



Many people describe the moment of becoming a gardener as something as simple as planting one seed in the ground and feeling surprising joy at the first sprout of life, or tasting a juicy sweet tomato that is nothing like store-bought and wondering if it's a different species, how could it be a tomato at all? Or drizzling olive oil and flake salt on a first bowl of assorted baby lettuces after thinning a row of greens and discovering a manna of flavor that tastes like the earth and sun and rain all in one heady beautiful bite. Farm-to-table is just a simple idea—it means grow your food and harvest it right before eating it. And it's glorious.

After years of gardening I finally know how to grow enough produce to feed my family for a year—and fill shelves and freezers with gourmet food. It's been an experience I wouldn't have known was so deeply satisfying and delicious until I actually walked the path to get here. Nor did I realize the life lessons that growing our own food would teach me—the gift of finding joy in small steps; of learning a “seed by seed” mentality of planting and harvesting one idea and one plant at a time; of discovering the soulful benefits of having my hands in the soil and face to the sun and later filling my arms with food to eat and share; and learning how to save seeds that I will later be able to gift to all our future generations. I also didn't know how much money we could really save until I watched our shopping bills plummet and my dreams of really saving money start to manifest themselves.

I didn't realize that I would end up spending so much happy time writing about this lifestyle on my blog Eating Buckets ([eatingbuckets.com](http://eatingbuckets.com)) or that it would turn into a journey of such peace, contentment, and fortitude. I have the feeling if you're reading this right now, you'll soon have an experience much like mine.

But how do you start? What's the best way to get hooked on this endlessly rewarding lifestyle? My biggest tip is to make it easy and low-cost, and to invest long-term in a low-maintenance gardening system. My favorite way to do this is with hugelkultur beds. That's German for "gardening with mounds." It is an easy, low-cost, low-energy, no-dig and no-build raised bed method that works in arid and boggy environments alike and offers the added benefit of requiring less water which means you won't need to install an irrigation system, nor be a slave to daily watering.

What should you start with? Plant a salsa garden or a pizza garden with your kids. Learn what it tastes like to mix fresh peppers and tomatoes with a bright onion and a handful of just-harvested cilantro and serve it alongside warm corn chips on a sunny day. Gather tomatoes and fresh basil for your first truly homemade pizza. Dive into the endlessly rewarding world of fresh herbs and simple greens. Plant your first berry plant and even fruit trees using pole trees for small spaces. You don't need as much space as you might think in order to change your life. Check out my "How to Grow Food for a Year" series on my blog [EatingBuckets.com](http://EatingBuckets.com) and follow along. Let's garden our way to happiness and financial freedom together.

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