



## Garden Tips: Making Your Garden a Thing of Beauty

Many of the vegetable gardens that Grow Pittsburgh maintains or supports rest squarely in the public eye. They line the outskirts of school properties or fill in formerly empty lots in residential areas. And, we maintain a greenhouse and growing site at the Frick Art and Historical Center, open to the public year round! So, we've learned a few tips and tricks for keeping our gardens looking tidy, if not lush and downright beautiful, throughout the seasons.

We know that sometimes the sunlight or soil is best for vegetable garden in the front yard, or on the deck or balcony or porch. And even if you have a backyard garden, what gardener doesn't love showing it off to friends and neighbors? So here are some ideas for ways to make the garden as visually pleasing as it is productive.

### *Employ Some Landscaping Tactics in the Vegetable Garden*

- Especially in a small garden, try grouping vegetable plantings, rather than seeding in rows. Maintain correct spacing between each individual plant and plant in clusters rather than lines.
- Try using large flat stones to create a winding path through the garden. The stones will help you to step in the same spots each time, rather than compact the soil throughout the garden.
- Intersperse perennial and annual crops. Many herbs make great perennial partners to annual vegetables. They stay green and growing almost the whole year, helping to avoid barren soil that comes early and late in the growing season with annual plantings.
- Plant tall crops in the back of the garden. Trellised crops like tomatoes or pole beans, or tall crops like corn or okra can set a visually appealing backdrop for the rest of the garden. Placing the tallest crops behind shorter ones keeps them from shading other plants as well.

### *Use Organic Gardening Techniques to Create a Beautiful Space*

- Intersperse flowers with vegetables. Flowers, along with looking attractive, draw beneficial insects. Some flowers, like marigolds, are thought to also repel animal pests. Try to plant several types of flowers, which bloom at various times of year, so something is blooming most of the time. Fall-planted bulbs bloom early in the spring, before most vegetables can even be planted. Perennial herbs will also bloom during the growing season, and their small blossoms are especially attractive to beneficial insects.
- Plant a few crops in each part of the growing season. By planting in the spring, summer, and fall, you'll have new growth in each of these seasons, making the garden full and productive. Plant crops that can handle cold in early spring and fall, and heat-loving crops in mid-spring, for the summer.
- Mulch your garden with chopped leaves or straw. Mulching reduces soil erosion, cuts down on watering, and looks tidy, too!

- Use trellises to support plants. A trellised tomato plant looks cared-for. Using long branches or other found objects for bean poles can look sculptural. Keeping the plant off the ground also makes harvesting easier and lessens the threat of disease.

*Choose Attractive Plants*

- Beauty is of course in the eye of the beholder. We think, though, that colorful vegetables can be as interesting and beautiful as any other plant grown in a garden. Try out some interesting heirloom varieties of vegetables like [Pineapple](#) tomatoes, colorful greens like [Bright Lights Swiss Chard](#), or plants with lovely blossoms like [Burgundy Okra](#) or [Scarlet Runner Beans](#). We bet your colorful vegetable garden will rival any flower garden on the street!