

The Stanislaus County Nutrition Action Plan Partnership (CNAP) is a collaboration of the many nutrition assistance program providers within the County, working towards a common goal of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption of program participants. Stanislaus County CNAP was established in June 2006. Partners include providers of the SNAP (Food Stamp) Program, the WIC Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, Summer Food Service Program, the Elderly Nutrition Program, and the SNAP ED and EFNEP Programs.

# My Garden

## Let's Get Started

Also, look for:

**Spring Veggies**

**Fall Veggies**

**Berries & Fruit**

**Herbs**

**Harvest & Storage**

**Cooking**

**Bugs in Your Garden**

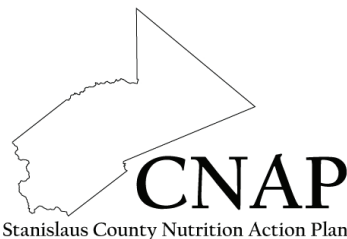
**Gardening with Kids**

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# My Garden

## The Series

## Let's Get Started!



An informational guide provided by the Stanislaus County Nutrition Action Plan Partners

## Let's Get Ready...

Gardening is a great way to add healthy food to your diet. Gardening is also great exercise! Kids like digging in the dirt and may even decide to try a new vegetable they have grown.

A garden can be big or small. Grow it in the ground or in containers. If you've never gardened before, start small with a project such as a **Salsa Garden**.

You can easily grow tomatoes, cilantro, peppers and tomatillos in just a few months. See the **Spring Veggies** brochure for more details.



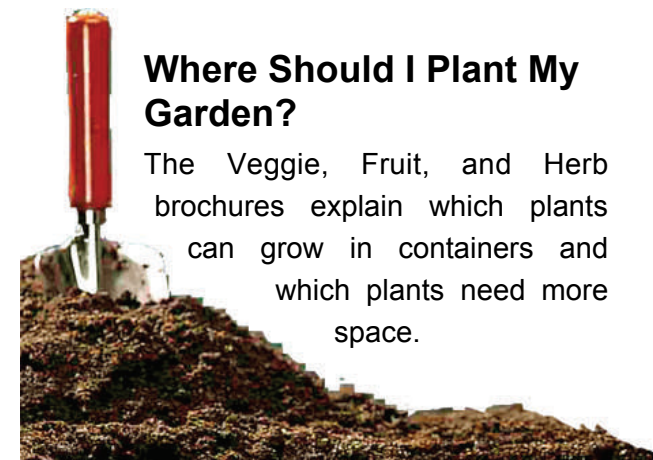
## to Garden!

This is the first brochure in a series that will help you start and grow your own fresh fruits, berries and vegetables.

Here are some questions you may have...

- Where should I plant my garden? Can I use containers?
- What do I need to buy?
- Will this be an expensive project?
- How much water will my garden need?
- How long does it take to start a garden?
- Do I have to put in a lot of time each week?

*This brochure will help you get started!*



### Where Should I Plant My Garden?

The Veggie, Fruit, and Herb brochures explain which plants can grow in containers and which plants need more space.

# Fruits and Vegetables are Good for Your Heart!

## Gardens vs. Containers

The main thing to remember when using containers is that when the weather gets warm, containers need to be watered more.

It may be helpful to set up a drip irrigation system or to have a hose nearby for easy access. Not all vegetable plants grow well in containers. But there will still be plenty of crops to choose from for planting.



## What Do I Need to Buy?

For outdoor gardens, buy compost from a nursery or garden center. Never add fresh manure to your garden, as it can “burn” plants because it has a high salt content. Composted manure is the best choice.

For container gardens, buy containers and potting mix. Containers can be found at garage sales, thrift stores or on sale at home garden stores. Potting mix can be found at nurseries and garden centers. Be

sure the label says “potting mix” or “planting mix.” Never use pure manure or compost in containers.

Purchase tools such as hoes, rakes, shovels, gloves and watering cans if you need them. Use a shovel to mix soil into the ground. For getting rid of weeds, use a hoe or hula hoe. Small hand tools are helpful for digging in containers. Often these items can also be found at the places mentioned.

## Did You Know?

**EBT card holders may use their Food Stamp benefits to purchase seeds and plants to grow food for their personal consumption.**

## Will This be an Expensive Project?

Tools, soil and seeds can be obtained relatively inexpensively. One seed packet of each type of vegetable is enough to plant for one season. If you do not use all of the seeds, save them for next year. Most seeds will still be good after two years if they are kept in a cool, dark place.

## How Much Should I Water?

When planting your garden, remember that seeds and small plants need to stay moist. Once they are large and established, they will need less water. If you water using a garden hose, turn it on low and leave it next to each



plant for a few minutes so the water will soak into the soil. For sprinklers, leave the water on at least 20 minutes each time you water, but be aware that overhead water can cause diseases in some vegetable plants. Another option is drip irrigation. Look at local nurseries and hardware stores for supplies. Employees who work in the store can tell you how to install this simple and inexpensive type of watering system. Just remember to check the drip system every week to make sure they are not clogged by soil.

When watering, the most important thing to remember is to let your soil dry out before you water it again. Plant roots need oxygen as well as water to survive.

## How Long Does it Take to Start a Garden?

A garden is an investment, so at the start of your project, you may spend several hours planning, preparing and planting. For con-

*The greatest gift of the garden is the restoration of the five senses.*

*~Hanna Rion*

tainer gardens, less time may be needed. Plan at least three hours to get a 16x16 foot garden plot installed. Once your garden is established, about 5-10 minutes of weeding and watering will need to be done everyday. Or you can do your weekly work all in one day for about an hour.

## Garden Tip

A good way to keep weeds from taking over your garden is to apply a 3-inch layer of mulch. Mulch can be shredded bark, leaves or compost. Using compost will also help your garden soil lose less water. ***But most of all, remember to have fun!***

