



Queensland Government

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Being fit & healthy on a budget

8 easy grow-your-own health foods



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If there's one thing all health experts agree on, it's vegetables. You should aim for at least five serves of them every day. They're high in fibre, low in kilojoules and you'll get more vitamins and minerals than you can poke a head cold at. But do you know what's even better than fresh vegetables? FREE fresh vegetables. Fortunately, these original superfoods can also be easy to grow, especially in the Queensland sun. Here, we'll tell you the eight easiest vegetables to grow in our climate.

1. Green beans



Green beans are tops. Bright and crunchy, you can serve them hot as a side dish like honeyed greens or cold in a salad. You can even eat them raw from the plant. Not only will you get a good dose of fibre, they are a source of vitamin C and biotin, contain lots of helpful phytonutrients, and you can learn more about the awesome health benefits of green vegetables on our colour wheel. Just find a nice spot with full sun and a big pot or a place in the garden with well drained soil. Plant bean seeds every few weeks to reap an ongoing harvest all through summer.



Honeyed Greens

Make this!

2. Carrots



Did you know Australia's most popular vegetable is carrots? They're fun to grow and loaded with beta carotene (which makes them orange). The body converts beta carotene to vitamin A, which is essential for healthy skin, your immune system and vision. More about that here. Plus you'll find a bounty of other wonderful things for your body like fibre, potassium and vitamins B6, C and K. Choose a plot of soil or a pot deep enough to handle them and get those seeds in there. You can pick them as soon as their tops break the soil. As for preparing them, the sky's the limit – baked, steamed, raw, grated, stir fried, sticks with hommus or as a soup...



Curried Carrot Soup

Make this!

3. Cucumbers



Always refreshing, cucumber is 95% water and is one of the 'green' family. It's a great addition to a Thai beef salad, sandwich or burger, certainly better than chips or fried bacon. Cucumbers thrive with sunlight, warmth and something to climb. In fact, they grow like weeds and the more you harvest, the more you get.



Thai Beef Salad

Make this!

4. Tomatoes



As well as being super versatile, tomatoes have a lot of nutrients. They are a member of the red family, and deliver a good source of Vitamin C and the phytonutrient lycopene, which is linked with prostate health. The good news is that with enough sun they grow like crazy. What's more, you can grow them in the garden, in a pot or even in a hanging basket. And with so many varieties out there, you're sure to find one you love. One of our favourite recipes is the hearty spicy tomato and lentil soup.



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Spicy Tomato and Lentil Soup

Make this!

5. Eggplant



Now to the purple group. Eggplants underscore lots of healthy recipes and they're a terrific source of vitamins B6 and E. For the best harvest, plant them in September in a nice sunny spot of the garden – they like it warm!



Eggplant Dip

Make this!

6. Basil



Who doesn't love basil? You can add it to so many dishes for a flavour boost, turn it into a mouth-watering caprese salad or whip it into a wicked pesto. And the smell of fresh cut basil, oh my! Pop this herb into some rich moist soil in the garden, or even in a pot inside if you've got a sunny windowsill, and you'll have a deliciously handy source of Vitamin K and other essential nutrients.



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Chicken Pumpkin and Bocconcini Pizza

Make this!

7. Rocket



There are lots of salad leaves you can grow, but rocket is the herb in a hurry and well suited to Queensland's winter warmth (as long as you keep it moist). You can grow it in the garden or even in a small pot and it can pretty much take care of itself. Keep sowing seeds all year round to maintain a continual easy source of Vitamin A and K and antioxidants. Then whack it on a pizza, it always tastes better when it's from your own garden.



Pita Bread Pizza

Make this!

8. Zucchini



Zucchini is a great source of vitamin C as well as phytonutrients like Lutein and Zeaxanthin which may help with eyesight. Learn more with our colour wheel. It loves warmth and space and once your seeds catch, it can be quite prolific. For best results in Queensland, sow your seeds from July to March and you should see your first zucchinis in six to eight weeks. As a bonus, you can also use the flowers in lots of recipes.



Zucchini, Capsicum, Artichoke and Rice Slice

Make this!

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