

5 Compact Plants For Small Gardens



5 COMPACT PLANTS

For Small Gardens

WWW.FRUGALGARDENING.COM

You're probably interested in frugal gardening tips because you're on a budget. But I'll bet that many frugal gardeners also have to carefully budget gardening space. Most people

don't have a lot of room to work with. And even if you have a large property, it's likely that not all areas are conducive to growing plants.

Growing within a constrained space is also a fun challenge. It's a great way to try out new plant varieties and come up with ways to grow upward.

I'm a big fan of [compact plants](#) because even though I'm lucky enough to have plenty of space to work with, I love the neat and tidy look of compact varieties.

Here are some of my favorite compact plants for growing in small spaces or [containers](#). Their miniature sizing also makes them great for growing indoors.

Orange Hat Tomato

This teeny-tiny tomato plant is one of the smallest I've ever grown. It doesn't get taller than 9 inches and takes up minimal space. If you're a fan of cherry tomatoes, it's a great variety to grow on a balcony or patio. Because the plants are mighty small, consider planting a few for a bigger yield.

Seeds available from [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)

Orchard Baby Sweet Corn

I don't grow corn often because squirrels usually make off with the ears before I can enjoy them, but this variety is an excellent pick for tiny, squirrel-free gardens. The small ears of corn are ultra-cute, and the stalks don't get taller than 5 feet. Don't plan a corn roast after planting these mini corn plants, though. Each stalk produces just a couple of ears. That said, it's a fun way to try out this crop that usually takes up a lot of room. And it's a great plant to grow with kids.

Seeds available from [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)

Baby Milk Bok Choy

Bok choy is one of my favorite crops to grow, and this variety is perfect for compact gardens. I love the unified look of the plants after harvest and the bright white stems. Their miniature size makes them great for steaming or stir-frying whole.

Seeds available from [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)

Little Gem Lettuce

This is actually the first variety of lettuce I ever grew. And it remains a staple crop to this day. I have some growing in my indoor hydroponic garden right now! Head lettuce can sometimes take up quite a bit of room, but this plant produces crispy, shrunken heads of lettuce that are perfect for one or two people. And the leaves are super tender and tasty.

Seeds available from [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#)

Parisian Carrot

Here's another variety that was a first for me back in my newbie gardener days. These small orange globes pack so much carrot goodness but don't require as much soil depth as regular-sized carrots, making them an excellent choice for containers. They also look fancy when cooked and plated. Like little gem lettuce, Parisian carrots are a variety I still grow.

Seeds available from [Hudson Valley Seed Co](#)

To Prune or Not to Prune? Keeping Tomatoes in Check



TO PRUNE OR NOT TO PRUNE?

Keeping Tomatoes in Check

WWW.FRUGALGARDENING.COM

To prune or not to prune, that is the question! [Tomatoes](#) are one of the most popular garden plants for a reason. They're fairly easy to grow, produce an impressive yield, and are

available in many interesting varieties. There are many schools of thought when it comes to tomato pruning. So what's the right way to do things? Should you let tomatoes grow wild? Or keep them neat and tidy?

Tomato pruning

I believe that you should do what works for you. Whether you decide to prune heavily or not, you'll probably end up with at least some tomatoes if all other conditions are met. [Pruning](#) heavily results in a neat and tidy look. It ensures that most of the plant's energy goes into creating fruit.

But pruning aggressively can also be a lot of work. It requires paying close attention to your plants. I used to prune heavily, but now I'm a lot more laid back with it. Picking the suckers off is pretty easy to do, especially if you check on your plants regularly.

If even that sounds like a lot of work, choose tomato varieties that require no pruning, like compact and dwarf determinate varieties.

The dos and don'ts of pruning tomatoes

Here are things you should and shouldn't do when pruning tomatoes:

- **Do give tomatoes enough room to breathe.** Crowding plants reduces airflow and invites pests and disease. Pruning can help improve airflow and allow you to plant tomatoes closer to one another without suffocating plants.
- **Do keep enough foliage to protect the plant and fruits from sun damage.** Removing too much of a plant leaves it vulnerable to weather and sunburn. Instead, keep some leaves around for protection.
- **Do remove foliage that's touching the ground.** Soil keeps plants alive, but it's also a potential breeding ground

for all sorts of nefarious fungi and bacteria. So even if you're a lazy gardener, make sure to prune the lower leaves of a tomato plant to avoid potential contamination.

- **Do use cuttings to propagate new tomato plants.** Just because you've snipped off a branch doesn't mean you need to toss it into the compost. Instead, you can propagate a whole new tomato plant by placing the cutting in a cup of water. Within a week or so, you'll notice roots start to appear, and soon after, you can plant the cutting and enjoy a whole new tomato plant.
- **Don't prune determinate tomatoes.** Some pruning at the base of the plant may be required, but you should prune determinate tomatoes minimally. By removing stems and offshoots, you risk limiting your harvest.
- **Don't prune after rainfall when plants are still wet.** This is a good way to spread and introduce disease. Instead, wait till the plant is dry before pruning.
- **Do make sure to give support to tomato plants.** Whether you use bamboo poles or [cages](#), tomatoes need support structures to stay upright. Plants that sprawl on the ground are more likely to pick up diseases.
- **Don't use inflexible ties.** You'll need ties to fix tomato plants to support to keep them from bending or toppling over. Use flexible ties to do the job to prevent damage to the stem as the plant grows.

Easy Preserving for the Frugal Gardener: Tomato

Edition



I'll say it loud and clear, I love the idea of canning, but I hate going through the process. It's long and tedious. I'm always left feeling paranoid that I've done something wildly wrong, which will leave me with botulism infested jars.

It's one of the reasons I'm partial to quick-pickling and other easy preservation methods. Recently, I was struggling to think of ways to use tomatoes in my cooking. I was adamant that I didn't want to make sauce or do anything boring. I wanted a unique way to use the mountain of tomatoes that had accumulated on my counter. Alas, my efforts to think of anything creative didn't really materialize. Honestly, despite the vast amount of tomatoes on my hands these days, I'm uninterested in eating them except for occasionally in a sandwich.

It's one of the reasons I'm of the belief that tomatoes are overrated. Don't get me wrong, tomatoes are excellent food!

But, they're very one-note. As someone who enjoys cooking a lot of Asian meals, tomatoes are tough to use up. They don't exactly fit into a stir fry dish!

So this weekend I stared at the beautiful mix of yellow, red, and purple tomatoes in my kitchen and decided to stop worrying about being creative. I cooked them down with the addition of a few spices and used my trusty handheld blender (AKA: immersion blender) to create a thick super-tomato-ey sauce. The glorious pile of tomatoes made enough for two 750 mL jars of sauce. I expect more tomatoes to arrive in the near future, so the two jars suited me just fine.

After letting the sauce cool a bit – a very small bit because I'm impatient – I poured it into the jars and left them to cool a little longer because everything was still piping hot. Later, I popped them into my basement freezer.

Super easy, right? Instead of letting my tomatoes go to waste, I made a sauce that I'll be able to pull out of the freezer anytime I need it. For pasta, pizza, and whatever else. The jars are relatively large, so I envision one will last us through a few delicious meals. I'm sure I'll be thankful for my minimal effort when winter comes at us full throttle.

Another bonus? I won't have to spend money on jars of tomato sauce, which are surprisingly expensive at the supermarket!

Do you have other simple sauces or recipes that you like to make in order to preserve your harvest? Sound off in the comments!