

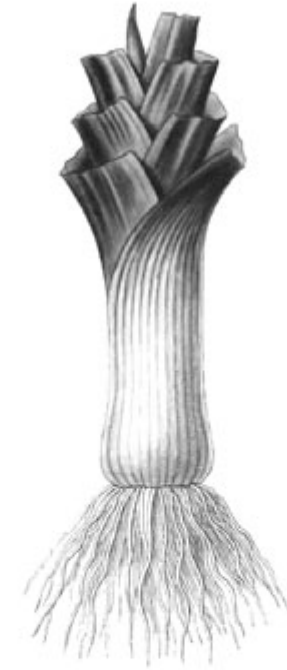
THE PATCH

**A GUIDE TO GROWING, COOKING &
SHARING YOUR OWN VEGETABLES**



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AN INTRODUCTION TO FOOD DEMOCRACY

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Buying food in Australia is easy. The same range of vegetables is available year round at our local supermarket. We can buy a plastic bag of tomatoes no matter which season we are in. When the asparagus season in Australia ends, the supermarkets import it from Mexico or Peru, and we don't notice the difference. We buy packaged meat without considering where it has come from, by the time a steak hits the supermarket shelves all the resemblance of a cow has been removed. This homogeneity has lulled us into a mindset of complacency, and when faced with the fruit and veg section of our local supermarket, we don't stop to consider it.

“In the developed world these supply chains have evolved to become highly efficient, and city dwellers have come to take for granted a reliable, safe, and relatively cheap supply of food.”^[1]

[1] Bellotti, B. (2010). Food Literacy: Reconnecting the City with the Country. *Agricultural Science*, 22(3), 29.

Little do we know that this complacent behaviour perpetuates all that is wrong with the food supply chain that we are part of. As we become more and more removed from the systems of food production, we disengage from the problems the world is facing in the near future in relation to food supply.

As we queue up at the checkout, Australian farmers are going broke due to pressures from our biggest supermarkets, overseas interests are snapping up land to ensure productivity for their own countries into the future, and the population is rapidly expanding as the amount of food we can produce plateaus^[2]. We are involved in the food industry on a daily basis, and despite it being so important to us, it is on the brink of collapse, just out of our view.

“Food scarcity is emerging as the most cogent risk to civilisation in the 21st century.”^[3]

[2] Brown Lester, R. (2009). *Plan B 4.0 Mobilizing to save civilization*. Earth Policy Institute, Norton, USA.

[3] Cribb, J. (2013, March 4). Hunger, the new BBQ stopper. *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Add to this that as students living in share houses, our diets are among the worst of any statistical group, and during this transitional stage in our lives, we develop habits and behaviours that will stay with us for life^[4]. For a number of reasons, including a lack of time and money, students consume nowhere near enough fruit and vegetables, leading to an increased risk of disease later in life^[5].

Not only are our diets changing, but the way we consume food is changing too. Not enough time is spent in share houses sharing food, and cooking is seen less as a communal activity, and more as a solitary one as we are pressed for time. Sharing food with others, as well as distributing the task of food preparation between sexes, is important. A focus on the ritual of dinner parties, including aspects such as manners and conversation, are important contributors to a civil society.

[4] Brunt, A. R., & Rhee, Y. S. (2008). Obesity and lifestyle in US college students related to living arrangements. *Appetite*, 51(3), 615-621.

[5] Huang, T. T. K., Harris, K. J., Lee, R. E., Nazir, N., Born, W., & Kaur, H. (2003). Assessing overweight, obesity, diet, and physical activity in college students. *Journal of American College Health*, 52(2), 83-86.



“If foodwork continues to be regarded as invisible, unacknowledged and female-only, then the quality of all our lives suffers.”^[6]

“With a culture that does not emphasize the significance of shared meals that are connected to certain values, our society has lost these moments of potential connection and understanding.”^[7]

[6] Flammang, J. A. (2009). *The taste for civilization: Food, politics, and civil society*. University of Illinois Press.

[7] Shafer, C. G. (2012). *Making Place For Ritual: Creating Connection Through Communal Meals* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Cincinnati).

THE PATCH is designed as a framework to empower people to break free from the monopoly of current food supply chains. This publication aims to bring back into the spotlight the important role that food plays in our lives, as well as our place in the global food supply network.

These books will help to guide the reader in planting and growing their own vegetables in an urban environment, harvesting and sharing these vegetables amongst a network of friends, and cooking and eating them in a way that allows this network to experience the positive effects of sharing food in a social setting.

By engaging more intimately with the entire lifecycle of food production and consumption on a local level, this guide allows the user to better understand this process and how it occurs on a global scale. Armed with this knowledge, the user can then take steps to amend their behaviour in relation to food to influence change on a global level.

HOW IT WORKS

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THE PATCH is a framework for the growing and sharing of vegetables between a network of share houses in an urban or suburban environment.

As is common in urban backyard gardens, trying to grow a wide range of vegetables with limited space can be difficult. It is hard to ensure a sufficient quantity of a wide range of vegetables is available year round. Often, when space is limited and only a few varieties of vegetable are grown, a surplus of one vegetable is common at harvest time. There are only so many tomato dishes one can take before it all becomes too much.

To overcome this, THE PATCH shares a wide range of vegetables between households, and then facilitates the sharing of these vegetables. The vegetables are grouped according the philosophy of companion planting to ensure the best chance of success.

To ensure adaptability to as many different and unique networks as possible, this guide is optimised for 6 separate households to take part in. However, it works just as well with two or three households as it does with six. Outside of this arrangement it still possible to implement aspects of these guides, but logistical problems are more likely.

To begin using THE PATCH, each household chooses an allocated group of plants to begin growing. This choice should be dictated by the amount of space each household has for growing. Group 1 contains vegetables that require a large area for planting, such as a large garden bed. Group 6 contains vegetables and herbs that can be easily grown in a very contained environment, such as in pots or planters on an apartment balcony.

← MORE ROOM

LESS ROOM →

1	Beans Corn Pumpkin Cucumber	2	Potatoes Eggplant Broccoli Peas	3	Onion Beetroot Lettuce Silverbeet	4	Cauliflower Celery Leek Garlic	5	Carrots Radish Rosemary Thyme	6	Tomatoes Basil Chives Parsley
Household	Household	Household	Household	Household	Household	Household	Household	Household	Household	Household	

If dividing this list between two households, each household chooses three columns, if three households, two columns each.

There are three guides that come in this pack.

These guides provide instructions, tips and tricks on all aspects of building, planting, growing, sharing and cooking.

The BUILDING guide provides information on the cheapest methods of garden bed construction, to ensure that even on the smallest budget a household can begin growing veggies.

The PLANTING & GROWING guide details the next steps after you've built garden beds. Seed selection, planting and composting are contained in this guide, as well as a foldout planting calendar.

Once the vegetables are harvested, they are shared between houses in the network. All the information you'll need is available in the SHARING & COOKING guide.

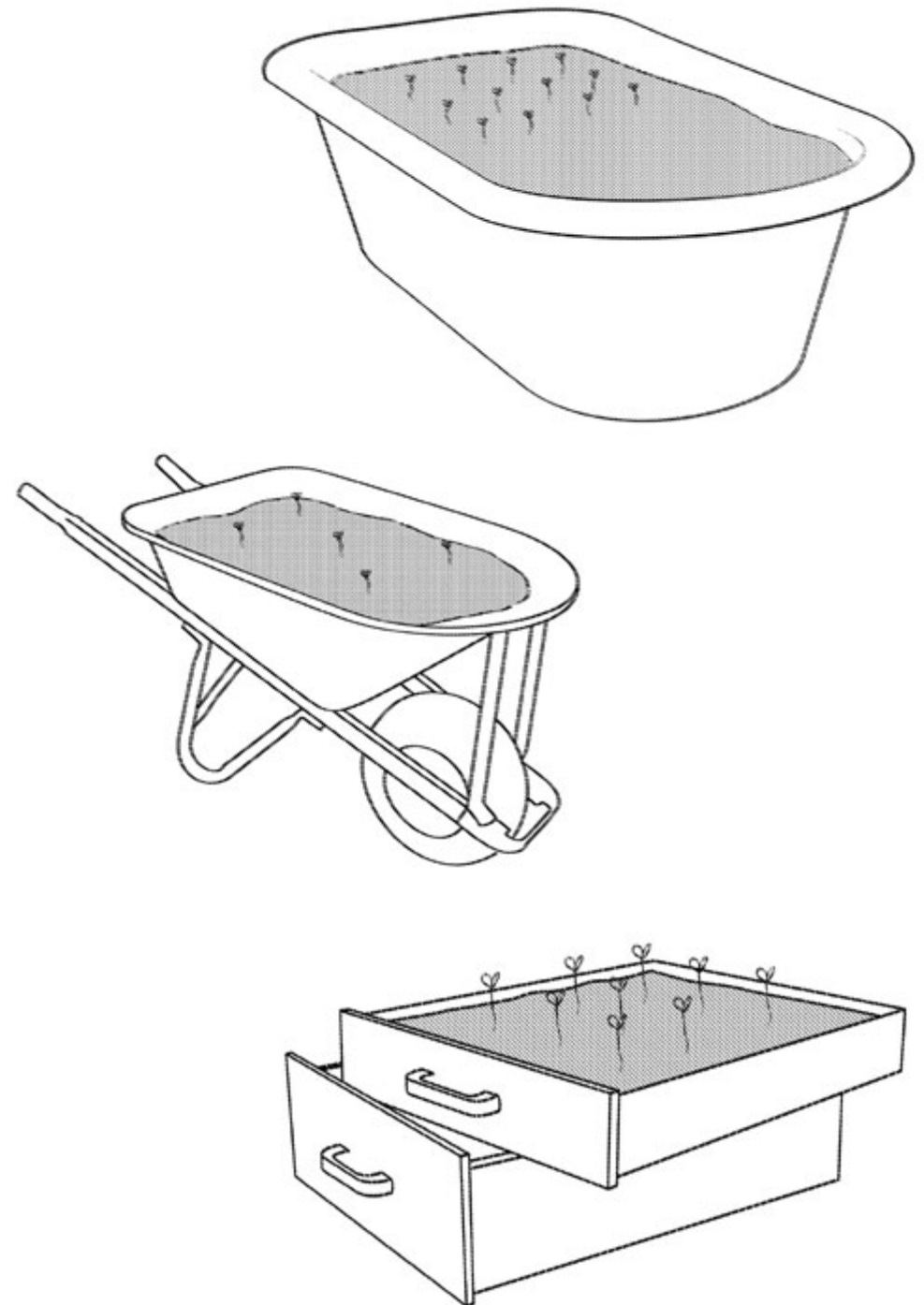
BUILDING



If you're renting, and your house doesn't have an established garden bed, there are a number of ways you can build a garden on the cheap and start growing. The type of garden you build will depend on the length of your lease, and whether or not you'd like to (or have to) dismantle the garden bed at the end of the tenancy.

The first step is to contact your landlord or real estate agent and ask them if you'd be able to build a permanent garden bed. This is the easiest and cheapest option, as all it involves is digging up a portion of lawn, fertilising it and planting seeds. If they won't allow a permanent garden to be built, then there are plenty of options for temporary gardens.

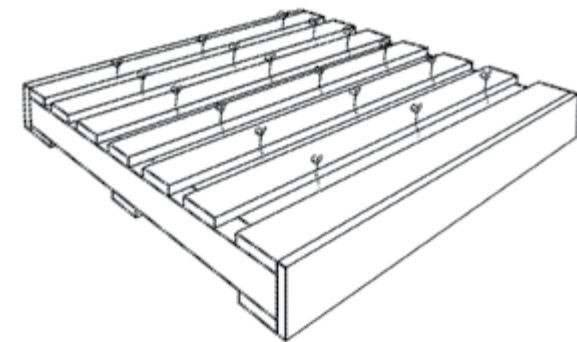
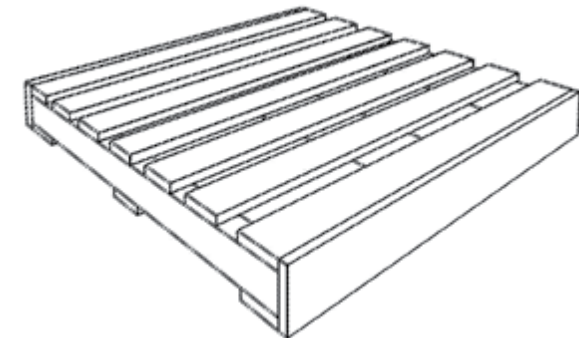
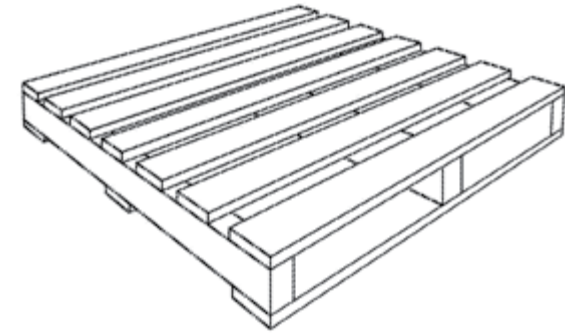
Any vessel that holds dirt and provides drainage works as a garden bed. Baths, wheelbarrows and wooden draws work particularly well, and can often be sourced for free. When using draws for a short-term garden bed, drill a few holes in the bottom to provide drainage. If using draws for a long-term garden, rip the bottom out of them and bury the edges of them slightly before filling with topsoil.



Another garden bed building material that can be sourced for free is the timber from wooden pallets. These pallets are an adaptable building material that can be used to build two different types of garden bed, one short term and the other long term.

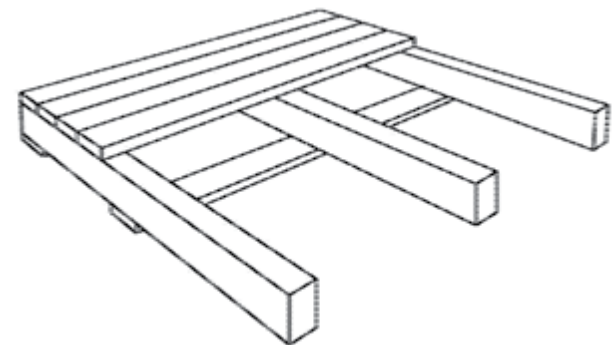
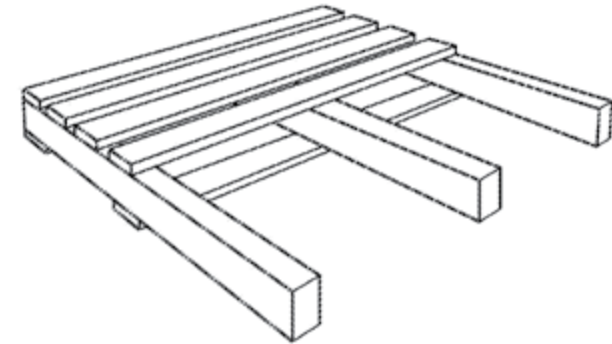
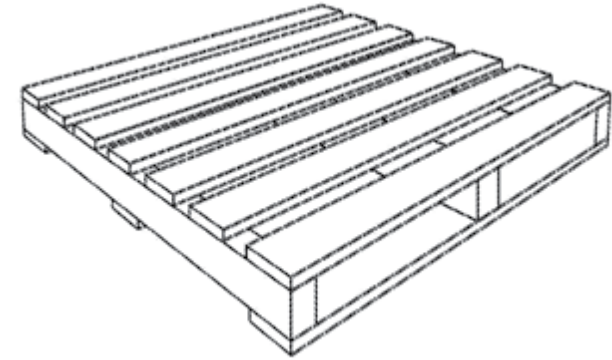
THE SHORT TERM PALLET BED

- 1. Each pallet in this design will be one garden bed. It's best to grab between three and six pallets for a sizeable garden. You'll also need one extra pallet for spare timber.**
- 2. For each pallet you'll be using as a garden bed, prise 2 pieces of timber from the spare pallet. Nail or screw these pieces along the open ends of the pallet to make an enclosure that will hold dirt.**
- 3. Fill from the top with a soil mixture or potting mix. Plant small, leafy vegetables in lines along the gaps in the pallet.**

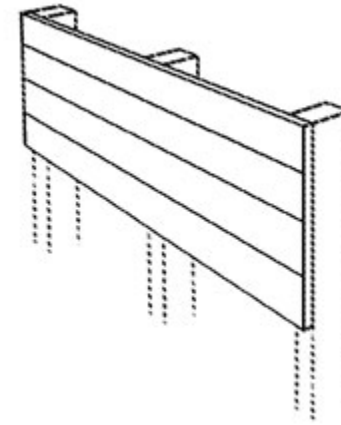


THE LONG TERM PALLET BED

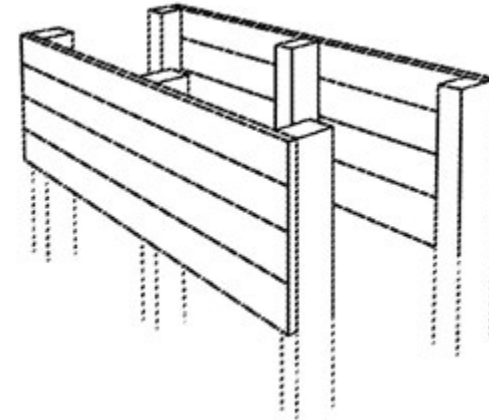
1. The design of this long-term bed requires two pallets. Ensure you acquire pallets that have solid, full-length runners (the bits of wood in the centre of the pallet).
2. Lay both the pallets with the heavily timbered side up. Using a crow bar, prise off all the boards from the top side of the pallets except for one at the end. To ensure the runners stay lined up, leave the boards on the underside for the time being.
3. Nail three of four of the boards back onto the runners, flush with the top board and not leaving any gaps between the boards. You'll want to cover half the pallets like this, leaving no gaps.



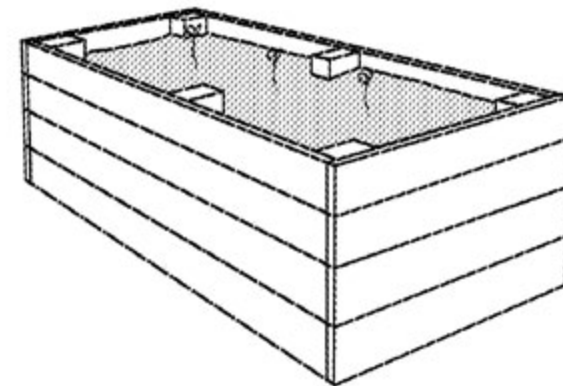
4. Flip the pallets over and prise off the two or three boards from the other side. Then, dig three holes to the depth of the uncovered runners (about half the pallet width). Stand one pallet upright with the runners in the holes, and fill the holes back up with dirt. Compact the dirt to ensure the pallet cannot move.



5. Dig three more holes, parallel with this first pallet, half a pallet width away. Repeat the digging process, and stand the second pallet in the holes. Fill the holes with dirt and compact.



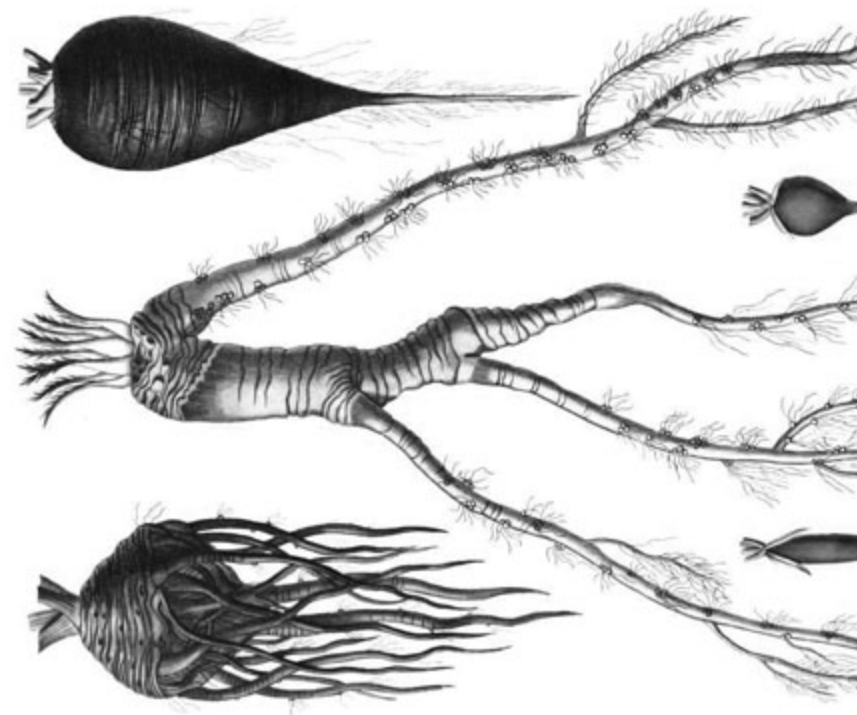
6. Using the discarded boards from earlier in the process, create ends for the garden bed. As the two sides are half a pallet width apart, the remaining boards can be cut in half, and each half should fit perfectly onto the end of the bed. Screw or nail these boards onto the sides of the bed, down to ground level. Fill the bed with your choice of soil and begin planting.



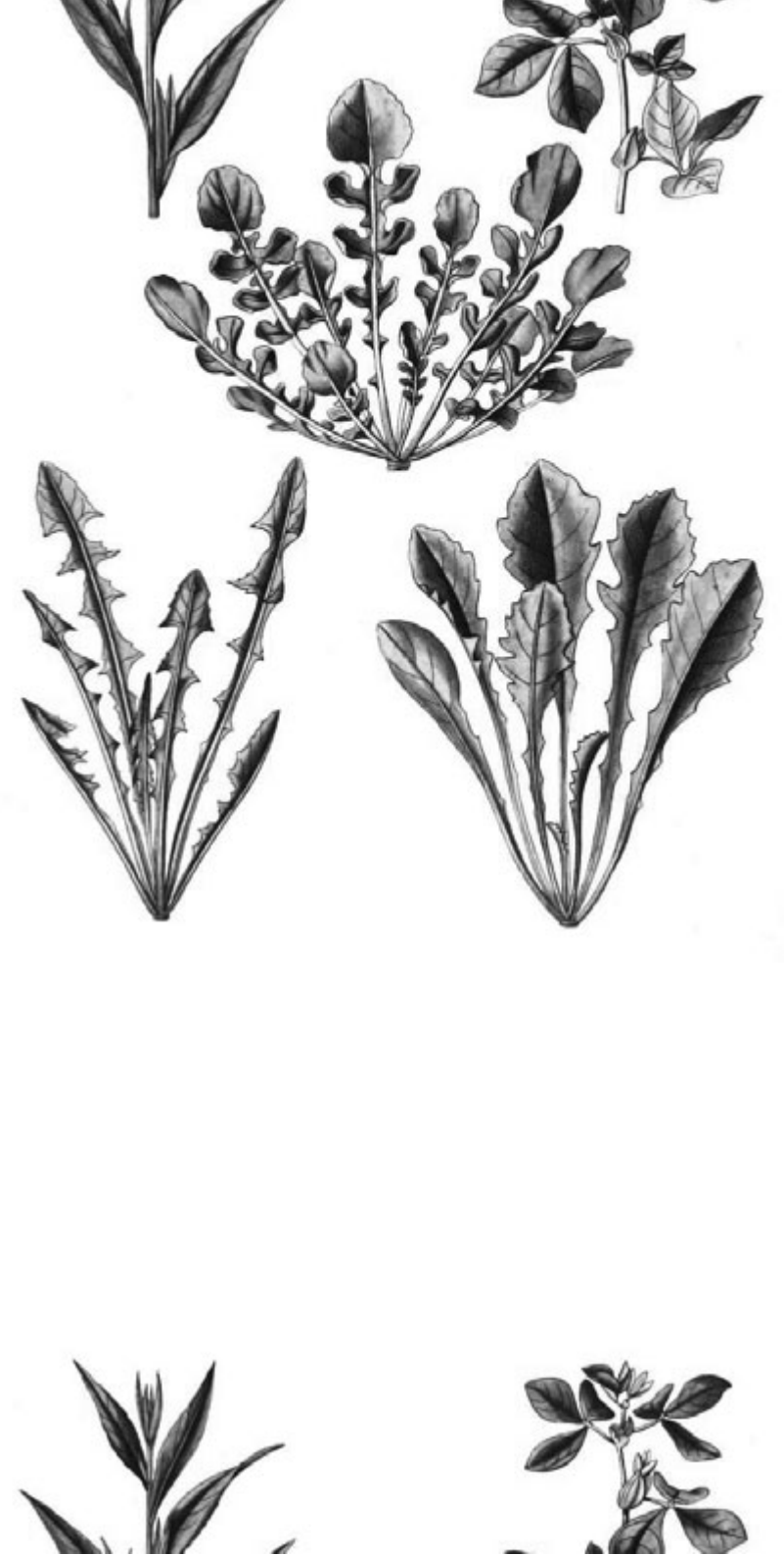
When sourcing pallets, look for a stamp bearing the letters 'HT'. This means the wood used to make the pallet has been heat treated during manufacture, and not chemically fumigated. Also, try to find pallets that are clean and in relatively new condition, as pallets used to transport hazardous chemicals could leech these chemicals into your garden.

Filling the newly built garden bed with soil is often the most complicated part of this process in a share house environment. Buying topsoil can become expensive, so it's best to try and source it for free. If you have to purchase soil from a landscape supplier, buy in bulk and share it between households. As some topsoil is devoid of organic matter, it is important to build this organic matter up to ensure a thriving garden. Using an organic fertiliser as well as some blood and bone should do wonders.

For smaller planters and pots, use potting mix. Potting mix doesn't retain water as well as soil does, so add some wetting agent every six months to the pots, and monitor them to ensure the mix is staying moist. Also, as with the topsoil, its best to add some organic fertiliser and blood and bone to get things started.



PLANTING & GROWING



SEED SELECTION

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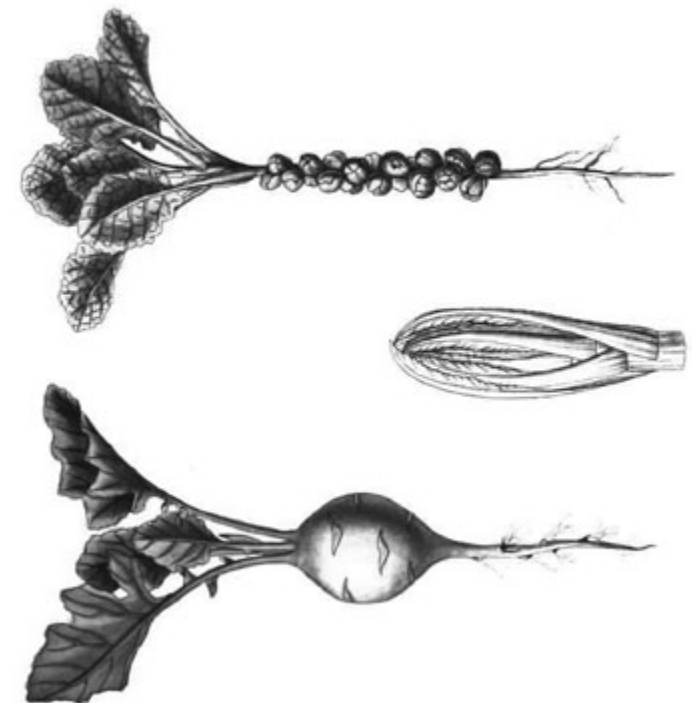
In your search for seeds you'll no doubt discover two distinct categories of seed: heirloom and hybrid.

Essentially, heirloom varieties are strains of vegetables whose lineage can be traced back a long way, usually around 100 years. Heirloom varieties are chosen for their taste over other traits, and this goes a long way to explaining why they've been chosen to grow continually for such a long time.

Hybrid seeds are seeds that are bred specifically for certain desirable traits, such as early maturity or disease resistance. These seeds are often developed on an industrial scale to produce a uniform product across a large crop. Taste is often less of a factor in the development of hybrid seeds.

When choosing which seeds to buy, keep in mind that whilst heirloom varieties are often more interesting and can taste better than their hybrid counterparts, hybrid seeds often

display traits such as disease resistance which will make your crop a lot easier to deal with. However, plants grown from hybrid seeds will not produce viable seeds to plant again, often the seeds from hybrid varieties are sterile. So, if you'd like to plant next years crop from the seeds of this years, consider heirloom varieties.



PLANTING

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The selection of plants that your house has been allocated has been chosen specifically as they can be planted in close proximity.

This means that the veggies you'll be growing are happy to share a bed, and in some cases may even be beneficial to each other when growing together.

However, to ensure a successful harvest, take special care to plant the seeds or seedlings you buy in accordance with the instructions provided by the supplier. Things like spacing, depth and exposure to the sun differ between different types of vegetables, so this means perhaps planting different varieties in different garden beds. At the back of this book you'll find a calendar, which provides a guide to when is the best time to plant each vegetable, but always double check the suppliers instructions.

COMPOSTING

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Composting is integral in closing the loop between the kitchen and the garden. A lot of the scraps left over from cooking can be cycled back through the garden, recycling the important nutrients they contain. As well as scraps, a compost bin is an ideal way to get rid of leaves, lawn clippings and other organic matter.

There are 4 ingredients that your compost needs; nitrogen, carbon, water and air. Nitrogen comes from typically wet, green things. Think fresh lawn clippings, veggie scraps, as well as manure from herbivores. Carbon comes from dry matter, such as twigs, leaves, dried lawn clippings, end of season plants, as well as paper products. The heap needs the occasional watering to keep it damp, and occasional turning with a garden fork to keep it aerated.

1. **Choose a spot in the shade to build a compost bin, as it needs to retain moisture to be effective.**
2. **Using the same technique of wooden pallet construction outlined previously, build a three-sided enclosure, leaving one side open for easy shovelling.**
3. **Lay down nitrogen and carbon materials in 10cm layers, sprinkling soil every few layers over the heap to start the decomposition process.**
4. **Turn and water the pile every week and monitor its moisture levels.**
5. **Add veggie scraps, lawn clippings regularly.**
6. **The compost is ready to use when it resembles a rich, dark soil.**

Don't put any meat or dairy products, fats or oils or manure from carnivores in your compost heap.



SHARING & COOKING



SHARING

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The sharing of produce is integral to the success of THE PATCH. As the wide range of vegetables are divided for growing amongst houses, a system of sharing these vegetables means all participants have access to all the produce.

Rather than sharing the produce and then consuming it in isolation, consumption of food in a social setting allows for conversation, connection and understanding between people in the network, and so the dinner party is an important event in the philosophy of THE PATCH.

Dinner parties should be hosted in turns by the households in the network, and timed to make best use of freshly harvested vegetables.

First things first – these dinner parties aren't formal occasions, they're low-key affairs. The aim here is to share produce, save money and celebrate the success of growing your own vegetables.

Chances are that due to the limited amount of vegetables ready at one time, you will have to supplement your harvest with bought groceries. The aim of THE PATCH is not to replace supermarkets, but to compliment, and fill gaps in, the current food supply system. Split the cost of these bought groceries between all the guests at the dinner party. This way, with the addition of the veggies you've grown, the cost of the meal shouldn't exceed a few dollars per head. It's much cheaper cooking for a group than it is cooking for one person, and you'll cut down on waste as well.



If regular dinner parties aren't already part of your social calendar, here are a few tips to ensure it's a great night.

Plan ahead. If you're hosting, try and have as much preparation done before the guests arrive, allowing you to chat when they do, rather than being confined to the kitchen. Choose simple dishes to ensure that on the night, there is the minimum amount of work to do.

Drink. Host the dinner on a Friday night, that way everyone can have a few glasses of wine. Sure, it's much more civilised than a night out on the town, but that doesn't mean you can't indulge. A drink on arrival will ensure a good mood.

Set the table. Candles, flowers and a tablecloth are a great idea for dressing up a table that otherwise would look a little basic.

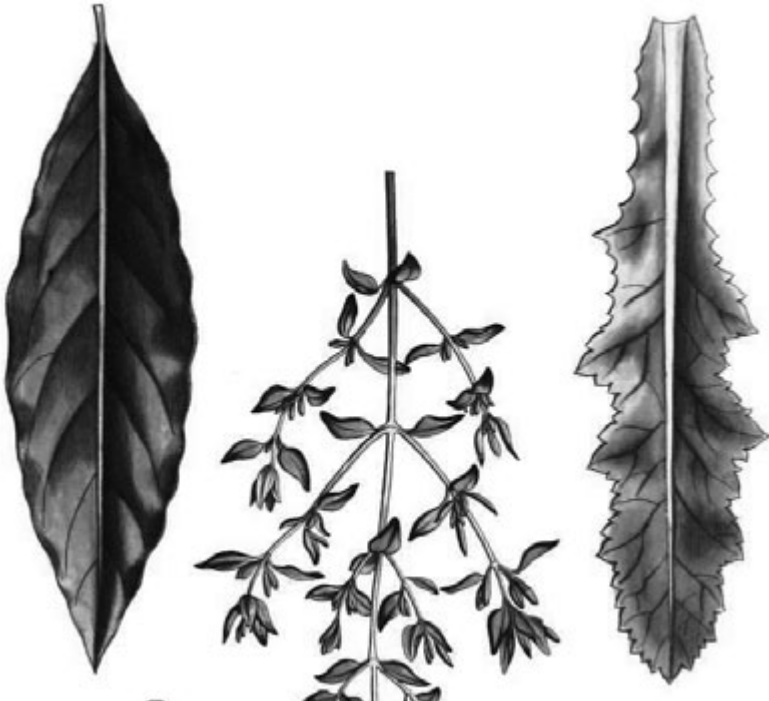
Music. Not too loud, music will go a long way in setting the mood of the night.

Dim the lights. Don't have flash dimmers on your lights? Install a 15- or 25-watt globe in the room that you'll be eating in. This should create a mood that fosters intimacy and conversation.

Cutting down on meat is one way that you can drastically reduce your impact on the environment through the consumption of food. With the range of vegetables you and those in your network will be growing, it's the perfect chance to cut meat out of one meal a week. However, if you much choose meat, ensure that the produce you buy adheres to the sustainable ethos of the patch. Here are a few points to keep in mind:

- 1. Only purchase organic, biodynamic or free range meat. Or, ideally, choose wild-harvested meat. Wild rabbit or kangaroo are great choices: healthy, delicious and very environmentally sustainable.**
- 2. Look for grass fed options over grain fed because this places less stress on the environment. Grain fed beef uses 10 units of grain to produce 1 unit of beef, and is a huge strain on natural resources. Grass fed beef is fattened naturally, requires a lot less inputs, and also tastes better.**

3. **Shop at farmers markets and buy your meat directly from the producer. There is a good chance these small meat producers practice organic or biodynamic farming, and although you will pay a premium for the meat, it'll taste better than the stuff in the supermarket and is much more sustainable than feedlot produce.**



COOKING

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Here are some recipes that are cheap and easy, and are great for showcasing the fresh produce from the garden.

Spaghetti Bolognese.

Olive Oil

1 Onion

4 cloves Crushed Garlic

500g Beef/Lamb Mince

400g Diced Ripe Tomatoes

3 tbsp Tomato Paste

Spaghetti

Salt/Pepper

1. **Heat a splash of olive oil in a saucepan, and sauté onion and garlic.**
2. **Add the mince and brown.**
3. **Add tomato paste and tomatoes, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and simmer.**
4. **Meanwhile, cook desired amount of spaghetti in salted boiling water until al dente.**
5. **Serve, topped with parmesan cheese.**

Gnocchi w/ Tomato Sauce

Sauce

Olive oil
2 garlic cloves, crushed
1 onion, finely diced
4 ripe, chopped tomatoes

1 sprig thyme
Salt & pepper
Parmesan cheese

Gnocchi

1kg potatoes
300g plain flour
Salt & pepper

1. Wash potatoes, and drop into boiling water with their skin on. Cook until just soft (a knife should not slide in easily, 10-15 minutes is ideal). Drain and set aside to cool enough to handle.
2. Peel potatoes and push through a potato ricer, or a sieve if you don't have a potato ricer.
3. On a bench sprinkle $\frac{3}{4}$ of the flour over the mashed potatoes, and season with salt & pepper.

4. Knead the dough until smooth, taking care not to overwork it. Add more flour if necessary.
5. Roll the dough into 2cm thick cylinders, and then cut at 2cm intervals. Press each piece with a fork to form flat, oval shaped pieces. Dust with flour.
6. Sauté the garlic and onion in a pan with olive oil, add the chopped tomatoes and thyme leaves. Reduce until lumpy.
7. Meanwhile, cook the gnocchi in salted boiling water. The gnocchi is ready just after it floats. If it tastes floury, cook for 30 seconds longer.
8. Add the gnocchi to the sauce, stir to combine, serve with parmesan cheese.

Pizzas

Here are two varieties of pizza using veggies from the garden, cheap, easy and delicious.

Dough

1 ½ cups warm water 4 cups plain flour
1 sachet (7g) dried yeast 1 tsp salt
Pinch caster sugar ¼ cup olive oil

1. Combine the water, yeast and sugar in a bowl, and leave aside for 5 minutes or until foamy. Combine the flour and salt in a large bowl, make a well in the middle and slowly add the yeast mixture and oil. Combine into dough.
2. On a lightly floured surface knead the dough until smooth and elastic (about 10 minutes). Oil the bowl and place the dough back in it, cover and set aside until dough doubles in size.
3. Knead gently to remove large bubbles and then divide and roll the dough out into desired size disks.

This sauce is best made in advance and then can be frozen and used at a later date.

Tomato Pizza Sauce

¼ cup olive oil 1 onion, finely chopped
1kg ripe tomatoes, diced. 1 tbspd dried oregano
4 garlic cloves, crushed Salt & pepper

1. Sauté the garlic and onion in the olive oil, then add the tomato.
2. Add the oregano and season with salt & pepper to taste.
3. Reduce until thick. Once cooled divide into single serve containers and freeze.

Pumpkin & Fetta Pizza

- 1. Preheat oven to 230°C**
- 2. Take skin off pumpkin, cut out seeds, and cut into thin sections. Brush with olive oil and salt & pepper and grill or BBQ until tender.**
- 3. Brush a pizza base with pizza sauce; add pumpkin and chunks of fetta.**
- 4. Top with mozzarella cheese and cook for 10 minutes, or until the base is cooked through and crunchy at the edges.**

Tomato & Basil Pizza

- 1. Preheat oven to 230°C**
- 2. Brush a pizza base with pizza sauce, add thinly sliced tomato and whole basil leaves.**
- 3. Top with mozzarella cheese and cook for 10 minutes, or until the base is cooked through and crunchy at the edges.**