

Should you start a victory garden?



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Ask a Master Gardener

Question: Recently I have been hearing about victory gardens. What are they, and are they different from a regular garden?

Answer: Historically, victory gardens began in WWI and returned in WWII. In WWI, the government asked the citizens to grow food for themselves and for the troops. In WWII, the rationing of food and other commodities was common. Community and private gardens were common. People pulled together with a common goal – victory over the enemy.

The Douglas County Master Gardeners have maintained a victory garden for years. They grow and donate approximately 5,000 pounds of fresh produce a year to local food banks.

Currently, our country and the world are facing a different threat – a virus. To fight this, we are encouraged to stay home and isolate ourselves from others. Jobs have already been lost with the possibility of more to follow, routines upended, and additional stress has been placed on everyone.

Isolated as we are, it would be easy to give in to thoughts of helplessness.



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Vegetables at the Victory Garden at the OSU Master Gardener's Discovery Garden

We are not helpless. What can we do? How can we help fight this for our families and our communities?

One way is to start your own victory garden so that you can grow healthy, nutritious foods for your family. Your garden will provide benefits beyond supplying your family with fresh fruit and vegetables.

Gardening keeps you physically active, is relaxing, instills self-reliance and enables you to gain knowledge and new skills. This is also a great way for the family to get outside and work together. Cooperation and working

towards a common goal can strengthen relationships and can provide a much-needed morale boost.

A victory garden does not have to be a huge garden. It can also be grown in pots on your patio. A large flower pot on the patio is especially good for lettuce since it usually needs more shade than most gardens provide. I love having fresh lettuce a few steps from my back door.

Ideally, you will want to start planning your garden at a family meeting. What fruits and vegetables are favorites of your family?

Start with those. What are some staples? Add these.

When you know what you want to grow, check that the site you have chosen has adequate sunlight, good soil and the area is the appropriate size for what you are planting.

Divide the gardening chores up by age and ability and decide who does what. There is enough work in a garden for you and your family to have something to do together every day.

When you decide what to grow, you will also need to decide if you will grow everything from

seeds or starts or a combination of both, and the amount you will need. If you are planning to preserve food (canning, freezing, drying), consider that in your planning.

Most seeds can be ordered through the mail. Some stores, Lowe's for instance, has curbside pickup for plants, but Home Depot does not. Also, I have spoken with another store in the area that does do curbside pickup but does not want to advertise it, so please call your local store to see if this is an option for you if you need it.

With a victory garden you will not be stuck inside all day when the glorious summer weather returns. Turn your victory garden into a personal victory for you and your family. Enjoy and appreciate watching your family, along with your garden, grow together and become stronger.

Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at ask.extension.org/ask. Presently, the plant clinic is closed until further notice due to public safety orders.