

NEWS & MEDIA



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Small-Space Gardening for any Area

By Margaret Smith

Container and raised-bed gardening help families cut grocery costs as food prices climb, offering a simple way to grow fresh produce in any space.

NEW YORK — Gardening has always offered more than just food. For many, it's a hobby and a path towards healthier or more sustainable living. However, as grocery bills continue to rise due to inflation and economic uncertainty, home gardening is reemerging as a cost-effective activity.

With strategies for gardening in small spaces – from making the most of limited square footage to choosing the right crops – apartment dwellers and homeowners alike can supplement grocery store purchases, all without needing a huge backyard.

Why more Americans turn to homegrown food

The price of groceries has risen sharply, fueled by inflation, supply chain disruptions and market volatility. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the prices for food prepared at home are expected to grow 3.2% in 2025, while restaurant food is expected to

go up 3.8%.

Fruits and vegetables have seen notable increases. A study by LendingTree found that from 2024 to 2025, the price of mixed greens increased by 36.5%, honeycrisp apples by 34.1%, cucumbers by 33.6% and cauliflower by 25.7%. For organic produce, the average cost is 52.6% more than that of its conventional counterparts, making eating healthy an increasingly expensive choice.

As people seek to offset these price increases, more households plan on homegrown food as a solution. The Center for Food Demand Analysis and Sustainability, or CFDAS, at Purdue University found that 44% of American families plan to grow food this year, with 82% considering fruit and vegetable gardening as an option.

Small-space gardens for any home

Not having a backyard, or even outdoor space like a patio, does not mean you can't save money with gardening. In fact, gardening can be even more impactful for urban dwellers who spend an average of \$20 more per week on food, according to the CFDAS data. The extra spending is attributed to eating out more frequently and suggests that cooking from scratch, with the help of homegrown food, can help food budgets.

If you have access to a yard, a raised bed is an efficient and productive setup for gardening. Raised beds of all sizes are commercially available, or you can build your own out of low-cost cuts of wood if you are handy. They make it easier to manage soil quality, drainage and weeds, and can also keep kids or pets out in a tiny yard.

For apartment or condo dwellers with patios, container gardens can provide a good crop yield. Fill your space with pots of various sizes to hold your fruits and vegetables. If you have no outdoor space, a windowsill or space in front of a sunny window can support herbs or microgreens in small spots. Place your plants in the sunniest spots possible in your home, and you can grow almost anything.

How much money can you save with small space gardening?

The amount you can save on grocery bills with home gardening will depend on the size of your garden and the type of produce you grow. Kendall Brown shared with Business Insider that she saves \$50 per week on groceries by maintaining what she calls a victory garden, named after the gardens homeowners planted during World War I to supplement the war effort.

Starting small can help you maximize your savings in the first year. A few pots, tools and seedlings are all you need to start. Brown advises against going all in to start as the upfront investment may cause you to lose money instead of saving.

Even a few pots can make a noticeable difference in the amount of produce you need to buy. Bonnie Plants estimates that a single slicing tomato plant grown in a container can produce 10 to 30 pounds of tomatoes, translating to several dollars saved. A cucumber plant grows

five to 10 fruits per season. Leaf lettuce will be ready to harvest every two weeks all season long. For most herbs, a single plant can provide seasonings and savings throughout the summer.

Best vegetables and fruits for small spaces and big savings

When planning a starter garden, the best crops are the ones you already use. These will be most effective in supplementing your grocery list and are least likely to go to waste. Additionally, produce that grows quickly and easily is ideal for getting started and increasing your chances of success.

Herb gardens with basil, thyme, parsley and other herbs provide significant savings. Grow herbs in a small pot on a windowsill, and you will no longer need to buy costly herbs. Leafy greens, radishes, peppers, carrots, tomatoes, cucumbers and potatoes are also recommended for high-yield plants that thrive in containers.

Growing vegetables that are expensive to purchase can compound savings, as can growing vegetables that have a long shelf life, like onions, potatoes and squash. Preserving vegetables allows you to make the most of your garden's produce throughout the year.

Hacks for small-space gardens and additional savings

Maximize your crop output by thinking vertically to make the most out of a small space. Use a vertical planter to get around limited square footage on a patio or in a sunny room. Trellises, repurposed bookshelves or stackable planters can transform your planting on the cheap. Indoor hydroponic gardens, whether you purchase an all-in-one system or build your own setup with mason jars, are another compact gardening option for herbs and vegetables.

There's also no need to buy expensive tools or fancy pots to get started. Almost any container around your home can become a planter. You can grow your strawberries in laundry hampers and potatoes in cardboard boxes. For deeper containers, you can further reduce costs by filling the bottom with organic material like leaves and sticks before topping it with a more expensive, quality topsoil.

Community gardens, local libraries and university extension programs also offer a range of free resources to help you kick off your patio gardening. Social media and online resources have inspired millennials and Gen Z gardeners. Classes, tools, books, seeds and experienced gardeners can help you learn how to get started and troubleshoot any problems as you begin planting. Gardeners in local groups have experience with gardens of all sizes and will have resources to help you apply a green thumb to your gardening space.

Save money this summer with your own garden

Even a single pot of herbs on your windowsill can help you cut down on grocery spending this summer. With food prices expected to rise, small-scale gardening can be a vital response to economic pressure. Whether you want to try patio planters with tomatoes and peppers or

construct raised beds in the backyard for a larger crop, sunlight, water and a little creativity are all you need to start a garden. Pick your family's favorite fruits and vegetables, and each harvest can mean money saved while still getting delicious, healthy produce for your kitchen.

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