Then as the seedling grows (about 2-3 inches tall and with two true leaves), it can be moved to the next pot size. The seedling will spend a few weeks here, continuing to grow and build its root structure until the outdoor temperature has warmed and the threat of frost has passed.

The process of hardening off is the final step in getting your plant outdoors in its permanent location. This involves slowly acclimating the plants to the outdoor weather over the course of a week before transplanting. It is also recommended to transplant your seedlings outdoors on a cloudy day to reduce plant stress.

If you're looking for some tips for transplanting, check out this video below that walks you through the entire process.

## HOW TO TRANSPLANT VIDEO



[< Click Here to Play >](#)



4. CAN I REALLY GROW IN CONTAINERS?



## GROWING IN CONTAINERS

Many believe that a huge backyard is needed to grow food, but the truth is, food can be grown very easily in containers on a back deck or front patio.

There are so many reasons why container gardening is a great strategy in gardening. Most containers are inexpensive and use less water (by only watering the container and not an entire garden bed, you save water). They require less labor and are quicker to adjust. For example, some plants like more acidic soil conditions and other plants need more nutrients and composts. It's much easier to adjust pH levels and cater to each plant's needs when it has its own container.

Growing in containers also helps you grow a steady quantity of food, perfect for daily consumption. Just one tomato plant can yield an estimated 25 pounds of tomatoes. Buying 25 pounds of organic tomatoes would cost more than \$45. They can be grown for just a few dollars in a 5-gallon bucket.

Yes, vegetables can be grown in a number of containers, including a 5-gallon bucket.

## IMPORTANT TIPS FOR CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONTAINER



Choosing the right container for your vegetables is an important step. It's so important, that we created technology within our meal planning system that tells you exactly what can be planted in what container. A one-size fits all approach does not work well here. Some plants need a deep container to support its root structure while others have a rather shallow root system and can even be planted in a solo cup.

### Here are a few important tips for choosing the right garden containers:

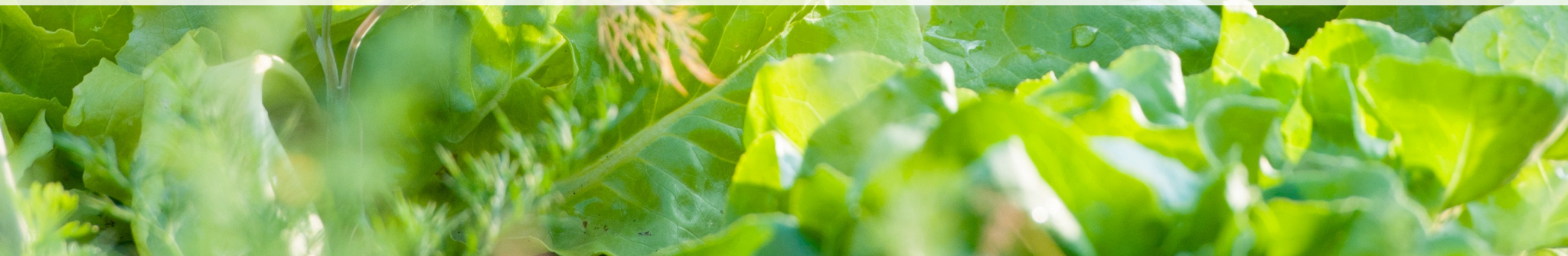
1. **Be mindful of the type of plastic used.** Plastics containing the numbers 1, 2, 4, and 5 are food grade containers and are ok for plant use. This number can generally be found on the bottom of most plastic containers.
2. **Good drainage holes.** Many pots look really nice but if they don't have drainage holes in the bottom, then your plants roots will become waterlogged. This also applies to DIY containers and raised beds. Be sure to drill small drainage holes.
3. **No aluminum.** Researchers believe the aluminum from cans can get into the soil and reduce root growth. This is ok for flowers, but not for garden vegetables or plants to be consumed. This includes aluminum coffee cans, soup cans, and soda cans.
4. **Terra cotta.** Terra cotta is a beautiful garden pot but can get very hot and dry the soil out quickly. If using terra cotta, be sure to water your plants more frequently.

Want to know our favorite container? It's the [Earthbox™](#). The Earthbox™ allows you to grow multiple plants in a single container. It's so easy to use and even comes with wheels.





## 5. HOW & WHEN TO HARVEST



# PREPARING FOR HARVEST

Knowing when to harvest your vegetables is important as each vegetable has its own unique window of opportunity for picking. Picking vegetables at their peak ripeness ensures that you are consuming produce with maximum nutrients.

Vegetables are ready to be picked when they can easily be removed from the plant. It's important that kids in the garden not pull or yank at the vine to remove a vegetable. Scissors or shears are often good to keep on hand if removing a vegetable with a thick stem.

Vegetables are best harvested in the cool morning, or in the evening, after the heat of the day has passed.

Every plant is different, but here are a few tidbits that can help:

- Zucchini are best picked when they're small (around 6-7 inches long)
- Tomatoes are of the few that will continue to ripen after picking
- Peppers are ready to eat when they're green and full size, but if left on the vine, will turn to red or orange depending on the variety.
- Leaf lettuce and spinach are best harvested by pinching off the outer leaves to ensure that the plants continue to grow and produce.





## YOU'RE ALL SET!

Getting from Seed to Table is a bit of a journey, but it's one of the most rewarding activities a family can embark upon. We spend a lot of time talking with teens about healthy eating and the overwhelming request they have is to start a garden. Not only do they want to participate in growing vegetables, but they also said they would be more likely to eat the vegetable if they grew it.

That always leads to their final question of how to incorporate their fresh vegetables into their families meals. We will close our guide with a few easy recipes from our Healthy Kids Inc. meal planner. Each recipe is paired with a cooking video to walk you through the entire process. In fact, all of our dinner recipes in the Healthy Kids Inc meal planner are also paired with a chef's cooking video.

Enjoy :)



# SEED TO TABLE RECIPES



# HOMEMADE PASTA SAUCE

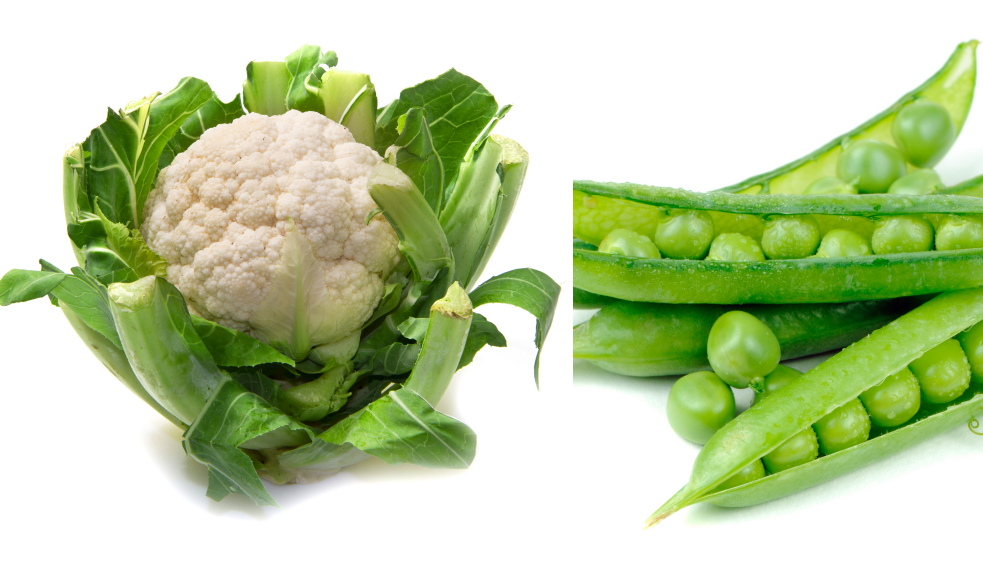
## Ingredients:

12 Roma Tomatoes  
12 oz. tomato paste  
1/2 Onion diced  
5 cloves garlic, minced  
3 tbsp fresh Oregano  
1 tbsp fresh basil  
Salt & Pepper to taste

## HOMEMADE PASTA SAUCE VIDEO



[< Click Here to Play >](#)



# CAULIFLOWER SHRIMP FRIED RICE

## Ingredients:

- 1 head cauliflower
- 10 ounces green peas, fresh or frozen
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup green onion, chopped
- 12 ounces shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons low sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon dark sesame oil

## CAULIFLOWER SHRIMP FRIED RICE VIDEO



[< Click Here to Play >](#)



# CHICKPEA & LENTIL SALAD

## Ingredients:

- 1 cup garbanzo beans
- 1/8 cup red onion
- 1/4 cup green pepper
- 1/2 cup lentils
- 1/4 cup fresh spinach or leaf lettuce
- 1/4 cup feta cheese

## Dressing (enough for three jars):

- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 lemon, freshly squeezed
- 1 tablespoon fresh oregano (optional, and only use fresh)

## CHICKPEA & LENTIL SALAD IN A JAR VIDEO



[< Click Here to Play >](#)



# Thank You!

Thank you for joining us for this Getting Started guide. We hope this guide brings clarity to your gardening questions and takes the intimidation out of getting started.

The benefits of gardening go well beyond cost and quality. It's an opportunity for us to connect with our family and build that legacy- that story. Because we all have a garden story, right?

If you would like additional resources to further walk you through the process of when to plant based on your growing zone, what containers will work for each plant type, how to start a square foot garden bed, or more recipes for your seed to table experience, we invite you to check out our Healthy Kids Inc. meal planner. It's the only meal planning tool in the country that shows families how to grow the food featured in their weekly meal plan. You can learn more about us [here](https://www.healthykidsinc.com).

[www.healthykidsinc.com](https://www.healthykidsinc.com)