



## Tips for the Thrifty Gardener

A garden doesn't have to cost a lot of money. In fact, there are many ways a garden can *save* you money. Here are a few suggestions for keeping your garden in top shape without draining your bank account. Supplement them with your own creative ideas!

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### Grow from Seed:

It makes good sense, and saves dollars to start easy-to-grow plants from seed rather than buying started seedlings from a nursery. Here are some vegetables and flowers that can and *should* be sown directly in the garden:



Lettuce, arugula, and other salad greens: Sprinkle the seed in wide rows. You will get at least three cuttings of salad greens, which can sell for upwards of \$6-\$7 a pound at the local supermarket.

All root vegetables like carrots, beets, radishes and turnips are also very easy-from-seed vegetables.

Garden mainstay veggies such as beans, peas, squash, cucumbers and corn all come easily and quickly from seed as well as long as you wait until temperatures are

warmed up into the 50° range both day and night.

Sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, marigolds, alyssum, sweet peas, morning glories and nasturtiums are some of the beautiful and popular flowers that can be had for the price of a pack of seeds. If you want to have cut flowers, a pack of seeds will produce lots and lots of flowering plants so that you can enjoy bouquets all season long.

See <http://www.ezfromseed.org/> for more vegetables and flowers that can be sown directly in the garden.

### Share-starting:

And while you're at it, consider joining with friends in a seed-starting cooperative for plants that need a head start indoors (peppers, eggplants and tomatoes all need to be started indoors in the US except in the warmest areas.) One person starts eggplants, another tomatoes, and at planting time, just divide the started plants among the participating members.



### Compost:

Don't give your leaves away! Chop them with your lawnmower and put them in a pile. Or make a simple compost bin with chicken wire and four stakes. Add vegetable trimmings, prunings, weeds (but no weed with seeds), and other compostables.

### Stake with Reused Materials:



Scavenged materials make very serviceable stakes. Political signs stakes (minus the actual signs) are a good size for propping up peppers or small pea varieties or vining cucumbers - but wait until *after* the election before collecting them! Scrap wood or old broomsticks or rake handles can be fashioned into tomato supports. An old stepladder can be repurposed as a bean or flower tower.

### Fertilize your Vegetable Garden with Living Plants:



Clover fixes nitrogen, fertilizing your soil!

Planting a cover crop in your vegetable garden when the weather is not conducive for growing edible plants is a sure way to improve both the structure and the fertility of your soil. Winter rye, mustard and clover are widely available good choices. For more information, consult your Cooperative Extension, or go to <http://hort.uwex.edu/articles/using-cover-crops-and-green-manures-home-vegetable-garden>

### Get Creative with Weed Barriers:

Laying down 3 to 4 inches of bagged mulch, at considerable expense, has become almost a rite of spring for many homeowners. There are many materials that will perform the same function at a fraction of the cost! Newspaper, cardboard, or shredded paper, topped with straw, pine needles, or chopped leaves, will make a very effective weed barrier between plants. If you don't like the look of these alternatives, try using shredded wood mulch in the front of the garden, and paper or cardboard topped with straw in less visible parts.



### Water with Rain:

Use rain, as much as possible, to water your plants. Rain barrels need not cost a fortune. Check out this EPA instruction sheet for a low cost, DIY version:

<http://www.epa.gov/Region3/p2/make-rainbarrel.pdf>



### Seed Pots come in all Shapes and Sizes:

Seeds can be started indoors in any container. Orange juice cartons (sliced in half), yogurt containers, takeout containers - the list is endless. All you need to do is poke holes in the bottom for drainage to make them useful.

### Mark with a Stone:

One attractive way to keep track of what's where is to mark the names of your plants with indelible ink on flat stones.

