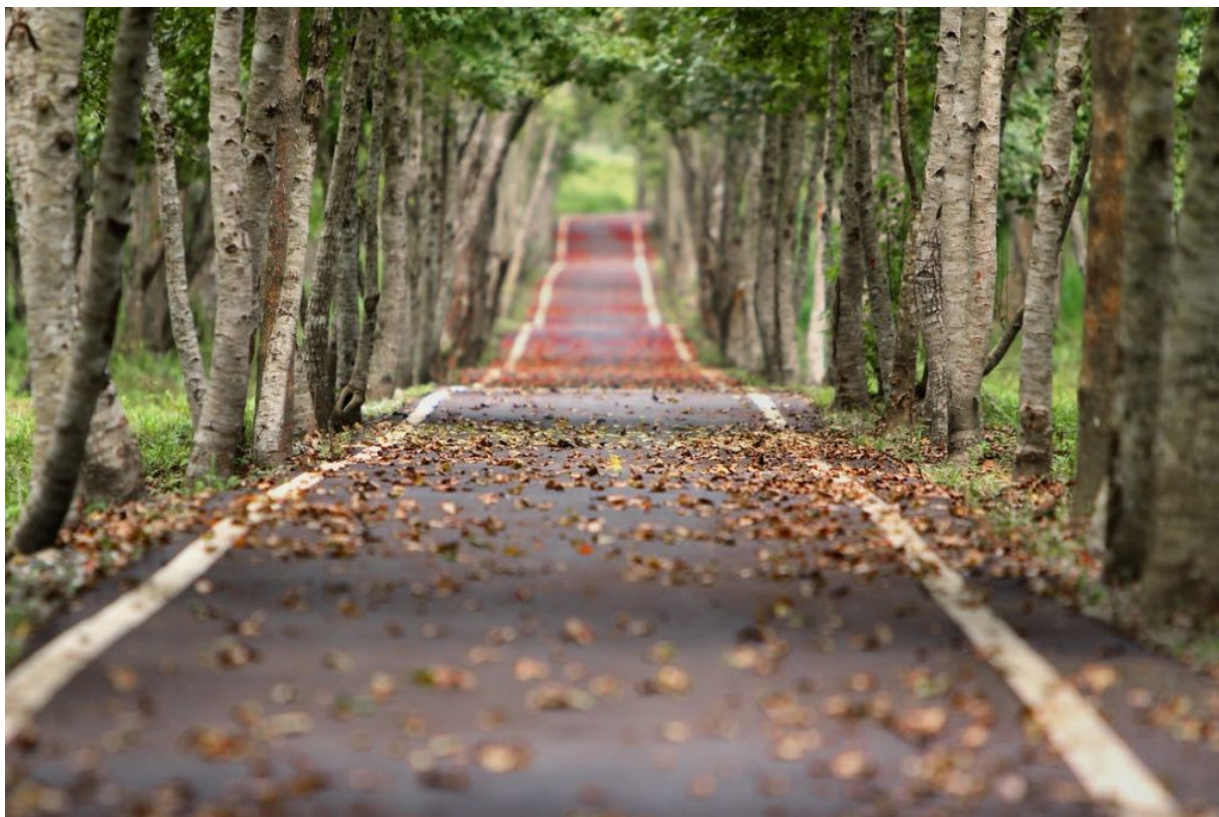


Goodbye Summer: Time to Keep an Eye on the Forecast



Here in the Northeast, summer seems to have disappeared overnight. Which, I'm totally fine with. I honestly only appreciate the warm weather because it makes my garden happy. I'm ready to embrace the cold right about now. I find having a winter break is an excellent way to reset my motivation meter for the next season of planting and digging. Right around mid-January I start to get the itch to plan my garden again, though.

Right now, things are still looking green and lush in my raised beds. Despite the fluctuation in temperature, my eggplants, tomatoes, and peppers are still enjoying the afternoon sun. Does the cold weather mean that it's time to pack up? Not at all. But for the frugal gardener, paying close attention to your plants while the weather dances around is mighty important.

September tasks

This month still calls for harvesting. In fact, many plants are producing more than I can keep up with. This is the month where preserving my vegetables is at the forefront of my mind mainly because I'm sick of eating salads and fresh sliced cucumbers. To prevent waste and keep dollars in my pocket down the road during the winter, I do a lot more preserving at the tail end of the season. My favorite September kitchen tasks include:

- [Making tomato jam](#)
- Chopping up ingredients for fresh salsa
- Making pickles (out of cucumbers, peppers, and anything else that I have an abundance of)
- Cutting up chunks of eggplant to freeze for fall stews

Additionally, I'll sow fast-growing seeds (radishes, mesclun, etc.) this month. Any plants not doing well or those that have run their course, are pulled from the garden. Slowly cleaning up saves time later on in the fall.

The forecast ahead

Just because things are cooling down right now, doesn't mean it will remain chilly all week or month. While someone with money to burn might just let Mother Nature run her course, a frugal gardener needs to keep their eyes on what's coming weather-wise.

If you've got plants that are still healthy and producing, you don't want a random frost to wipe everything out. Pay attention to the weather, so you can cover plants or bring them inside at a moment's notice. I have a particularly impressive pepper plant this season, and I've moved it to my porch so I can keep a closer eye on it and bring it in if the nighttime temps get too cold. Peppers are one of my favorite veggies, and they can be costly at the supermarket, so I'm keen on keeping the plant alive as long as possible!

3 Key Pieces of Information for the Frugal Gardener



Gardening on a budget doesn't have to be difficult, but it requires some know-how. Like any other gardener, a frugal one needs to be aware of certain essential pieces of information. What's the difference? Someone who isn't worried about overspending can get away with making mistakes. While errors are part of the learning process, especially when it comes to this hobby, those pinching pennies have less room for error than others.

The essentials

There are some critical facts you need to know as a frugal gardener, and it's the same advice I give any of my friends,

family or acquaintances interested in getting started.

Know your planting zone. Knowing your zone allows you to pick out perennials best suited for your area. Being aware of your growing region will enable you to get an idea of the types of vegetation that can survive your climate. When it comes to growing produce, you'll be better suited to figure out which varieties will thrive in your area. For instance, my zone's very severe weather fluctuations make it tough to grow things like eggplant without first starting them indoors and giving them some extra TLC.

Your first and last frost dates. Some hardiness zone maps will provide you with this information, and it's essential for planting purposes. Each year these dates will fluctuate, but having a ballpark gives you an idea of when it's best to start seeds indoors, sow them outdoors, and transplant seedlings.

Your soil. If you're starting from scratch, it's a good idea to get to know what kind of earth you have. Certain soil types work best for different crops. If you discover you have very poor quality soil, it may be worth thinking about building raised beds. You'll save time and cash, in the long run, by adding your own soil mix instead of attempting to amend low-quality soil. In extreme cases, some areas may even have contaminated soil, which is a no-go for edible gardens.

Armed with knowledge

As a gardener, I've found the above information to be incredibly valuable. It's saved me from planting things that would never flourish in my area. It's also the best way to relate to other gardeners. Find out your zone, and it's easy to discover others who have to deal with the same climate as you. You can discover the tricks and techniques that others in your area use that may apply only to your zone. Knowing your area's frost dates is critical, too. Having the dates in mind prevents me from succumbing to the temptation to plant

seedlings out early. Every year I wonder what the harm would be and every year, abiding by the frost dates usually saves me from disaster. Finding out the soil on my property was mostly rocks and pebbles largely factored into my decision to create raised bed gardens. All these pieces of information will enable you to work with Mother Nature instead of against her, and in doing so, you'll save yourself from wasting time, effort, and money.

Frugal Gardening: Battling Burnout



As September draws near, this is the time of year I find myself most vulnerable to gardening burnout. Midsummer weather

is fierce, produce starts to ripen at a lightning fast pace, and weeds seem to grow out of control all of a sudden. If you're new to gardening, this is an especially delicate time. But don't despair! Burnout is normal and temporary.

What's gardening burnout?

One of my other hobbies aside from gardening is running, and burnout is a term that's thrown around often in the running community. Magazines, online articles, and coaches all put forth tips to combat overtraining and burnout. It usually happens because a runner takes on too much, isn't listening to their body, and doesn't take the proper rest required to stay in tip-top shape.

I believe the same thing can easily happen to gardeners. Especially those dealing with budgetary concerns. I love to garden, but having to pinch pennies and find ways to keep my gardening low-cost is a stressor all on its own. Pair that overwhelming concern with the hard work needed to nurture a garden and it's no wonder that when September rears its head that many among us run out of steam.

How to deal with gardening burnout

Unusually hot weather, garden pests, and plants that may not be thriving can leave gardeners discouraged. The further we get into the gardening season, the more there is to do. You may be tired of walking out to the garden to discover cabbage moths munching on your kale or find it hard to deal with setbacks. I recently had to pull a squash plant after it was irreparably damaged from a vine borer infestation. Don't let the setbacks deter you. Here's how to get some of that gardening mojo back, without spending money this late in the season.

- **Switch your watering schedule.** Tired of waking up early to water your thirsty plants? Do it in the evening instead. Or, check the weather and let Mother Nature do

some of the work. Daily waterings are ideal in the heat of the summer, but I'll admit that sometimes I'm tired of trudging out there. If I see a rainstorm is in the forecast for the next few days, I don't feel guilty skipping a day.

- **Accept some losses.** Squirrels are going to munch on cobs of corn. Caterpillars are going to nibble on your collards. This late in the summer, there's no use trying to mount a full assault on these dreaded garden enemies. Pick off the worms and shake your fist at the squirrels, but don't let it get to you.
- **Start cleaning.** Some plants may start to wilt and look worse for wear. It may be the weather, it may just be that a particular variety isn't doing well in your garden. Don't sweat it. Dispose of it and plant a quick growing fall crop (e.g., radishes, mesclun mix, arugula).
- **Enlist some help.** Ask friends or family to help you with your gardening tasks for a day. Make it a fun activity for kids. Pick ripe veggies and clean up weeds together rather than solo. Make a veggie feast as a reward for everyone's hard work.
- **Don't feel obligated.** You don't *need* to do anything. If you're spent, you don't need to plant fall crops. In fact, being ready to close the garden when fall comes around can leave you well-prepared for next year.

Rest easy

Know that you're not alone. Plenty of people find themselves overwhelmed and tired of their gardening routine at some point during the season. Welcome the colder weather ahead with open arms. I find that knowing that there's a winter season coming helps me to mentally rest and recharge for the next year of playing in the dirt. By the time January rolls around, I'm usually itching to start planning and prepping my seed starting stations.

Why is coping with burnout important for a frugal gardener? When your garden grows rapidly, and it feels tough to keep things organized and sorted out, it's tempting to find easy ways and shortcuts to deal with problems. It's a surefire way to find yourself spending money unnecessarily. A little bit more of a laid-back attitude can help you prevent impulse buys. Cabbage loopers driving you insane? Don't run to the store to buy a pricey pesticide. Summer is nearing an end, after all! Leave it to the birds and enjoy those fresh grown tomatoes.

Keeping Up With the Harvest: Using All Those Cucumbers



If you're like me and decided to plant cucumber this year, it's likely that you're currently dealing with a deluge of them. Cucumber plants are an excellent choice for the frugal

gardener since just one plant yields a lot of fruit. The tough part is coming up with ways to eat it all! There's only so much you can share with friends and family. And leaving cukes on the vine too long can cause them to become seedy and tough.

The humble cucumber

Very light tasting, cucumbers are easy to incorporate into a variety of dishes. They're low calorie and contain a lot of water, but that doesn't mean they're not packed with nutrients. The seeds alone contain a variety of healthy phytonutrients. Some interesting studies have also discovered the potential blood sugar regulation effects of cucumber. There are two main varieties: pickling and slicing. The latter type has thicker skin than pickling varieties. Though there's no reason not to enjoy both varieties fresh.

Cooking with cucumber

Most commonly enjoyed fresh, cucumber tastes delicious sliced or added to salads. Here are a few ideas for eating up your mountain of oblong green veg.

- Sliced cucumber seasoned with salt and pepper
- Cucumber and lemon ice water
- [Cucumber tomato salad](#)
- Cucumber and cream cheese sandwiches
- [Smoked salmon cucumber bites](#)
- [Quick pickled cucumbers](#)
- [Cucumber soup](#)
- [Cucumber chips](#)

Save money at the grocery store

Heading to a potluck or need a quick side dish idea for tonight's dinner? Consider all those cucumbers ripening in your garden! Avoid the expensive prepared salads aisle at the grocery store by using cucumber as an ingredient and take advantage of all that garden abundance. Simple cucumber salads

are easy to make and don't require pricey, hard to find ingredients. You won't need fancy kitchen appliances, either. Still having trouble finding ways to use all those cukes? Find a fellow gardener to trade recipes with, or swap a cucumber or two for something you forgot to plant in your garden.

Source:

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=42>

Preserving the Harvest: Freezing Summer Veggies



Pack up the taste of summer by preserving it in your freezer. Avoid waste and save money during the winter months by

freezing freshly picked garden vegetables. Nothing beats the taste of fresh summer produce, and while there are many preservation methods available to conserve the bounty of the season, options such as fermenting and pickling alter the taste of ingredients. Freezing vegetables is simple, straightforward, budget-friendly and requires very little time commitment.

Blanching garden vegetables

Blanching is the best method for freezing your produce. You can also opt to go the super simple route and just dump whatever you're saving into zip locks, but the food won't keep as long. Properly stored, garden produce can last up to a year in the freezer.

Blanching involves submerging food in boiling water very briefly and then quickly cooling it in ice water. Different vegetables may require different blanching times. You can find a handy chart here: <https://extension.umn.edu/preserving-and-preparing/vegetable-blanching-directions-and-times-home-freezer-storage>

Best vegetables to freeze

When the time comes to preserve the harvest, make sure you're freezing fresh items to ensure the best taste. Think about how you plan to use these frozen bags of goodness and pack and organize accordingly. Want to use these frozen ingredients in fall soups? Chop them up to cut down on prep time later.

- **Onions** – great to have on hand for soups and stews
- **Corn** – if properly frozen, the flavor is sure to remind you of summer
- **Tomatoes** – best for sauces, vegetable soups
- **Leafy greens** – add to smoothies or stews for a vitamin boost
- **Fruit** – let's not forget that fruit is easy to freeze. Use for pie filling or smoothies.

Use freezer-safe bags or containers when storing prepared food in the freezer. You should also try to get out as much air as possible when sealing your chopped produce in bags.

Preserving for later

When the harvest is coming in at full speed, and you have too much produce to handle, freezing is a viable option for preserving what you have on hand. Storing veg in the freezer allows you to enjoy tasty summer treats when snow and colder temps come along. While everyone around you misses vine-ripened tomatoes and freshly shucked corn, you'll still be enjoying the flavors of the garden. And grabbing home-grown peas and corn from your freezer is much cheaper than heading your local grocer's frozen foods section.

Sources:

<https://www.thekitchn.com/when-freezing-fresh-vegetables-blanch-them-first-tips-from-the-kitchn-215947>

Maximize the Harvest: Preparing Now for the Fall



It's only August, so why am I bringing up the fall already? While stores are already preparing for Halloween, gardeners are still enjoying the warm days of summer. If you're looking to get the biggest bang for your buck in your garden, planning in anticipation of fall is critical. Sowing seed now and keeping your plots organized ensures that you'll still be harvesting when October and November roll around. When others head to the supermarket in November to buy expensive greenhouse lettuce they no longer have access to in their gardens, you'll be harvesting hardy veggie varieties and saving money.

When do I need to start sowing seeds for the fall garden?

The optimal time to start planting seeds for the cooler season depends on your particular growing region. Find out what your first frost date is if you haven't already. Here's a useful resource: <https://www.almanac.com/gardening/frostdates>

Remember that a first frost date is just an estimate. It may

vary from year to year. Mother Nature is unpredictable after all!

Check your seed packets to find information on maturity times. Using your region's first frost date, count backward to find out when your planting window is. Harvesting after frost is possible, but vegetables need to be mature by the time the cold weather comes around. Colder temperatures typically slow plant growth.

An example:

You want to plant some lettuce that will be ready to harvest during the fall months.

The seed packet says the variety matures in 50 days. If your last frost date is October 30th, then the last day you can sow the lettuce seed for optimal growth is September 10th.

Best plants for the fall garden

The ideal options for a fall garden depend significantly on your region and the amount of time you have until that first frost. Cold hardy plants are an excellent choice since you can keep harvesting even post-frost. Here are a few examples of cold-hardy vegetables that you can grow:

- Kale
- Carrots
- Collards
- Spinach
- Lettuce
- Swiss Chard

Choose varieties that mature early if your growing window before the first frost is short. Some vegetable varieties are exclusively bred to withstand cold temperatures.

Get a jumpstart and enjoy the bounty

Don't wait until early-September to start thinking about your cool season garden. Start right now. Check your seed collection to see what you have on hand to sow. Make sure you've got the space, too. When filling up your plots in the spring and summer, don't forget to keep a spot saved for starting seeds later in the season.

If this is your first year attempting a fall harvest, write everything down. Keep a notebook with your sowing dates and observations. Notice a plant that didn't do well when frost came along? Try seeding earlier or choosing a different variety.

Keeping Up with the Harvest



Summer is in full swing, and that means the gardening season has really begun. Seeds and seedlings have grown into sturdy, productive plants. Pollinators are out in grand numbers, and there's no shortage of stuff to pick from the branches, vines and stems around the garden. Tomatoes are starting to ripen, eggplants are slowly appearing, green beans ready to pick. All your hard work won't be worthwhile if you don't keep up with the harvest. It's one of the challenges I've faced over the years. Gardening will only be fruitful and save you money if you take full advantage of the fruits of your labor. I've put together some helpful tips to ensure you get the most out of this bountiful time of year.

Pick produce at the right time – Harvest vegetables when they're ripe or near ripe. Too soon and you'll end up with hard green tomatoes more sour than sweet. Too late and your eggplant may be seedy and bitter.

Harvest frequently – Pick vegetables often to signal to your healthy plants that they can keep right on producing. Some plants only produce a single crop (e.g., determinate tomatoes, potatoes, cabbage) but others like lettuce, beans, and squash will continue to provide until the first frost.

Collect recipes – Having recipes ready to go will ensure you're prepared for an onslaught of tomatoes and a whole bunch of beets. Look for recipes that utilize preservation methods like fermentation, pickling, and canning, to prevent waste when plants produce in abundance.

Succession sow – When you've pulled certain plants from your garden because they've become unproductive or you've added them to your dinner plate don't just let that space go to waste. Plant new seeds. Continually harvesting and sowing ensures you'll always have something producing in your garden. If you garden in a cold climate, like me, choose varieties (e.g., cold hardy kale) that will mature in time for the fall and produce even when the mercury drops.

Keeping up with the rhythm of your garden means that you'll take full advantage of all it has to offer. It can be overwhelming for first-time gardeners to get into a harvesting groove, but it's worthwhile. Growing your own food will help you pinch pennies unless you don't use what you grow. Not sure when it's time to pick the veggies in your garden? It's a good idea to keep seed packets, even if they're empty. They contain valuable information. On the back of most packets, you'll find how long it takes for a plant to mature, which should help you determine a ballpark harvesting time. The easiest way to tell for most plants? Appearance. The color and size of vegetables and fruits is a handy indicator that they're ripe for the picking. For unique varieties, check out the photo on the seed pouch. If you're still stuck, ask a veteran gardener or perform a quick Google search. Over time, you'll get the hang of it, and you'll intuitively know when it's time to harvest.

Top Ten Frugal Gardening Tips



Gardening doesn't need to be an expensive hobby. I've been digging in the dirt for a long time, and have found ways to minimize costs and maximize results. Here are my top ten ways to garden frugally and keep this rewarding hobby affordable.

All of these are tried and true, as well as easy to do. They also work in most any part of the country – regardless of the soil or climate conditions.

1. **Make your own compost** – There are plenty of good

reasons to compost at home. You'll cut down on the waste you produce and spend less on trash bags over time. It's an inexpensive way to make rich fertilizer for your garden so you won't have to pay big bucks on commercially sold options.

2. **Reuse rainwater** – In addition to being good for the planet, collecting rainwater to use in your garden can help save you money on costly water bills. Having water on hand during the dry months is extremely handy in areas where drought is commonplace.
3. **Save seeds** – The cost of buying seeds for planting every year adds up. Thankfully, most plants produce seeds that are easy to save. You can even participate in local or online swaps with your new saved seeds to get your hands on hard to find varieties.
4. **Trade with other gardeners** – Get to know other gardeners in your neighborhood. They may be willing to swap veggies with you! Have an abundance of summer squash? Trade them for something you didn't have a chance to plant, like onions or eggplant.
5. **Start from seed** – Sure, you can buy seedlings at your local greenhouse or hardware store, but purchasing seeds is cheaper. Starting from seed ensures you grow the exact varieties you want. A mini seed-starting setup doesn't cost too much and if taken care of properly will provide you with an impressive yield.
6. **Use natural pesticides** – Commercial pesticides harmful to the environment and can be expensive, too. Make your own pest-control mixtures using non-toxic, biodegradable household products.
7. **Plant high yield crops** – Choose to grow vegetables that will produce a lot and keep producing as you harvest. Good choices include indeterminate tomatoes, summer squash, eggplant, beans, and cucumbers.
8. **Grow the most expensive produce** – What are your favorite veggies? Write down a list and head to the grocery store to find out which ones are the priciest. If you live in

a climate with harsh winters, grow and freeze produce that's expensive or hard to find during the cold months.

9. **Scour the neighborhood on garbage day** – Establishing a garden doesn't have to hurt your wallet! Drive around town on trash day to look for found objects that might be used to build raised beds or act as plant supports. You can also find potting soil this way.
10. **Choose easy to maintain plants** – This is particularly important if you're a beginner. Don't choose hard to care for plants if you haven't yet developed a green thumb. It'll likely be a waste of money, and you'll end up discouraged.

And there you have it! Gardening on the cheap is totally doable. It requires a bit of thriftiness and a lot of patience, but there's nothing like the taste of biting into a fresh garden tomato as a reward for all your hard work.

Frugal Gardening Quick Tips

Have a great gardening tip that saves money? Share it with us. Simply [email us](#) so we can share it with everyone and others can save from your favorite frugal gardening tricks:

Weeds

- If you need to use a weed killer, buy the concentrate. It's expensive, and it doesn't work as well if you dilute it. So don't. Instead, pour some into a small eyedropper bottle (I use an old Schulz container), and put one drop smack in the the middle of the weed you want to kill. You won't hit the other plants, and it gets right to the root. The other alternative is to put

the concentrate in a bottle and use a brush – we use an old rubber cement bottle, well cleaned out – and brush it on onion weeds or others that are difficult to kill and impossible to spray or dig up. – *Courtesy of [Flash](#)*

- Sprinkle salt between bricks or stones to keep grass from growing & to kill weeds in your lawn.
-

More Gardening Articles

Prepare Your Lawn For Fall

By Matt Morrison

Hemingway once said, “America is the land of wide lawns and narrow minds.” Now, I don’t know about narrow minds, but we definitely love our lawns. Fall is one of the most important times of the year to perform lawn care maintenance.

The process you need to follow will vary with the type of turf on your lawn. The two main types of turf grasses are cool season and warm season. The main difference is that cool season grasses require regular maintenance throughout the fall and winter seasons, while warm season grasses need to be prepped for the following spring. Common cool season grasses are ryegrasses, fescues, bluegrasses, and bentgrasses. Common warm season grasses include St. Augustinegrass, Bermudagrass, Zoysiagrass, and Buffalograss. If you are unsure what type you have on your lawn, you can take a sample to your local county extension and find out which type you have. The most important thing to remember is that maintenance doesn’t end when the grass stops growing... [Read More](#)

Gardener Safety Tips

By Allison Thompson

Whether you happen to be green thumbbed or you simply want to start gardening it is essential that you are prepared for any little surprises that may occur. You may want to create a beautifully landscaped lawn, or you might even want to grow some vegetables, or you could just want to surround your home with beautiful flowers. But whatever the situation you must keep in mind the following tips when you start any gardening project.

Firstly consider do you suffer from any pollen allergies. If you are like so many people nowadays you probably suffer from some type of allergy. This may affect you every day and during every season, but with all sufferers things can be even worse during the spring and summer months. This is because there is pollen in the air and everything will be in bloom and you may find it difficult to spend large amounts of time outdoors. So before you start any new project in the garden it is important that you consider whether you have any allergies or not and if you have to what extent do they affect you. If you find them be from moderate to severe it may be well worth avoiding working out doors... [Read More](#)

Budget Garden Basics

By Kathleen Wilson

Decorating the outside of your home very often involves some type of garden. Not only can living plants add value, curb appeal, and charm to your home, gardening has been known to soothe ones soul. Gardening on a tight budget can be a challenge, but with a little knowledge, a little creativity, and a do-it-yourself spirit, it can be much more rewarding than traditional landscaping.

1. Start Small: Pick out a small spot in your yard or decide to grow in containers only and pick up a few basic pots. If you spend a whole weekend tearing up your yard your first time out, chances are you will become overwhelmed and find it an unhappy experience, not to mention a waste of money. Let the joys of growing things be a pleasure, not a chore. You can always expand your garden as you gain experience... [Read More](#)

Gardens From Garbage – Book Review

By Lisa A. Koosis

Although I consider myself an avid gardener, living in a one-bedroom apartment has sometimes hindered my hobby. My apartment complex, though landscaped nicely, doesn't leave much room for individual tenants to care for individual gardens, and there are no outdoor windowsills for outdoor window boxes. So, that leaves indoor gardening, and consequently, I've become something of a houseplant aficionado.

The trouble with houseplants and indoor gardening in general, is that it tends to limit you creatively. When is the last time you've found a selection of houseplant seeds in your local garden center? Houseplant seeds just aren't to be found. In fact, the only place I've been able to locate them is on the Internet, and then they don't come cheap... [Read More](#)

Landscaping On A Budget

By Rex Ryan

It is possible to have an appealing, unique look to your yard without investing thousands of dollars every year in order to do so. Practicing some basic conservation rules can help you to save money and still make your yard look great.

One great new innovation that is all the rage is the art of

xeriscaping. As water becomes ever more valuable a commodity, many homeowners are seeking to conserve their water costs by choosing plants that do not need very much water in order to survive. These plants are available in many different varieties, and they will add a splash of color to your yard while still saving you money. Know which plants tend to use a lot of water- cedar hedges, for example, are the landscaping equivalent of the sports utility vehicle. Don't plant any if you are concerned about your water costs... [Read More](#)