



## My 1st Kitchen Garden Plan

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This is my first full year on my own and I'm starting my first kitchen garden. As a child some of my fondest and earliest memories are of helping my mom in her various kitchen gardens at my three childhood homes. I've always been a fan of natural living, spending time outdoors, eating good food, and digging in the dirt. Now I finally am able to plan, implement, and manage my own kitchen garden in the tiny yard that comes with my even smaller apartment. Challenges: There's challenge number 1: limited space - I need to get as much value out of as little as possible. Challenge number two is closely related: limited budget - this year, and probably the next few years as well, make-shift will have to do. Challenge number 3 is by personal choice: I want my first year of crops to be as natural as possible, so I need to learn as much as I can about organic and biodynamic gardening as possible in a short amount of time (not like I waited to the last minute or anything, lol). Plot: So, I've measured out my plot (most definitely going with a raised bed garden with some containers mixed in to utilize as much space and make it as easy on my barley-green-thumb as possible). There is going to be 3 parts: 2 'arms' and a 'torso' - per say. The arms are 3 1/2 ft long and 2 ft wide. The torso is to be 7 1/2 ft long & 2 ft wide. Depending on available lumber, I'm going to shoot for an 8-12 inch depth. This puts me (if my calculations are correct) at just over 30 sq. ft. of gardening space not including any containers. Crops: I'm planning on a VERY diverse set of crops and utilizing as much of the growing season as possible (might even try a winter crop or two depending on how my research goes on that topic). The 1st batch of crops is going to be mostly root veggies & leafy greens. I'm also going to start my sugar snap pea plant(s) in the 1st round. The 2nd round will be the most diverse with edible flowers (to help with natural pest control and polination), summer veggies, herbs, another round of leafy greens, and strawberries. This is when most of the container gardening will come into play as that'll let me move the flowers around for when I have parties and keep my mint & strawberries under control. Then the 3rd round of crops is going to be similar to the 1st: root veggies & leafy greens. For winter, I may do a cover crop to help revitalize the soil. If not, the beds will be covered with the left over compost from the growing season and the fall leaves. I will probably also cover the beds with plastic sheeting. Any plants that will be able to last another year or more will be put into containers and brought into my apartment to see if I can keep them alive for the winter (my indoor thumb is more brown than green, lol). Utilizing Free Resources: I'm also planning on utilizing birds in pest control by providing them with a bird feeder & bath. Might even try to entice some humming birds and butterflies. :D It should also be interesting to see how my rain collection experiment will work (hopefully MD doesn't go through a drought this summer because the city often puts restrictions on water use). What's Happened So Far: Yesterday I started some of my garlic, carrots, beets, radishes, and fennel. All of which I'm starting multiple seedlings/sprouts in a single container to increase my chance of success. The garlic I just used cloves from my pantry. These are on a bed of old leaves and covered with seed starter mix. Their container is covered with plastic & kept damp. The rest are being started from seeds on my window sill. These are in plastic trays, covered with plastic domes, soilless seed starter mix with peat moss disks. What's Next: I need to continue to collect seeds & create a schedule of when to start and transplant everything. This is partially done. I need to start the rest of my root veggies: onions, turnips, and sweet potatoes. I also need to start my 1st batch of leafy greens: kale, spinach, lettuce, & muscelin. I'll start my pea plant(s) after that. This weekend I'm planning on building my raised beds &

starting the soil preparations. For soil preparations I need to till the existing soil (shooting for 5-10 inches down) and mix in the existing grass with old leaves. Then I'll put a layer of small pebbles to help with drainage. On top of that I'm shooting for a layer of peat moss (or something similar). Then nutrient rich soil and what compost and dead leaves I currently have available. Then a thin layer of mulch (thinking of trying seaweed mulch since that's supposed to be high in nutrients & helps keep away pests). Also, I need to start my worm composting bin. I have some saved scraps & can collect leaves from this past fall. Just need to make the composting bin and collect worms. I also have an organic compost starter powder that I'll use to help speed the process. Wish me luck! I'll keep you updated!

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