

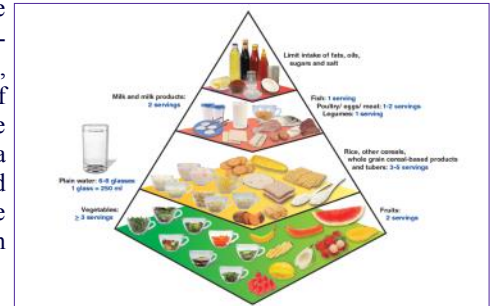
HOME GARDEN

Starting your Own Kitchen Garden

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Malaysian Food Pyramid (2020)

According to the Malaysian Food Pyramid (2020), Malaysians are recommended to consume at least three servings of vegetables daily. Eating a diet high in fruit vegetables helps lower blood pressure, reduce the likelihood of heart and stroke, prevent some types of cancer, and lessen the chance of eye or digestive problems (The Nutrition Source, n.d.). Nonetheless, the country recently reported a rise in vegetable prices due to bad weather and strong demand (Hilmy, 2021). This has created an uproar among consumers. One way to reduce the cost of vegetables grocery is to plant your own vegetables.



Guides to grow vegetables

These are some general guides to grow your vegetables (and herbs) at home.

1. Organise your space

First figure out how you can effectively utilise the space that you have in your home. The vegetables can be planted in pots, hanging baskets, planter bags, styrofoam boxes, vegetable beds or even recycled containers! Types of containers are also determined by your consumption rate.



Organising herbs

2. Plan on the type of vegetables

Some of the vegetables that thrive well and are easy to plant in the Malaysian weather are *kangkung* (water spinach), pak choy, Brazilian spinach and okra. Should you want to plant vining vegetables like cucumbers, long beans and tomatoes, you need to prepare poles. Herbs like lemongrass, curry leaves, *pandan*, commonly used in local cuisines are also easily grown plants in our climate. *Ulam* (traditional salad made of fresh leaves and vegetables eaten raw or blanched) such as mint, *kaduk* (*Piper sarmentosum*) and *cekur* (*Kaempferia galanga* Linn) grows well between vegetable beds or at the edges of your compound.



Easy to plant vegetables

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3. Sunlight requirement

Most vegetable plants require six to eight hours of direct sunlight every day. However, some vegetables need partial shades. Then using garden netting is necessary, if not overexposure to the rays may cause the leaves to sunburn or also termed as leaf scorch.

4. Choose the right soil

Use organic manure, compost, or even peat moss rich ensures the plants grow well. Good soil must also be moist and well-drained. When watering the plants, make sure the water goes to the roots, not just the top soil.

5. Regular watering

Vegetable garden near a water source to make your watering easier. Watering methods depend on how large your plot is. You can use a watering can, a hose or an automatic watering device. Watering is best done early in the morning or late in the evening.

6. Harvesting

Harvest vegetables when they are of the 'right' size. Early morning harvesting is ideal for almost all vegetables.



Harvest of the day

Growing your own vegetables can benefit your physical and mental health. In addition it is a cost effective way to address the economic issue that we are facing today. Hence, grow your own food!

References

Hilmy, I. (2021, November 24). Veggie prices up due to bad weather and strong demand. *The Star*. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/11/24/veggie-prices-up-due-to-bad-weather-and-strong-demand>

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