

How Gardening Helps Save Money

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in organic produce. But for those of us with limited food budgets, patronizing organic grocery stores, co-ops, and restaurants can be a bit of a strain on the wallet.

As [Time](#) recently pointed out, there's a way to eat healthy organic produce on a budget. It's a novel little idea known as... gardening:

"Unlike some hobbies which can prove to be gigantic money pits, like buying sports cars or speedboats, with gardening, there is the practical return on your investment in the way of a harvest of tasty tomatoes or leeks or radishes.

A well-maintained food garden yields 1/2 pound of produce per square foot per growing season, according to the NGA [National Gardening Association]. So a 600-square-foot garden, the American average on which households spend \$70 per year, could churn out 300 pounds of fresh produce worth about \$600 annually, the association estimates.

As a result, you could cut into some hefty grocery bills. The average American household forks out \$6,759 a year on food, or 12.6 percent of total spending, according to the Consumer Expenditure Survey from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Of that, \$756 is spent on fruits and vegetables, and \$2,787 on the high cost of eating out."

But gardening has many benefits beyond budget savings, some of which include:

- **Community-building:** Gardening brings people out of the seclusion of their homes and provides more opportunities

to talk with neighbors.

- Good Health: Beyond providing healthy eating choices, gardening also offers the physical activity and fresh air which many of us with desk jobs lack.
- Creativity: Gardening offers opportunities for expression and creation in an increasingly mechanized society.

Because America was originally an agricultural society, these benefits were once a regular feature of everyday life. But we've drifted away from that agricultural society and into one based more on convenience. Would Americans be wise to return to gardening?

Image Credit: Sarai Mitnick bit.ly/liowB8m