

# BACKYARD GARDENING.....

*Conserve natural resources and save money*



## **Tips on What to plant**

Many people think they cannot plant anything because they do not have plenty of land. This is not true.

You can improve the family pot by planting vegetables in a little space near your house. You don't need more than an 8' by 5' plot with soil depth of 10-12 inches, to grow lettuce, calaloo, hot peppers, tomatoes, a few okra and egg plants, cucumbers, parsley and escallion.

Thyme is difficult to grow on the hot lowlands in Jamaica but in the hills, it thrives. Even a 40 gallon drum cut in half can provide a space in which to grow vegetables. These are the ones you see being used to prepare "jerk" chicken.

The important thing is to make sure your small space has rich soil - a good mixture of dirt, sand, rotted vegetables, leaves and grass cuttings. Save all the fruit and vegetable



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skins from your cooking, dig them into the soil so that they rot down quickly and provide nutrition for the soil. This is what we refer to as **composting**. Two shovels of compost soil scattered on one square metre (3 by 3 feet) of vegetable garden land will produce good and healthy crops for six months.

It is a good idea to sow lettuce, tomatoes and parsley seeds in a seed box, then you can transplant them into your small bed or container, when they have grown to about three inches.

Okras can be sown straight to the soil. Put them to the back because they tend to grow tall.

Put tomatoes out in one row, string beans in the next, then lettuce and escallion with thyme in the front row of the bed.

Use recycled water to irrigate the garden. In addition to conserving this vital resource, it also lowers your water bill. A small bed of vegetables can be easily controlled for weeds and watering. Covering the bed with cuttings of grass and rotted leaves will give protection from the sun. This is what we call '**mulching**'. It will stop water from evaporating too quickly and prevent weeds from growing.

### **Calaloo - A healthy option**

Calaloo can be grown quickly and cut regularly to improve the diet of your family. By cutting off only the larger leaves for use as a vegetable when it is needed, many people keep the calaloo plants for months before replanting. If you have bought calaloo, save the bottom tough cuttings and plant these in your small bed or container. In no time at all, you will have beautiful new calaloo plants from which to cut the leaves.



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We mention calaloo in particular, because, if you can only grow one thing, let it be calaloo. Steamed with other foods, it is an excellent source of **iron** for all members of the family, especially women. Have a lime drink with it. This helps to release the iron in the calaloo more quickly.



**If you cannot plant  
anything else, plant calaloo.**

Are you ready? - Lets Plant!!!

### **How to make a compost pile**

- Choose a spot where there is already some organic material. It should be a place where there is some shade during the day.
- Build the compost heap into layers. The entire heap may be as wide as 1-2 metres (3-6 feet). You can make it as long as you like - it depends on how much material you have to put in it!
- Start at one end, and build up as high as you can. Put thin branches at the bottom of the heap to let air enter.
- The heap grows in one direction. The end where you start should not get more new material.
- After one week, the “old” end starts to collapse, and it will be half as high as it was when it was fresh.
- Mix your compost heap with layers of animal faeces and soil as they speed up the decomposition process.
- After several months, weeds and grass will start to grow on the side of the pile. This shows you that the process has reached a stage where plant roots can grow. This means that the compost soil is ready for use.
- The outer cover will most likely be dry organic matter. Inside the heap you will find a lot of small insects or worms busy at work, breaking down the organic matter.
- If you want to have fine soil, put it through a sieve.
- Whatever does not go through the sieve is the base for the next generation. This means that you can go back to the start of the pile and begin again.

### **Be a Responsible Consumer**

*It is your responsibility to understand the environmental consequences of your consumption. We should recognize our individual and social responsibility to conserve natural resources and protect the earth for future generations.*



**Be a responsible  
Consumer...play your part in  
preserving the environment.**

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