

DIY Pallet Garden

For more ideas, or zines, feel free to
contact us at:
Theshark642@gmail.com



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Pallet gardens are excellent alternatives to large gardens for growing smaller sized vegetables, herbs and ornamental flowers. Garden blogs and garden websites are noting pallet gardens as an up-and-coming trend. We decided to build a pallet garden and found that a few modifications to the original designs really make this garden suitable to plant production. Schools with limited budgets and space can benefit from growing pallet gardens. Lumber costs can be expensive to build raised beds, and many schools simply do not have the space to plant raised beds let alone traditional gardens. Below are the LSU AgCenter directions and pictures to construct and plant a pallet garden.

Materials Needed

1 pallet, a staple gun and staples, landscape fabric, soil and seedlings.



Step 1. Find a pallet. Don't spend money on a new one; visit a local dumpster or speak with a grocery store manager. Pallets can often be found behind large stores, but first ask a manager as sometimes the delivery trucks recycle pallets saving stores money.

Step 2. If any of the pallet boards are loose, nail them securely. If old nails are sticking out remove them. We don't want students tearing their clothes or worse injuring themselves on old nails.

Step 3. If the boards are really rough lightly sand to prevent splinters.

Do your plants look like this?



If the soil pH is below 6 or above 7, most vegetable crops will not have access to nutrients in the soil. They are simply unavailable to the plant as they attach to the soil and will not go into water solution and be taken up by the roots. Pine bark can significantly lower soil pH causing yellow plants, but bark in general also takes a long time to decompose. Because vegetables have relatively short life spans, they need quick-release fertilizers. As bark decomposes, it ties up soil nutrient again making them unavailable to the plants. Try and use soil mixes that are aged or very decomposed when building raised beds. Overwatering can leach nutrients from the soil, especially in raised beds. Most vegetable crops need 1 inch of water per week. Place a rain gauge in your garden to determine the amount of water from rain and overhead irrigation.

These green ladybugs are a serious problem. Although they resemble ladybugs they are nottheir true common name is cucumber beetle and scientific name *Diabrotica undecimpunctata*. There is also a striped cucumber beetle, scientific name *Acalymma vittatum*. Cucumber beetles feed on small plant seedlings on the stems, roots and flowers. Not only will they physically damage the plant resulting in poor fruit set from flower damage, but also transmit bacterial wilt disease. This disease can wipe out an entire field of plants. Typical symptoms of bacterial wilt are entire plants wilting in a day or over night and a white ooze emerging from cut stems placed in warm water. Cucumber beetles usually feed on cucurbits such as cucumbers, squash, melons, pumpkins and gourds. But they will also feed on plants such as beans, corn and potatoes. In a garden, how do we control pests such as cucumber beetles when we do not want to use insecticides?

1. Rotate your crops. Avoid planting successive plantings of cucurbits (pumpkins, cucumber, squash, gourds, melons). Take all cucurbit debris, old leaves and dead plants out of the garden. Clean these plants as soon as the season is over. Remove from the garden and if you see the beetle, do NOT place in the compost. Throw plant material away.
2. Keep grounds around the garden mowed and weed free!
3. Place yellow sticky tape around the garden to trap adult cucumber beetles. Replace the sticky tape often as it will attract many beetles and garden debris. If you find large populations of cucumber beetles, you may want to switch from direct seeding cucurbits to planting transplants in the school garden. Transplants are older when beetles arrive and more tolerant of some feeding damage than young seedlings.



Step 4. Determine which side you want to be the front, then flip over. Starting on one side of the pallet, staple the landscape fabric (double layered) to the sides of the pallet, working from one side across the back and onto the other side. You may also want to start stapling at the top of the pallet pulling the fabric taut as you move across and down. Make sure the bottom of the pallet is also covered by a double layer of landscape fabric.



Step 5. Lay the pallet again on the ground front side up.

Step 6. Fill the pallet with soil. Occasionally tip the pallet to a 45 degree angle and shake soil to the bottom. Be careful not to let too much fall from the front slots.



Step 7. Place plants in all slots between wood, placing the plants tightly together.

Step 8. Fill the remaining empty spaces with soil.

Step 9. Place something (we've used a low bench) like bricks or concrete pavers under the top portion of the pallet garden. Staple a single layer of landscape fabric to the top of the pallet. Cut small holes in the top to plant seedlings that will grow vertically in the pallet. Stapling landscape fabric to the top side of the pallet at this stage allows you to fill the pallet completely with soil, keep the soil from falling out of the pallet each time you water, and prevents weeds from growing around the plants in the top section of the pallet garden. Leave pallet in this position for approximately 2-3 weeks.

Step 10. Carefully and slowly water the pallet. If you water too quickly, the soil will rush out of the top of the pallet.

Step 11. After two to three weeks of initial growth, the roots will keep soil from falling out of the pallet garden when you flip it vertically. Flip the pallet to a standing position. Regularly water and use a liquid fertilizer. Construct the pallet garden in the permanent growing location. Once filled with wet soil and plants, pallet garden are very heavy!



Can you think of other creative small garden containers? Share your ideas with us. We'd love to feature them in future productions. Feel free to send us an Email at Theshark642@gmail.com.



Vegetables to plant in May

Direct seed snap, lima and butter beans (both bush and pole), collards, okra, southern peas, pumpkins (for early harvest), winter squash, sweet corn, watermelons Transplant sweet potatoes

Vegetables to plant in June

Direct seed pumpkins (for early harvest) collards, okra and southern peas Transplant sweet potatoes and tomatoes (for fall harvest)

Vegetables to plant in July

Start seeds for broccoli, bell pepper, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, and cauliflower Direct seed collard greens, okra and watermelons (for Halloween harvest) Plant tomato transplants (Heat set varieties) for fall harvest

Vegetables to plant in August

Direct seed snap, lima, and butter beans, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, cabbage, collard greens, cucumbers, lettuce, mustard greens, okra, shallots, and turnips. Transplant cauliflower and tomatoes.