



How Does Gardening Build Health? Let Us Count the Ways!

1. A short dose of daily sun enables skin cells to manufacture vitamin D.
2. Gardening can ease stress, keep you limber, and even improve your mood.ⁱ
3. Research shows that gardeners are more physically active than non-gardeners, and on average, have a lower body-mass index.ⁱⁱ
4. Food gardeners tend to eat more vegetables.
and ... last but not least:
5. ***The fresher your vegetables, the greater their nutritional value.***



Grow for Health! 10 Easy-from-Seed Garden Vegetables that will Benefit Your Body



1. Kale is something of an icon for healthy eating, and for good reason. Not only does it contain almost seven times the recommended daily allowance of vitamin K (best known for its role in helping blood to clot, but also helpful in preventing osteoporosis), it also contains a full day's supply of vitamin C, and more than enough vitamin A to keep your body performing well. Add to that B vitamins, calcium, potassium, minerals, and cancer-fighting antioxidants, and it's easy to see why kale has become a symbol of health.

Did You Know? *Vitamin C losses in vegetables stored for 7 days at about 40 °F range from 15% for peas to 77% for green beans.*ⁱⁱⁱ



2. Carrot is the root word for carotene, and the roots are—no surprise—rich in health-benefiting beta-carotenes, a powerful antioxidant that the body converts to Vitamin A. In fact, one good-sized carrot provides about twice the recommended daily allowance of Vitamin A. The particular health benefits of a carrot can depend somewhat on its color. According to the USDA, yellow carrots contain xanthophylls, a substance that supports vision and lowers lung cancer risks; red carrots contain lycopene, which helps prevent heart disease and some cancers; purple carrots contain anthocyanins, pigments that act as powerful antioxidants to neutralize harmful free radicals.^{iv}

***Did You Know?** Each color category represents different nutrients and antioxidants. Nutrition experts' advice: Colorize your diet.*



3. Bok Choy is a vitamin powerhouse. One cup contains well more than a day's worth of vitamin A, most of your daily requirement of vitamins C and K, and a respectable dose of B vitamins and calcium. And it's an easy cool-weather vegetable to grow! Baby bok choy varieties mature in just 30 days.

***Did You Know?** Calcium in foods is not always available to the body. Only about 5% of calcium in spinach can be absorbed, and the percentage of milk-calcium absorbed seldom exceeds 40%.^v In contrast, calcium in bok choy is more than 50% available.*



4. Parsley is often thought of as an herb rather than a vegetable. This is a mistake! Gram for gram, raw parsley contains an equal amount of vitamin C to raw kale, twice the vitamin K, and four times the iron. Grow it, cut it repeatedly, and use it in a power juice or a tabouleh recipe. Your body will thank you.

***Did You Know?** If the thought of juicing green vegetables turns your taste buds off, you can toss an apple into the mix.*



5. Tomatoes provide good amounts of vitamins A and C, but are most renowned in health circles for their lycopene content, responsible for the fruits' deep red color. Lycopene's powerful antioxidant actions maintain the strength of cell membranes, and are vital in the prevention of many diseases.

***Did You Know?** To get the most lycopene, you should grow tomato varieties that have the deepest, richest red color.*



6. Peas are a very well rounded source of nutrients, containing healthy amounts of vitamins A, C, and K, as well as the B complex vitamins, and an impressive mineral content to boot. Maybe *that's* why mom and dad always prompted you to "Eat your peas!"

***Did You Know?** Just ten snap pea pods (admit it: you eat at least that number while picking the daily harvest!) supply about one third of the recommended daily value of vitamin C.*



7. Beets are a rich source of B-complex vitamins, especially folate, which is responsible for the production of new cells. They also supply our bodies with minerals, including iron, manganese, potassium, and magnesium. And don't throw out the greens! They are good (and tasty) sources of vitamins C and A.

***Did You Know?** The unique crimson-red color of red beet is due to betalain pigments, antioxidants with cancer-fighting properties.*



8. Spring Onions, or Scallions, are an excellent (and often overlooked) source of vitamins A, C, K, and folate, as well as calcium, iron, and a host of other minerals. Use the mild and tender white stalks in salads, and chop the green tops finely and use them like chives.

***Did You Know?** The sharp, pungent smell of onions comes from its sulfur compound, allyl propyl disulphide. This compound offers multiple health benefits, one of which involves helping to lower blood sugar.^{vi}*



9. Spinach is one of those dark green vegetables that scream out, “I’m good for you!” Packed with the same nutrients that make kale such a health champion (but in lesser amounts), it’s an easy choice for a nutritious salad. The fresher, the better.

***Did You Know?** Steaming helps vegetables retain water-soluble B vitamins and vitamin C, which are easily lost during boiling.*



10. Green beans are a good source of vitamins (especially vitamins C and K), minerals, and fiber, whether eaten raw or cooked. For an extra nutritious hors d’oeuvres, blanch them and serve on a crudité platter with hummus.

***Did You Know?** Fat-laden dips can cancel out the benefits of raw vegetables. Avoid this nutritional pitfall by serving raw vegetables with a yogurt- or bean-based dip, or with pesto.*

ⁱ Harding, A. 2011. Why Gardening is Good for Your Health.

<http://www.health.com/health/article/0,,20507878,00.html>

ⁱⁱ Talbott, C. 2011. Colorado Arts and Sciences. artsandsciences.colorado.edu/magazine/

ⁱⁱⁱ Barrett D. 2007. Maximizing the Nutritional Value of Fruits & Vegetables. Food Technology 61(4):40-44.

^{iv} Simon P. 2004. Carrots With Character.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/ar/archive/nov04/carrot1104.htm>

^v Gueguen L. and others. 2000. The Bioavailability of Dietary Calcium.

http://www.jacn.org/content/19/suppl_2/119S.full

^{vi} White, K, Zellner, J. 2008. Onion.

http://academics.hamilton.edu/foodforthought/Our_Research_files/allium.pdf