

## *Horticultural Therapy*



### **HEALTHY VEGETABLE GARDENS**

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**Grow vegetables because they're GOOD for you!**



Nothing is more gratifying – or good for you – than growing your own vegetables. You are not only providing food but also exercising and getting rid of stress by working the soil in the fresh air.

A well balanced diet is essential for a healthy body and mind. Vegetables and fruits are rich in vitamins, minerals and other necessary components. Without a proper diet our immune system is weakened which may effect our body's ability to ward off illnesses. Recent studies conducted through the University of Hawaii have shown that eating certain vegetables may lessen the chances of developing lung cancer. Because vegetables have little or no fat or salt content, are low in calories and high in fibre, they contribute to keeping the heart healthy and preventing coronary heart disease.

Vegetables can provide 100 percent of the vitamin A and C that we need daily, as well as 20 to 35 percent of iron and 15 percent of other minerals and B vitamins. The darker the vegetable, the more nutritional value it has. Spinach is much higher in iron, calcium and vitamin C than light iceberg lettuce. "Smelly" vegetables like cabbage, broccoli and Brussel sprouts are high in potassium, iron and vitamin C. That's important if you are taking certain drugs, like diuretics, which rob your body of potassium. It is also important to help balance the sodium. Sodium and potassium regulate nerve signals and muscle contractions. When they aren't balanced, nerves and muscles don't work as well.



A well planned garden should have vegetables that produce the most nutrients for the least amount of space. It's fun to grow corn, but to harvest a good crop you need as much space as some devote to all their vegetables. If you want some colour and height, add sunflowers. Their seeds are nutritious, the plant takes little garden space and those giant blooms make quite a spectacle.

And don't be skeptical about the exercise factor. Digging, bending, hoeing, planting, weeding – and finally reaping – all provide a good cardiovascular workout.

Following is a guide as to which vegetables and seeds provide which nutrients. It is important to note no one food group is nutritionally complete on its own, but together with other groups form a well balanced diet. Couple that with the exercise and fresh air that gardening provides, and you're on the way to a healthier lifestyle.

<b>Nutrient</b>	<b>Vegetable</b>	<b>Value or Function of the Nutrient</b>
<b>Iron</b>	Sunflower seeds, squash, pumpkin seeds, green beans, peas, spinach	Combines with protein to form hemoglobin, the red constituent which transports O <sub>2</sub> and CO <sub>2</sub> .
<b>Vitamin A</b>	Beets, chick peas, asparagus, corn, lima beans, carrots, pumpkin, spinach, sweet potato	Aids in normal bone and tooth development. Promotes good night vision. Maintains healthy skin membranes.
<b>Vitamin C</b>	Asparagus, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, Brussel sprouts, tomatoes	Maintains healthy gums and teeth. Maintains strong vessel walls.
<b>Carbohydrates</b>	Peas, carrots, corn, onion, potatoes	Provides energy, assists in the utilization of fats
<b>Thiamin</b>	Soya beans, split peas, sunflower seeds, lima beans, broccoli	Releases energy from carbohydrates. Aids in normal growth and appetite.
<b>Calcium</b>	Rhubarb, beans, spinach, beet greens, broccoli	Is the most important structural mineral in our body for skeletal growth and development of dental tissue. Promotes healthy nerve function and normal blood clotting.
<b>Fibre</b>	Raspberries, potato skins, carrots, chick peas, apples, plums, peanuts	Provides indigestible bulk which encourages normal elimination of body waste.
<b>Folacin</b>	Soya beans, asparagus, lima beans, yellow beans, beets, broccoli, Brussel sprouts	Aids in red blood cell formation.

