Wed, 02/20/2008 - 08:21 -- KGI-old
Question:
What steps are involved in growing an organic kitchen garden?
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These straightforward tips come courtesy of Charlie Nardozzi, senior horticulturist and spokesperson for the National Gardening Association. Follow them and you're sure to have great results this season.1. Find the Right Spot. Like real estate, a successful organic garden is all about the right location. Find a spot in your yard with full sun (at least 6 hours), well-drained soil, and one that's within easy reach of the house.2. Beef Up the Soil. Add organic matter such as grass clippings, leaves, compost, manure, hay and straw each fall. In

spring, apply a 1/2- to 1-inch-thick layer of finished compost on beds before planting.3. Raise it Up. Create raised beds (8 to 10 inches high, 3 feet wide) by mounding the soil and flattening the top. Soil in raised beds warms up and dries out faster in spring and is easer to work. You can reform the beds each spring or make the beds permanent by framing them with rot-resistant wood, plastic or stone.4. Grow What You Like. Although it may seem obvious, grow crops you and your family love to eat. While bush beans, lettuces and tomatoes are some of the easiest vegetables to grow, if your family doesn't enjoy them, why grow them?5. Select the Right Varieties. Grow varieties of vegetables and fruits adapted to your area. Check with local garden centers and fellow gardeners to find the best varieties to grow.6. Start With Transplants. For the beginning gardener, purchase as many vegetables as possible as transplants from the garden center. Seeds are necessary for root crops, such as carrots and radishes, but transplants of most other vegetables are more likely to be a success.7. Design Properly. Design your garden with a mix of flowers, vegetables, fruits and herbs. A mixed planting is less likely to get completely destroyed by insect, animal or disease attacks.8. Plant Correctly. Follow package directions and plant at the proper spacing and depth. Thin seeded crops to the proper distance. Crowded plants become easily stressed and don't produce well.9. Mulch. Maintain constant soil moisture and keep weeds at bay by mulching. Mulch cool-season crops such as strawberries, broccoli and lettuce with a 2- to 3-inch-thick layer of hay, straw or grass clippings. Mulch warm-season crops such as tomatoes, melons and cucumbers with plastic mulch to heat the soil.10. Check for Insects. Inspect plants every few days for any insect activity. Handpick destructive insects and drop them in a can of soapy water.Text credit: The National Gardening Association Photo credit: Keeeps

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