



The Salad Lover's Garden Greens for Health

Garden Personality: *If you crave a tidy bed of greens for an endless supply of the spicy, savory, bitter, and crisp leaves that make a truly great salad, the Salad Lover's Garden is the one for you. A series of small beds provide easy successive planting that will keep a steady supply of greens from seed to salad bowl.*

A Salad Lover's Garden can be as small as a perfect one-square-foot plot, or a matrix of geometric designs. For new gardeners, lettuce and salad greens are the easiest and quickest garden crops to grow and are ideal to plant in a kitchen garden. Consider a full range of European and American heirloom greens blended with gorgeous lettuces that weave together into a colorful tapestry almost too beautiful to harvest.

A garden of salad greens, either wild or cultivated, is rich in vitamins and minerals, and can contain as many as 50 different plants with flavors from buttery-soft head lettuce to piquant arugula and peppery cress. You can also grow salad onions, radishes, carrots, salad cucumbers, and a range of edible flowers to enhance the salad bowl, but in this design, salad greens steal the show with their unique blend of wild colors, textures, and shapes.

The varieties in this garden may be new to you, but they are all worth growing. Your best bet is to start with seeds, since all are easy to grow. Claytonia, which is rarely found in the farmers' market, rewards the gardener with tiny, exotic, lily pad-shaped leaves that will add an unusual visual twist to a bowl of greens. Goldgelber purslane, a cousin to the more rampant weed, is more upright, and the succulent leaves are at the top of the charts when it comes to omega-3 benefits. Mustard greens, with their sizzling hot flavor, are tamed by a good creamy dressing, especially when picked young and tender.

Start the season as early as you can work the soil, since greens enjoy the cooler weather of early spring and late fall. Plan to grow tender



The Organic Rotation Garden

Four-Square Principles

Garden Personality: *This design is ideal for first-time gardeners with the goal of learning the fundamental principles of organic gardening. The four-square design is one of the oldest and most practical designs, and it provides the building block for many of the other garden designs in this book.*

The history of the four-square garden goes back seven centuries, to the first English cottage gardens, when the landholding aristocracy offered four-square parcels of land to the working class, who had been decimated by the plague during the thirteenth century. In these four-square gardens, they could grow food for their families, as well as supply the upper class with grains, herbs, berries, fruit, and livestock. This practical and productive four-square design continued to evolve through the centuries, then flourished when more aesthetic elements were introduced, such as espaliered trees, ornamental flowers, and fragrant herbs.

When you combine this classic design with the principles of organic gardening, you will appreciate how the basics of organic rotation work, making it easy to follow a successful planting routine each year. The end result will be healthy soil, healthy plants, and a harvest that is vitamin-rich and packed with flavor.

When plants are grown in the same location year after year, they can be weakened by soil-borne diseases. This may lead to weakened (or dead) plants, and may tempt you to find a short-term chemical solution to keep the plants alive until the following year. In the Organic Rotation Garden, you are creating a garden that will be self-sustaining as well as self-improving every year. You are working with nature to constantly upgrade the natural balance in your vegetable garden.

By following this basic concept of grouping your garden plants based on their needs and rotating them every year, you are avoiding problems that may stem from your soil, while enhancing the health of your plants. A four-square Organic Rotation Garden simplifies the pro-



The Cook's Garden

The *Potager*

Garden Personality: *This classic garden is planted with the cook in mind, with ample amounts of tender greens and aromatic herbs conveniently located near the kitchen door. During the summer, this garden becomes an extension of your kitchen.*

The word “garden” derives from an old German word *gart*, which means an enclosure or safe place. This classic garden design is based on my own *potager*, which fits snugly against the south side of my house, on less than a quarter of an acre. Surrounded by emerald green arborvitae, which frame the front and side border, the hedge provides privacy from neighbors. Boundaries around your garden may not seem like a priority at first, but they create a transition between the lawn and the garden. Stepping inside the garden feels private, and the space feels as cozy as a small room.

A Cook's Garden is a classic *potager* (the French term for “kitchen garden”), designed to grow only those tender greens and aromatic herbs that are used by the cook on a daily basis. Gardeners have intermingled vegetables, fruits, flowers, and herbs since medieval times, and for the French, the *potager* continues to be an integral part of their lifestyle. More than 25 percent of the fruit and vegetables consumed by the French are homegrown, which explains why the French are known for their enjoyment of cooking and consuming good food.

A Cook's Garden is compact and efficient, with sufficient space for a dozen or more different salad greens and herbs, a few heirloom tomatoes, edible flowers, and delicate plants that are only available from your own kitchen garden. Select seeds for unusual varieties that pique your interest, and experiment with a range of flavors that are unfamiliar but will spark you to try new recipes.



The Children's Garden Peter Rabbit–Style

Garden Personality: *This garden is a place to play, dig in the soil, spray water, pick spinach and peas, grow flowers, climb, hide, nap, read, and have tea. It is located within the larger garden, and there is only one rule: no adults allowed.*

Form follows function in a Children's Garden, and often the child's wishes are quite different from the parent's. Most children prefer to have their own garden space, and it's ideal to integrate a space for a Children's Garden into the larger family garden. If your kids are young, they will most likely enjoy a place to dig, spray water, and climb, so why not build a sandbox into the corner or a tree house nearby? If your kids are older, they might need magnets such as blueberries, strawberries, or raspberries to entice them to step inside the garden gate.

The best way for children to learn how to garden is by imitating your actions, and together you can share the daily garden routines and explore the world beyond the plants. Be prepared to answer lots of questions: Why do earthworms eat the soil? What is a good bug? How are honeybees helping the garden? Since young children don't understand activities such as weeding or planting in straight rows, give them tasks that will trigger their curiosity and build their connections to the natural world, rather than jobs with merely practical purposes. Above all, keep it fun, and provide gentle guidance without expectations.

Spoil your children and let them graze before dinner on tender garden spinach or snack on sugar snap peas, but be warned that eating fresh from the garden is guaranteed to turn them into food snobs. Supermarket produce and frozen peas from a bag will never hold the same appeal again. Planning a Children's Garden involves the whole family, and a good place to start is at the dinner table. Discuss what foods can be grown, and how long it might take for a head of broccoli to mature. Kids will appreciate the food on their plates far more when



The Culinary Herb Garden

Fresh and Flavorful

Garden Personality: *The relatively carefree nature of herbs, along with their aromatic qualities, makes this garden ideal for an entrance or pathway into the house. Fill your Culinary Herb Garden with color, texture, and fragrance; a showy blend of green, gray, and gold will rival a flower border for visual beauty and surpass it in usefulness.*

The herb family comprises hundreds of species, and learning which ones are the best for your own kitchen garden may take a few seasons. Herb cultivars fall into two main categories: annuals and perennials. Annual herb plants live a single season, with a focused goal to set seed. Perennials go dormant when the temperatures drop, and generate new foliage during the growing season. Ideally your herb garden will contain a mixture of both, kept in separate beds, in order to make it easier to get to know the different plants.

As you learn to cook with herbs, you may wish to keep expanding your herb garden plant list, especially when you discover pineapple sage, lemon basil, or chocolate mint. If you love basil, you can choose from the more than 80 different cultivars and fill a single garden with sweet, scented, or sacred basil. Love the smell of lemon thyme? Check out the dozens of varieties, from low-creeping thyme to variegated thyme, both ideal for forming garden edges or enhancing paths. The most successful herb gardens may appear carefree, yet they require the most planning in order to get the design right from the start.

The term “herb” encompasses a wide spectrum of delicate soft-stemmed annuals, woody perennials, and large voracious plants that also double as gorgeous ornamentals. Many herbs remain compact, but others are prone to spread underground with an active root system that can easily turn into a weed. Do your research and get to know your herbs before you welcome them into your herb garden.



The Paint Box Garden Raised Beds

Garden Personality: *This garden is a place to play, dig in the soil, spray water, pick spinach and peas, grow flowers, climb, hide, nap, read, and have tea. It is located within the larger garden, and there is only one rule: no adults allowed.*

Instead of digging a garden in the earth, create a series of raised beds by stacking wood together to form an enclosed area. Fill it with topsoil or compost and you have an instant garden. This is especially beneficial if your soil is composed of heavy clay or is otherwise difficult to amend for growing vegetables, herbs, and flowers. Raised beds offer several other advantages: They lift plants higher, which protects them from the early spring frost. They are also a deterrent for rabbits and dogs, as well as a natural barrier against grass and weeds.

There are numerous options for what to use for your raised beds; the best materials will be those that are made with untreated, rot-resistant wood. These include cedar, cypress, and any hardwood indigenous to your area that has not been treated with chemicals. Wood will not last forever, but it sure beats plastic, which can leach into the soil, leaving residuals that may affect the health of your crops. Besides, what you sacrifice in aesthetics, you make up for in convenience, since movable raised beds are optimal for gardeners who are renting, or are unsure where to plant a more permanent garden. If you change your mind, simply knock down the sides and stack the wood.

Just as with a traditional garden, give careful thought to where you might place the raised beds to provide the option for full sun exposure and access to water spigots and hoses, but also to how the beds blend into your yard. In this Paint Box Garden, the raised beds are grouped together in a pattern that takes up minimal space, yet provides ample growing opportunities for a range of colorful vegetables.

Raised beds look better together, so plan to install several at a time,



The Patio Garden Pot Luck

Garden Personality: *Not enough land for a garden? You can still follow this design and plant your favorite summer foods in pots. Create a sense of place that is defined by containers of ornamental edibles, ideal for the patio.*

Containers come in all sizes and shapes, and how you arrange the pots to fill the space will largely depend on the way your door opens onto the space or where the steps are located on or off the patio. Building the Patio Garden in layers will allow sunlight to reach all the plants. Place the larger pots in the back row; give them height by placing them on top of a tiered structure, with mid-sized pots in the middle rows and smaller plants dotting the front. If the pots are really large, position your containers on movable dollies before adding the soil and plants. Keep a watering can or hose nearby, and plan to keep the plants moist but not overwatered, as that can rot the roots.

Plastic holds moisture better than terra cotta, and is half its weight when filled with potting soil. Furthermore, there are remarkable terra cotta reproductions available in almost every garden center, and even the classic oak whiskey barrel has been replicated in plastic. Be sure that there are drainage holes in the bottoms of your pots, and fill them with several inches of crushed stone or small gravel to allow excess water to drain out through the holes and keep the roots aerated.

If you could think like a plant, you would understand how what happens underground affects what is produced above ground. Give your plants ample room for their roots to expand, and feed them with good soil, which will ultimately affect their flavors. Not all soil is created equal, especially when it comes to potting soil blends; many are treated with a fertilizer infusion to boost plant growth. So read your ingredients label carefully, just as you would when selecting your own food at the grocery. Select organic blends with a mixture of natural compost; add peat or sand to lighten the soil, which will help the pots drain ex-



The Heirloom Maze Garden Kokopelli's Labyrinth

Garden Personality: *Inspiration for the Heirloom Maze Garden comes from ancient labyrinths, circular paths that served as meditation retreats or offered an adventure with a surprise at the end. Follow a winding path past tall tomato teepees and archways of runner beans that leads to the center of the garden. Immerse yourself in the greenery that surrounds you and connect to the history of your heirloom open-pollinated plants.*

This garden is a far simpler version of a traditional maze, yet can be easily adapted to accommodate additional winding paths, and taller plants. Building this garden may take a bit more patience and ingenuity than simply measuring out the four corners of a more traditional square garden. Plan to use a measuring tape, garden stakes, and lots of string to measure the perimeter and the pathways. Once you have the stakes and the string in place, take a walk to be sure that you have the dimensions exactly the way you want them before digging. If you have room to expand, increase the outer edges of this design and add an additional loop in the center.

Many garden plants love to grow vertically, and this maze design provides the perfect opportunity to establish a string of tall teepees to support a living wall of heirloom tomatoes, cucumbers, and pole beans. There are two ways that you can build a trellis to accommodate tomatoes and runner beans; either create individual teepees by lashing together three 8-foot poles at the top with garden twine, or set up a series of double poles that form an X. Run a 6-foot length across the top. Plant seeds in rows underneath the poles, and train seedlings to grow up a string until they reach the top. Build the understory with low-hugging plants such as summer squash, and dot the middle with fragrant sweet herbs and plants that thrive in a bit of shade, such as salad greens or flowers.

Heirlooms were grown before the introduction of hybrid plants in the 1950s, and for many years heirlooms were thought to be inferior



The Garnish Garden

Edible Flowers

Garden Personality: *Flowers bring an unmistakable aura to a garden. Edible plants grown in this garden go far beyond simple sprigs of parsley. Plant a full spectrum of colors, shapes, and flavors that showcase the best of edible flowers, which can double as bouquets for the table or garnish for the plate.*

Inspiration for this garden comes from my neighbor Annie, who floats into the garden like a butterfly, touching each flower as if it were nectar for her soul. Her kitchen garden always stirs with magic; it is filled with a poetic blend of flowers and vegetables, a combination of squares and half-moons enclosed by a rim of sunflowers and a hedge of raspberries. She collects unusual flower vases to fill every room with bouquets, bringing the garden into the house. Annie taught me the value of taking time to appreciate the small nuances that a garden brings to the gardener, whether it is attracting honeybees or watching a darting hummingbird.

Annuals respond to frequent cutting, so plan to harvest your flowers and be rewarded with lush, bushy growth. Mixing ornamental vegetables with edible flowers in your Garnish Garden brings the best of both worlds together. Select vegetables that blend well with the flowers and that have longevity, so there are no gaps when the vegetables are harvested. Flowers have a way of transforming the garden—and any meal—into a work of art, and the Garnish Garden inspires the cook with a cascade of captivating blossoms.

Lay out the garden by building the outer squares first, and then measure in to the center circle. Edge the garden with a solid mass of low-growing greenery that will allow the garden to be viewed from all angles. Plan to start seeds in plug pots, and then transplant them into the garden. Allow adequate space between rows for the flowers to fully develop into bushy, robust plants. Make the paths of grass, to set off the colors of the garden and keep it looking natural.



The Chef's Garden Herbs and Aromatics

Garden Personality: *With a strong focus on savory herbs and ornamental garnish, this garden provides a variety of options for the culinary professional seeking the ultimate fresh experience.*

One of the ways Chef Russell, executive chef at the Equinox Resort shares his love of fresh ingredients is with a tour of his garden, located just outside the kitchen door. It's not a large garden, and he doesn't expect to supply the five restaurants at his exclusive hotel with the harvest. But he does enjoy teaching culinary students and guests how to identify basil, when to harvest rosemary and thyme, and the difference between tarragon and sage.

In early spring, Chef Russell finds time between meals to recruit his restaurant staff to prepare the soil, lay out the garden, and plant herbs, edible flowers, heirloom tomatoes, and hot peppers. He plants beans and broccoli, too, just to show the culinary students how these crops grow, and to build an appreciation for ingredients from the ground up. Guests at the hotel admire the garden as well, with a bird's eye view down into the courtyard. Many chefs are learning that a kitchen garden goes beyond the mere cultivation of food. Teaching, eating, slowing down, avoiding chaos—these are all ways that a kitchen garden improves the busy lives of chefs. A Chef's Garden planted with herbs that can be used for fresh garnish, colorful peppers for decoration, and a row of heirloom tomatoes for a connection to the past can fulfill much the same purpose for in your home.



The Family Garden Outdoor Fun

Garden Personality: *It's time to consider how a vegetable garden can be more than just a place to grow food. It can be a place to get the whole family involved and build connections essential for a lifelong appreciation of community values.*

Setting up a perfect dynamic between the stovetop, the sink, and the refrigerator forms the foundation of good kitchen design and saves you extra steps. Likewise, a well-designed Family Garden gives you freedom of movement; balancing the structures and the planting beds will result in a garden that is easy to maintain, hugely productive, and an outdoor living space that the whole family will enjoy together.

You can begin the process of designing your Family Garden by asking basic questions: What does your family like to eat? What do they want to grow? How much time do you have for a garden? What elements would you enjoy in a garden that go beyond simple food production? Make a list of what tasks might engage your family in the process of creating a garden area that go beyond daily maintenance.

Plan to invest in good garden tools that will make your daily tasks more enjoyable. Be sure to select tools that are a good fit for the whole family; well-constructed child-size tools are a better investment than short-lived plastic toys. Add longevity to your garden season by making a long-term investment in perennial plants such as rhubarb, asparagus, fruit trees, blueberries, and strawberries. These can be planted around the perimeter of the garden or on the edges of the garden beds. Gardens are an investment in time and patience, but the rewards will be enjoyed year after year and be long remembered as time well spent by you and your family.



The Artist's Garden Colorful Parterres

Garden Personality: *This garden is all about the visual qualities of vegetables. You can build an exotic tapestry of color using seeds and plants as your paintbrush and the freshly tilled soil as your blank canvas. Combine the ferny texture of carrot tops with the undulating leaves of arugula and the crimson red of radicchio, and you have a fun, colorful, and whimsical garden, framed by geometric raised beds.*

Plan to build this garden with raised beds, and add a focal point such as a simple bamboo pole structure surrounded by fragrant lemon thyme and lemon gem marigolds. Loose-leaf lettuce, Italian chicories, and bok choy cabbage are valued as tender salad greens, yet also form an eye-pleasing carpet of green, so harvest carefully to keep them growing strong.

“I like to plant close so that the leaves blend together seamlessly,” says Ilona, a professor at Williams College and an avid gardener. She designs her kitchen garden with an artist’s eye and has an unusual knack for combining edible plants that weave together as if they were inseparable friends. Her Artist’s Garden is remarkably productive, though I suspect the plants are selected as much for their brilliant colors as for the flavors they will provide in the kitchen. Entering under a tall trellis smothered in a canary-yellow clematis vine, you are reminded that the vegetable world is rich in color and texture. You are greeted by ferny carrots, Troutback lettuce, and garlic scapes accentuated by a handmade trellis for painted runner beans, a twig bench beneath an arbor, and rustic sticks that stake the eggplant. It’s these visual flourishes that distinguish Ilona’s garden and give it personality.



The Country Garden Easy Maintenance

Garden Personality: *This is a workhorse of a garden, ideal for the gardener who likes to pack a lot into a small space. The Country Garden is designed with intensive garden beds that are mounded to accommodate thick rows of plants. Be prepared with plenty of recipes when the harvest season kicks in.*

The Country Garden contains all the familiar elements of a classic kitchen garden, but with extra wide paths for wheelbarrow, a central axis with evenly spaced beds, and an ample border for cutting flowers such as zinnias, dahlias, and sunflowers. A clearly defined entrance forms a transition from the lawn into the garden, with a two-bin compost pile and a generous tool shed easily accessible. Permaculture is a way of working the landscape naturally, and this garden design blends some of the key elements to avoid disrupting the natural balance, while increasing productivity in the food garden.

If the area you've chosen is especially wild and weedy, it's best to start building this Country Garden in the fall, to allow ample time to prepare the beds and fully remove the weeds. Stretch a layer of black plastic or cardboard weighted down with bales of hay over the entire garden area for the winter, to completely choke out weeds. In the spring, remove the layers and measure and map out the garden beds. Remove the remaining turf, and turn over the soil, adding compost and other soil amendments. Once the beds are in place, and you are ready to plant, you can mulch the paths to keep weeds from resprouting by spreading a layer of wet newspaper and then piling on several inches of straw, hay, or cedar bark.

Intermingling plants that complement each other is called companion planting, and it creates a naturally symbiotic relationship between groupings. Tall plants will tower in the center, with mid-sized plants on the edges, and the smaller plants tucked underneath. Classic pairings are tomatoes with marigolds, cucumbers with dill, beans with carrots,



The Four Friends Garden Sharing Squares

Garden Personality: *A patchwork quilt symbolizes friendship; likewise, in this garden each of the four squares reflects the unique personality of one of the four gardeners, and all the squares blend together as one. Inspired by the concept of a community garden, the Four Friends Garden offers camaraderie, recreation, and education, with a common goal of growing nutritious food.*

Planning your garden around the kitchen table can lead to a wish list of seeds and plants far larger than a single family can possibly use. That's when it's time to invite friends to share your garden, and build a community around edible plants. Or perhaps your family garden has grown too large; perhaps it's time to invite friends to share not just seeds, but also garden tools, fencing materials, and time in a healthy shared activity.

The Four Friends Garden is a great way to create mutual ownership and encourage harmony among friends. Furthermore, it makes practical sense to combine seed orders, share garden tools, and provide incentive to each other along the way. In a group effort, each friend can choose a single plot and become the steward of its plants for the whole group to share. One friend could be in charge of growing all the tomato, eggplant, and fruiting crops, while another could take responsibility for lettuce and salad greens. A third friend might choose to tend the onions, carrots, and beets, and the fourth could manage the beans, peas, and potatoes. This way, a full spectrum of plants could be grown in a single garden, with everyone benefiting from the care and expertise that each gardener brings to the whole, and all can share in the harvest.