

# **INDOOR AND OUTDOOR GARDENING FOR YOUR HOME**

—By Amber Martinez

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“Gardening has many useful benefits for the environment, as well as physical and mental health. The relaxing nature of gardening plus the fact that it can be an indoor or outdoor activity, make it a popular pastime for many. There are, however, people who don't know how to start and grow a garden. Fortunately, when equipped with the right information, plants, and tools, most can successfully grow anything from houseplants to floral or food gardens right in their home, patio, or yard.

## **TYPES OF PLANTS**

When planning an indoor or outdoor garden, the first step is to decide on what type of plants to grow. Various types of plants include herbs, palms, ferns, bamboos, cacti and succulents. They may flower or be non-flowering, annual or perennial.

Not all plants, however, are suitable for all environments. Some plant types cannot successfully thrive in indoor pots, for example. There are also plants that are better suited for the controlled climate of the indoors or filtered lighting, while others require open-air conditions and direct sun.

## **TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT**

In addition to the right type of plant, the right tools are also a necessity. Whether gardening indoors or outdoors, one should have a pair of comfortable gardening gloves to not only keep their hands clean, but to protect them from thorns, scratches, or coming into contact with leaves or flowers that may be toxic to the touch. Other basic tools that one will need regardless of where they intend to grow their plants include pruning shears, a hand trowel, and a hand fork.

Indoor gardeners also need pots for planting, a watering can, and a plant mister. In homes with limited space, a windowsill potting kit can be suitable for flowers or herbs and will ensure they receive enough sunlight. A plant stand and a moisture meter are also examples of what one may need for their indoor garden.

When gardening outdoors, there are a few basic tools needed. This includes a garden hoe, a water hose with a nozzle, a shovel or long spade, and a garden rake. Depending on the size of the garden and the need to haul soil, one may need a wheelbarrow. In areas with hard dirt, a cultivator or tiller may be necessary.

Patio gardens are most commonly container gardens or bed gardens. For bed gardening, a raised garden bed or a planter box is necessary.

## **LIGHTING**

Lighting plays a critical role in growing healthy plants. All plants require light, but not to the same degree. Before buying a plant, it is important to check the lighting requirements to ensure that it is suitable. A plant that requires full sun, for example, will flourish outdoors versus being in an apartment with low light.

When planting outside, plants that require partial or full shade should be appropriately placed in areas that receive shade from the sun, such as areas close to walls or in areas that are near trees.

People who live in homes or apartments should ideally choose plants that require low or indirect light. South and East-facing windows often provide the best indirect lighting for plants. People who live in houses or apartments that have little to no natural lighting can still be successful at indoor gardening. Grow lights can help meet the needs of some houseplants, even full-light plants that require up to 6 to 8 hours of sunlight.

### WATER

One area that novice gardeners have difficulty with is how much and how often to water their plants. It is important that people follow the watering guidelines to ensure their plants do not die from dehydration or from too much water.

Houseplants rely entirely on the water from the person who cares for them. One should learn how to check the soil manually for moisture or purchase moisture meters that will show when a plant needs hydration. A watering schedule can also help gardeners keep track of which plant needs watering and when.

Outdoor plants receive moisture from a variety of sources, such as rain, mist, or even morning dew. This can make it hard to control how much water they're actually receiving. Sprinklers or drip systems use timers to maintain a regular schedule and are adjustable for days that are naturally wet. A drip system works by placing the water at the base of each plant so that it isn't wasted on surrounding dirt.

### SIZE

Plants come in various sizes. Not all plant sizes, however, are suitable for in-home growth. Because the size of its container limits a plant's growth, there are certain types of plants that need space for their roots to grow.

### CLIMATE

Depending on where a person lives, they may be subject to blistering hot summers or chilly winters. Extreme temperature can affect plants in various ways, including their ability to thrive. A plant that needs full sun may not, for example, be able to endure the high heat that comes with summer in certain areas. People who live in areas that experience extreme climate conditions will want to choose plants that are ideally suited for the weather. This is important for outdoor gardens that are more susceptible to the elements. Selecting plants that are native to the area is one way to ensure that a plant can survive the climate.

People can also consult the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone map that helps gardeners determine if a plant can survive locations based on minimum cold weather, or by consulting the American Horticultural Society (AHS) Plant Heat-Zone Map.

### PESTS

Pests plague plant life both inside the home and outside. Indoor gardens are typically at risk of damage from insects such as spider mites, scale, and mealybugs. Outdoor pests, however, are more varied and can be difficult to control. Besides leaf-eating aphids and other types of pests that plague household plants, gardeners must fend off wildlife.

Deer, squirrels, and rabbits are all examples of pests that can destroy food or even flower gardens. To combat this type of pest, fencing, netting and other deterrents may be useful.”