

## Vegetable gardening for beginners: start with herbs

If you are looking to start a vegetable garden, but are not sure how, why not start with a low-key effort: a few herb plants in your garden or on your balcony. Growing herbs is incredibly easy. And you will have a continuous supply!

### Which herb plants?

Start with the herbs you use (almost) every day, like thyme (Thymus), rosemary (Rosmarinus) and chives (Allium schoenoprasum). These are all easygoing plants that you will be enjoying for months. Once you get the hang of it, you can expand your plant collection with slightly less common herbs, like tarragon (Artemisia dracunculoides), sage (Salvia) and fennel (Foeniculum vulgare). And don't forget herbs for tea, like mint (Mentha) and anise hyssop (Agastache).

### From border to herb garden

Herbs are easygoing and beautiful plants. You can simply plant them between your other plants in the border. They do like a sunny spot, though. If you prefer to have more of an overview, you can group the herb plants together in a part of the border or in a separate herb garden. Herbs also thrive in pots and containers. Put them near the kitchen door for easy access! For inspiration, visit [www.perennialpower.eu](http://www.perennialpower.eu).

### A square meter garden

Once you get the hang of growing herbs, it's only



Photo by Maayke de Ridder courtesy of iVerde "Perennial Power"

**FOR BEGINNERS** — Lavandula angustifolia Hidcote or Lavender is a free flowing variety prized by most gardeners for its long-lasting and delightful scent. Lavender, perfect for beginners to grow, can be dried and its soothing scent enjoyed in winter, too.

a small step to a vegetable garden. You could set up a square meter garden, for example, with a mix of herbs, vegetable plants and edible flowers. But if you prefer,

feel free to just enjoy your herb garden and leave it at that!

### Tips and ideas

• Lots of lushly growing herbs will give your garden

a natural atmosphere. If you pick with moderation, the plants will flower. The flowers will attract lots of butterflies and bees!

• You can pick rosemary, sage and thyme year-round (avoid picking the plant completely bare).

Lavender is perfect for drying, so you can enjoy its soothing scent in winter, too.

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## What to do about moss in your lawn

A lush, green lawn is a point of pride for many homeowners. Eye-catching landscaping anchored by a healthy lawn is one of the key ways to improve the value and curb appeal of a home. In fact, the experts at HGTV say an attractive and well-maintained landscape can add as much as 10 percent to the value of a home.

Maintaining a thriving lawn takes effort, and that means recognizing when the green in the yard may not necessarily be coming from soft blades of grass. Invasive greenery, including moss, can infiltrate a lawn and that can be problematic if left unaddressed.

A mossy lawn is a sign that certain conditions are ripe for the moss, but not necessarily the grass, to grow. According to Lowes, moss thrives in certain conditions, which should be addressed if homeowners hope to corral it.

• Moss does well in acidic soil, more so than traditional grasses. A soil test can confirm if the pH needs to be adjusted to make it more hospitable to grass and less friendly to moss.

• Compacted soil and excess thatch can make it easier for moss to take root. These conditions also can make the soil damp and restrict drainage, something that promotes moss growth.

• Moss can grow in shady conditions. If patches of the lawn have been over-run by moss, there could be too much shade in the area. Trimming back trees or shrubbery may help; otherwise, homeowners may need to look into hardscape or plants that thrive in such conditions to remedy shady and damp areas on portions of their landscapes.

Photo courtesy of Metro Creative Graphics

**NO MOSS** — Moss may look whimsical on stones in the woods, but most homeowners would prefer their lawns be free of it.

Moss typically can be removed the same way one would dethatch a lawn. It involves rigorously raking or agitating the lawn to loosen the moss. This can be done by hand with a rake, or in the case of a lot of moss or a large lawn, with a dethatching blade attachment for a lawn mower.

Aerating the soil will help keep moss that was removed from returning. In addition, amending the soil so that it has a more dense nutritional profile by adding compost, as well as improving drainage and adjusting the pH, are keys to keeping moss from returning.

For pesky moss, The

Spruce suggests making a solution of one box of baking soda to two gallons of water and spraying this solution on the patches of moss. It is a natural alternative to using chemical products. Certain sources indicate a glyphosate herbicide could work on moss, but the World Health Organization considers glyphosate to be a probable human carcinogen and it is prohibited in certain areas.

Moss may be green, but it's often not the type of green homeowners desire in their lawns. Learning about moss can help when removing it and preventing it in the future.

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