

Grow Your Own Pizza Garden

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Did you know that many pizza ingredients come from the garden? Tomatoes, basil, oregano, sweet bell peppers, garlic and onions are just a few of the vegetables that you might find on a slice of pizza. These vegetables also are commonly used to make sauces for pizza and pasta. Other garden vegetables, such as spinach and hot peppers, are sometimes added as toppings.

It can be fun to grow your own ingredients to make a fresh, tasty homemade pizza that you and your family can enjoy together!

Getting Started

1. Select a container that is large enough to hold all the plants you want to grow and deep enough for the roots to grow, too. A recycled 5-gallon bucket or foam cooler work well. Make sure that the container is clean before you begin.
2. It's important that your container has holes in the bottom. If it is a recycled container, an adult should drill or cut drainage holes in the bottom.
3. Next, moisten the potting soil with a little water to make the soil easier to work with once it is in the pot.
4. Fill the container with soil until it reaches about 1 inch below the top of the container.

Planting the Garden

1. Carefully remove the plants from their individual containers.
2. Make a hole in the potting soil big enough for the root and soil to fit in and be covered by the potting soil.
3. Plant tomatoes and peppers in the middle of the container. If you are planting both, keep them at least 8 inches apart.
4. Plant the basil, oregano, garlic and onions around the tomato and pepper plants about 3 inches from the edge of the container.
5. Water the plants well to make sure they feel welcome in their new home.

Caring for the Garden

1. Keep the garden in a location that receives between six and eight hours of full sunlight each day.
2. Make sure that the garden is watered. The soil should dry out slightly at the top before you water again. Perform a screwdriver test for moisture.

Take a screwdriver that is about 6 inches long and push into the soil about 4 inches deep. If it comes out “dirty,” it means that the soil has enough moisture to leave a trace on the screwdriver. If it comes out clean, the soil is dry and needs water. Check the soil every day. Depending on the weather conditions, you may have to water more than one time per week. Water loss occurs more quickly when the weather is hot and sunny, and the plants will require more frequent watering.

3. Keep an eye out for insects and other problems. If insects start eating your plants, you can remove the insects, if you see them actively feeding on the plant, and remove the plant parts as they turn brown or yellow.

What You Will Need

- A large pot, bucket or any other recycled container with holes drilled in the bottom
- Enough potting soil to fill the container
- A few of your favorite plants, such as:
 - Tomato
 - Bell Pepper
 - Basil
 - Oregano
 - Onions (from sets or seeds)
 - Garlic
- A sunny location to place your completed pizza garden



Photo credit: Beck Gusler, flickr.com

Harvesting your Ingredients

1. Pull tomatoes and peppers from the plant firmly. Wash and use.
2. Remove only the leaves of the basil and oregano. They may need to be washed if they look dirty.
3. Pull onions and garlic up from the soil. The longer they stay in the soil, the bigger they get. Wash the onion bulbs and slice as needed. You can also use the green parts when the onions are young.

Fresh Tomato Pizza Sauce

This sauce will take a little while to make, but the results are delicious. This also makes enough for your family to freeze or preserve for future use.

1/3 cup olive oil

2 cups finely chopped onions

8 cups peeled, seeded, coarsely chopped tomatoes
(put through blender, if desired)

2 (6-ounce) cans tomato
paste

2 tablespoons oregano,
crumbled

2 teaspoons basil, crumbled

1 bay leaf

2 tablespoons sugar

1 tablespoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper

2 tablespoons finely chopped garlic

Heat oil in large (6 to 8 quarts) stainless steel pan. Add onions and cook over medium heat for six to eight minutes until transparent. Add garlic and cook another minute. Stir in tomatoes, paste, oregano, basil, bay leaf, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Then simmer, uncovered, for an hour or until thick. Stir occasionally. When finished, the sauce should be thin and fairly smooth. Remove bay leaf. Taste and season. Sauce may be canned or frozen. Makes 5 to 6 pints.

From: www.cooks.com



For more information

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