

# Victory Garden Planning during a Pandemic



We're in the thick of it now. Areas are going into lockdown, and non-essential businesses are closing until further notice. It feels weird. It's scary. I'm exhausted. But I feel motivated, now more than ever, to keep up my gardening efforts. I've seen interest in [gardening](#) skyrocket. Is this the return of the victory garden?

I know a lot of you are anxious to get started and make up for lost time. While it's a little late to start crops like onions, there's still plenty of time to prep before the last frost date passes you by.

## Starting Seeds

Last year, I wrote a series of posts about seed starting. The posts covered a lot of ground, so I recommend checking out a few of those articles. Many of them go over the many mistakes

you can make during the process and provide tips for avoiding fatal errors. Here's a roundup of a few posts you should read:

[Seed starting Mistakes to Avoid](#)

[Is Starting from Seed Worth it?](#)

[The Importance of Air Circulation](#)

[Seed Germination](#)

[Watering Seedlings](#)

Now is a great time to consider starting your victory garden [plants from seed](#). Why? With many stores shutting their physical locations, you'll likely have a tough time finding starts. Don't hesitate to contact your local nursery, though. Many locations are offering delivery for all sorts of items.

## **What Should I Grow in my Victory Garden?**

I get this question a lot. Whether you have a ton of space or a small balcony, the answer is two-fold:

### **Things you like to eat**

If vegetable gardening is your goal, think about what pops up often on your dinner plate. Don't bother with things that are easy if they don't appeal to your palate.

I love greens and eat a lot of kale, arugula, and bok choy, so those are some of the crops that feature prominently in my garden.

Conversely, I don't love cucumbers that much and rarely sacrifice a lot of growing space to them. One plant is more than enough and, I usually only use them for pickling. Some years, I don't bother with cukes at all.

## **Things that are easy**

Unless you're an avid gardener or don't mind dealing with finicky crops, stick to things that are easy to grow. Remember, though, easy is relative. Something that's easy to grow in one climate may be a pain to grow in another. Or perhaps it's tougher to produce a particular crop in your area because of a recurring pest issue. I don't bother with corn anymore, because squirrels always make off with the goods when I'm not looking.

Your best bet is to pick plants that meet somewhere in the middle. The best plants for your victory garden are those that provide a significant reward compared to the effort expended. For instance, I love love, love, eggplants. They're a bit tricky to grow in my climate, because they prefer hot weather and don't enjoy temperature swings (which are common here, especially at the start and end of the summer). Still, I love them so much I'm willing to deal with these delicate plants. On the plus side, I never have pest issues with my eggplants. The result? A plant that provides a big reward upon harvest (because I love eating eggplant!) but doesn't require an unreasonable amount of effort to grow.

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# **The Pandemic: a Gardener's View**



It's been a tough week. Because of what I do for a living, I'm unable to unplug and decompress amidst all this. I feel overwhelmed, exhausted, and mentally spent. But while the future seems uncertain and I'm anxiety-ridden at all hours, I try my hardest to look on the bright side. It could always be worse. Of course, that realization leads me to the reality that there are so many people right now who are in dire straits and worse off. So, in the end, my attempt at a positive outlook fails me.

Still, if I quiet my mind for a moment, I'm able to appreciate some of the small miracles around me. It's seed starting season, and it's been hard to focus on all the tasks I've needed to get done. I've lost track of what needs to be started when! But seeing those little seedlings pop up from the soil is always awe-inspiring. What lessons have I learned from gardening that apply to this pandemic?



## Keeping Things Clean

My [tomato](#), pepper, and eggplant starts are healthy as ever. The soil blocks are holding strong, and I can see the sturdy roots developing. Oddly enough, seeing my [seedlings](#) doing so well made me think about the link between gardening and this pandemic. Gardeners, better than most, can appreciate the importance of proper sanitization and hygiene. The invisible pathogens that live in the soil, on garden tools, and on accessories all have the potential to obliterate seedlings and crops. On a conceptual level, I understand that hand washing and disinfecting surfaces is vital to stop the transmission of the virus, and I've been rigorously doing my part to maintain personal hygiene and [socially distance](#) myself. But as a gardener who has seen the plant-related consequences of poor hygiene and contamination, I'm keenly aware of the importance of social distancing and hand washing.

## The Ultimate Lesson

If you're a gardener who has never dealt with damping-off or diseases caused by contaminated soil, you're incredibly lucky! But I suspect that plenty of dirt-digging enthusiasts can identify with the shock of watching everything you've worked hard to cultivate wilt and flop over. It's devastating. It's even more upsetting when you realize the fault was your own. As a beginner gardener, I wasn't careful with my trays and tools and didn't bother to wash [pots](#) anew each year. Why bother? It's natural! It's all going to be going in the dirt anyhow! Ah, what a naive gardener I was!

Today, I'm cautious to the point of being paranoid, but in the end, I've been rewarded with beautiful, strong seedlings that I can't wait to plant in the ground.

If there's a lesson here that relates to this unprecedented [world pandemic](#), it's that you're better off safe than sorry. [Wash your hands](#) and stay home. Let's all stay strong

together.