



I'm not a master gardener, but I do garden extensively on my three acres. For the price of a shovel and a pack of seeds, you can start an emergency garden too. In this article, I share what I've learned about the best things to grow in your survival garden! I hope that you take this information and use it to extend your research to find the plant(s) that work best for your location, climate, and personal requirements.

With few exceptions, this article covers "Staple," plants or crops that can become a significant part of your survival diet.

It is very difficult to plant everything you need to survive. But a solid garden, food preservation skills, and careful planning can get you on the road to food self-reliance.

Before making changes to your diet consult with you doctor.

## What To Grow In An Emergency Garden

### The Three Sisters: Beans, Dent Corn and Winter Squash

The three sisters are a companion planting of beans, corn, and squash together. This planting technique has been used for 5000 years by the indigenous people of Central and North America so it's tried and tested.

Three Sisters	Use	Varieties
<b>Beans</b> (Pole, or climbing beans, not bush beans) <i>Rich in protein</i> <i>Grow in all 50 states</i>	Pull Nitrogen from the air, and pump it into the soil.	<b>Fresh Pole Bean Varieties:</b> Try to choose Native or Heirloom varieties. Some new pole beans are too big for corn stalks to handle. <b>Dried Pole Bean Varieties:</b> Bergin, Pinto, Blue Lake, Black Turtle, Cherokee Trail Of Tears, Anasazi, Grandma Rose Italian Pole Bean, Petaluma Gold Rush, Indiana Wild Goose, White Emergo, Valena Italian, Riggins Stick Pole, Navy
<b>Dent,Flint and Flour-Corn</b> 30,000 calories per 100 sqft <b>Heavy Nitrogen Requirement</b>	Corn gives <b>shade</b> and acts as a <b>trellis</b> for beans. <b>Uses:</b> Ground for flour, cornmeal, masa, polenta, grits or roasting  <b>Common Dishes:</b> <i>Succotash,</i> <i>Hominy,</i> <i>Tortillas</i>	<b>Dent-Corn Varieties:</b> Jerry Petersen Blue, Oaxacan Green, Painted Mountain, Earth Tones Dent, Nothstine Dent, Reid's Yellow Dent Corn, Tennessee Red Cob, Floriani Red Flint, Cherokee White Flour, Cateto Sulino Flint, Ohio Blue Clarage Dent, Bloody Butcher Dent, Hickory Cane, Big Daddy's Yellow, Green and Gold

<b>Winter Squash: (Cucurbit)</b>	Cover shallow root systems of corn and beans. Provide weed suppression.	<b>Winter Squash Varieties:</b> Candy Roaster Melon, Delicata Zeppelin, Tahitian Melon, Seminole Pumpkin, Thai Kang Kob Pumpkin, Acorn Squash, Banana Squash, Butternut Squash, Boston Marrow, Bush Table King Acorn, Green Striped Cushaw, Honey Boat Delicata, Hopi Pale Grey, Long Island Cheese Winter, Blue Hubbard
Grow in all 50 States		

\*Tip: To increase your harvest plant: Sunflowers, Bee Balm, Hyssop, Sage, Mint, or Lavender to attract pollinators.

## Plant Potatoes In Your Emergency Garden

There isn't one perfect food, but the standard white potato is as close as you'll get. The white potato is my # 1 choice as a primary staple. Potatoes are nutritious, and they are excellent comfort food.

### 15 Reasons To Plant Potatoes

1. Potatoes are filling comfort food, excellent to help you keep a positive attitude in hard times
2. Along with grain and corn, potatoes give the most calories for the least amount of garden space.
3. A 100 sq ft garden bed (10' x 10') should produce 60+ lbs of white potatoes.
4. Potatoes are more forgiving to grow than grain and corn.
5. Taters are easier to prepare for consumption than grain and dent-corn
6. Easier to store than grain, but more perishable
7. Practice *Permaculture* or *Back to Eden gardening* techniques, and you can leave some of your potatoes in the ground for the next year.
8. The white potato provides All of the essential Amino Acids.
9. They provide lots of Carbohydrates.
10. Vitamin C
11. Potassium (more than sweet potatoes)
12. Iron
13. Vitamins: B1, B3, and B6.
14. Provide Minerals: potassium, phosphorous, magnesium and zinc
15. Potatoes provide 347 Calories Per pound.

### Can I Survive Long-term On Just White Potatoes?

For long-term survival, you need to supplement your potato diet with additional nutrients. In the following list, I've outlined what potatoes lack and what you can grow to provide nutritional shortages.

## Plants That Provide Nutrition Potatoes Don't

### White Potatoes Don't Provide Enough of These Nutrients      What You Can Plant To Supplement

#### **Protein**

It would take 25 potatoes per day to hit your protein requirement

meat, almonds, hazelnuts, eggs, lentils, pumpkin seeds, oats, milk, beans, broccoli, quinoa, whey protein, supplements, Brussel sprouts, and peanuts

#### **Fatty Acids/Omega-3s**

necessary for a healthy brain and heart function

salmon, cod liver oil, herring, oysters, sardines, anchovies, chia seeds, flaxseeds, walnuts, edamame, kidney beans, soybeans, or omega 3 supplements

#### **Vitamin A**

for healthy vision, skin and bones

winter squash, kale, collards, turnip greens, carrots, sweet red peppers, spinach or romaine lettuce

#### **Vitamin E**

is an antioxidant, and an immune system booster that helps fight against bacteria

blackberries, black currants, red sweet pepper, butternut squash, broccoli, mustard greens, salmon, rainbow trout, snails, and sunflower seeds

#### **Vitamin K**

for bone and blood metabolism

kale, spinach, mustard greens, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, romaine lettuce, sprouted mung beans, green beans, green peas, blackberries, blueberries, grapes, and red currants

#### **Calcium**

for healthy bones

poppy seeds, chia seeds, cheese, yogurt, milk, canned sardines, canned salmon, white beans, lentils, almonds, rhubarb, amaranth, edamame

**Vitamin D**  
for strong immune  
system, calcium  
absorption and  
neurological function

eggs, mushrooms, cheese, tuna, salmon, and  
exposure to sunlight

## Sweet Potatoes In Your Emergency Garden

**Sweet Potatoes are considered a superfood. They make for healthy eating and make a fantastic addition to white potatoes as they provide so much vitamin A.** Sweet potatoes also contain iron, calcium, selenium, *B vitamins*, and vitamin C.

### Interesting facts about Sweet Potatoes

- Sweet potatoes will grow as far north as growing zone 3 (Canada)
- Provide more carbohydrates, per acre, than wheat.
- Comparable to white potatoes in regards to calories, protein, and carbohydrate content
- High in Vitamin A
- Will act as a perennial in warmer climates (come up year after year)
- Contain 389 Calories per pound

## 8 Grains In The Emergency Food Garden



***If you have the planting space and resources, you should plant grains or grain-like plants because they offer high calories per acre, on average, and some are excellent for long-term storage.***

## **Barley**

**Plant in early spring as soon as you can work the ground**

- Barley is a good source of carbohydrates, protein potassium, iron, vitamin B6, and magnesium
- Used for fermentation, the preferred grain for beer brewing
- Cook barley with soups, stews or grind to flour for baked bread, or cakes
- Cook and eat by itself, or mix in greens from your garden
- 1605 Calories per pound

## **Rye**

Rye is one of the easiest grain crops to grow, used for flour, brewing, whiskey distillation, and as animal fodder.

**Interesting facts about Rye:**

- Tolerates temps as low as -30° F
- Used to make Pumpernickel Bread
- Grown as a staple crop in Poland, Germany, and Russia
- A good cover crop that sprouts and grows quickly
- Suppresses weeds
- 1520 calories in a pound of Rye

## **Buckwheat**

**Buckwheat is not a grain but it's grain-like. A plant that produces edible seeds that provide an excellent source of protein.**

If you are a little intimidated by growing grains, then buckwheat might be your solution. ***It grows in poor soil where nothing else grows, it suppresses weeds, and it's easy to harvest.***

- Excellent source of protein (more than rice and corn)
- Gluten-Free
- Good cover crop
- Provides erosion control, and green-manure for fertilizing the garden
- Excellent for honeybees
- 1556 Calories per pound of buckwheat

- Grind flour for unleavened bread. (you need gluten for leavening)

### **How Do You Harvest Buckwheat?**

Cut the stems when  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the seeds turn brown, lay the stalks on a clean white bed-sheet, and beat them with a broom.

### **Oats**

Oats are a solid addition to your survival food stash.

Scotch Highlanders, known for their size, strength, and fierceness in battle, survived on a healthy diet of *oats* and raw milk products. They ate other foods, but oats and dairy were the foundation of their diet.

**Nutritional value of Oats:** carbohydrates, protein, fiber, manganese, phosphorus, copper, vitamin B1, Iron, Selenium, Magnesium, and Zinc

#### **Interesting facts about oats:**

- Grow Hulless oats for an easy harvest.
- ***Oats like water more than the average grain.***
- Broadcast in a well-cultivated bed in direct sunlight.
- 1765 Calories per pound of oats.

### **Wheat**

- **Wheat takes up a lot of space for a small harvest.**
- An 1100 sq ft garden-bed will produce approximately 60lbs of wheat.
- **If you plant Irish potatoes in the same foot-space, you could harvest 660 to 1000 lbs of taters.**
- **If you have a lot of growing space, wheat is an excellent survival crop to plant.**
- Wheat is easier to harvest than potatoes.
- It provides more calories per pound and, if properly stored, lasts longer.

***If you don't have a lot of gardening space: Consider the purchase of professionally packaged wheat that is hermetically sealed for storage. It has a shelf-life of up to 30 years.***

***Suggested wheat storage: 150 lbs, of wheat, per person, per year (This amount is up for debate. If you have other staples, this number will be lower.)***

### **Two Kinds Of Wheat To Choose From**

**Winter wheat** has a more abundant harvest than spring wheat; it is planted in the Fall and harvested the following summer.

**Spring wheat** (*Durum wheat*) is sown in the spring and harvested in the fall. Most of the wheat grown in North America is Spring wheat.

### **Interesting facts about wheat**

- There are thousands of varieties of wheat
- Red wheat has an earthy flavor
- 1520 calories per pound of wheat

### **Proso Millet**

If you're an amateur bird watcher, you may know millet as birdseed, but millet is a staple food in many parts of the world, including Northern China. Millet can be ground into flour for bread and cakes, or eaten as porridge.

### **Interesting facts about millet:**

- Ready to eat 30 days after planting
- Millet survives in arid environments with poor soil.
- It is often planted in an emergency when other crops fail.
- ***Millet contains more amino acids than wheat, oats, rice, barley, and rye.***
- Plant in polyculture with maize, sorghum, or legumes.

### **Teff**

Teff is a grain that was domesticated around 6000 years ago and remains a food staple in Ethiopia.

If you live in a warm climate with poor soil, Teff may be an option.

Grind into flour, and bake, use like corn-meal to make a porridge or add to soups and stews.

### **Interesting Facts About Teff:**

- A good source of iron, calcium, magnesium, manganese, and phosphorus
- Teff grows in all soil types: sandy, loamy, and clay
- Teff will not tolerate frost
- Grow it in pots or the garden bed.
- 1666 Calories per pound of Teff
- Pesticide resistant



## Quinoa

It is considered a superfood, a healthier replacement for white rice. It's not a grain, though you use it like one; it's a relative of spinach.

A staple crop in parts of South America, it is regularly eaten in soups or stews, but it can be ground into flour.

### *Interesting facts about Quinoa:*

- Quinoa can handle frost, drought, and high winds
- Requires little fertilization
- Little to no irrigation
- Rinse your quinoa until water runs clear to remove bitter saponins
- **Quinoa contains all nine of the essential amino acids**

## Amaranth

You can eat the seeds and the leaves of Amaranth, a drought-tolerant crop favored by the Aztecs.

I grew Amaranth for the first time last year, but I didn't get to harvest because the birds ate it.

Amaranth is considered a pseudo-grain. It has similar nutritional characteristics to grain, it's used as a grain, but it isn't a grain.

- Amaranth contains: Protein, Carbohydrates, Antioxidants, Manganese, Magnesium, Phosphorus, Iron, Selenium and Copper
- Pop it like popcorn
- Boil it
- Gluten-free
- Substitute Amaranth for rice, pasta or couscous
- Boil it and eat it like oatmeal
- Sprout it and eat it fresh

## Lentils

We eat a lot of lentils because they are easy to make and they taste fantastic.

Stew lentils as a base and throw in whatever root vegetables and herbs you have available: onions, carrots, or diced potatoes. Meat, even better!

Lentils were made for Tabasco and sea salt. Talk about comfort food.

### Facts about lentils:

- Lentils are a pulse, a grain-legume, rich in Iron, Folate, and an excellent source of protein.
- Cook much faster than dry beans
- Full of Polyphenols: antioxidants, calcium, and magnesium
- 516 calories per pound

## Sunchokes/Jerusalem Artichokes



The Jerusalem Artichoke, sunroot, or earth apple, (*Helianthus tuberosus*,) was eaten by Native American tribes in late winter when food supplies were lean.

**Sunchokes are an incredibly productive perennial food source.**

Be careful where you plant chokes. Once they take off, it's tough to get rid of them. I made the mistake of planting sunchoke around baby fruit trees, and they took over.

### Interesting Facts About Jerusalem Artichokes

- High in potassium, carbohydrates, probiotics, and iron
- Provide amino acids and protein.
- Tubers grow underground like a potato
- Cook like a potato: boiled, fried, baked
- Used to make Sunchoke Brandy
- Harvest chokes when you are ready to eat them; they don't store or cure well

- The perfect plant for guerilla gardening.
- Hardy and productive to the point of being invasive; experiment with a dedicated sunchoke garden bed.
- Mow or scythe around the perimeter to keep them under control, or plant them in a large pot.
- Don't plant with potatoes or tomatoes they may inhibit the growth
- Plant outside three sister mounds to draw pollinators
- Companion plant with heat-sensitive plants like cucumber, lettuce, spinach, broccoli, or cabbage
- 330 Calories in a pound of Sunchokes

## Perennial Onions/Walking Onions/ Egyptian Onions/Garlic Chives

*Plant them and forget about them.*

These perennial plants will self-propagate year after year. I have more chives and onions than I can use, and the crop grows more every year. They are too easy to ignore.

- These aren't a staple crop, but they do a fantastic job of spicing up your staples, and you get the side benefit of nutrition.

## Asparagus



Asparagus takes three years to get going from seed, but once it's up and running, an asparagus plant will remain productive for 20 plus years.

Not a staple crop but too easy to ignore.

## 20 Herbs For The Emergency Garden



Plant herbs for medicinal use, flavoring, dried spices, and pollinators. Most herbs are easy to grow.

### List Of 21 Herbs

Herb	May be beneficial for:	Growing conditions
<b>Basil</b>	head colds, loss of appetite, gas	Plant 2 weeks after last frost, warm weather annual
<b>Echinacea: (cone flower)</b>	Anxiety, blood pressure, inflammation, flu symptoms	Full to part sun, clumping perennial, 2 to three years for flowers, if planted from seed
<b>Calendula:</b>	antifungal, antiinflammatory and antibacterial	Sow spring to early summer, full sun, short-lived perennial
<b>Chamomile:</b>	anxiety, stress, insomnia	Self sowing annual, part shade

<b>Dandelion</b>	acne, eczema, heartburn, gastrointestinal disorders	Prefers full sun, perennial
<b>Garlic</b>	Antibiotic, lowers cholesterol,	Perennial, plant in full sun
<b>Ginger</b>	Nausea relief, pain relief, cold and flu symptoms, reduce inflammation	perennial, Grows in part to full shade,
<b>Lavender</b>	antiseptic, anti-inflammatory	Full-sun Perennial, like, will come back year after year, may die if cut to ground.
<b>Marshmallow</b>	pain, inflammation, constipation, ulcers, urinary tract	Perennial, direct sunlight, moist soil
<b>Oregano</b>	Antibiotic, antioxidant, gut health, pain relief	Grows as an annual in cold climates. Full to partial sun
<b>Yarrow</b>	Wound treatment, lower blood pressure, improve circulation	Perennial, Hot dry conditions in full sun,
<b>Lemon Balm</b>	Stress relief, anxiety, indigestion, nausea	Perennial, Full sun to part shade, will grow in most soils
<b>Meadowsweet</b>	Colds, bronchitis, heartburn,	<b>Perennial, full sun</b>
<b>Motherwort</b>	Anxiety, gas,	Perennial, sun to part shade, moist soil
<b>Peppermint</b>	Digestion, tension, headaches, sinuses, energy, bacterial infections	Perennial, light full sun to part shade
<b>Passion Flower</b>	Insomnia, anxiety, pain, inflammation, burns	Full sun to part shade, perennial if it makes it through winter, may come back from roots
<b>Stinging Nettles</b>	Inflammation, hay fever, blood sugar control,	Moist, full sun to partial shade, perennial

<b>St. John's Wort</b>	Depression, appetite, nervousness	Perennial, full sun to part shade,
<b>Thyme</b>	Stomach ache, arthritis, sore throat	Perennial, full sun,
<b>Valerian</b>	Sleep and anxiety, antioxidant	Perennial, light shade to full sun

## Salsify (vegetable oyster)

A tuber, popular during the Victorian era.

Like sunchoke, salsify is part of the sunflower family.

I haven't tried it, but it's said to be parsnip-like with a taste of oysters. The taste of oysters is why I haven't planted it. This may be appealing to some.

### Interesting facts about Salsify

- Salsify provides protein, carbohydrates, vitamin C, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B6, folate, pantothenic acid, phosphorous, potassium, and manganese
- Grows well in cold climates
- Eat it boiled, mashed or baked
- Said to be ideal roasted, or in vegetable soups and stews

## Cowpeas (black-eyed peas)

A bean and not a pea, cook them just like a bean in soups and stews, leaves are edible and can be used like other edible greens.

Remove the outer shell and grind into flour for fried cakes, use in soups and stews or cook and eat with herbs from the garden.

- Protein-packed
- Drought and heat-tolerant.
- Acts as a nitrogen-fixer (pulls nitrogen from the air and pumps it into the soil).
- Thrive in poor soil
- Self-sowing seeds
- Can handle grazing pressure from livestock

## Berry Bushes

Do your research when selecting varieties of fruit bushes or trees. Avoid planting varieties that are highly susceptible to blites or pests in your area. This is very important with fruit trees.

Eat berries fresh, freeze-dried, or make jams, jellies, pies, ciders, or seltzers.

## Blueberries

**Blueberries love acidic soil.** For years my blueberries looked ragged and barely hung on. I started throwing old coffee grounds down, and they started to perk up. If you don't have acidic soil, you'll either have to acidify the soil with coffee, vinegar, or sulfur or pick a different type of berry.

Provide antioxidants, phytoflavinoids, potassium, and vitamin C

- 3 years, from time of planting to the first harvest
- Remove flowers the first two years to stimulate root growth
- **Blueberry bushes will provide fruit for 40 to 50 years.**
- Prefer climates with winter chill (Not a requirement for some cultivars)
- **Prefer acidic soil**

## Red Raspberries

High in vitamin C and delicious.

Pick the right variety of raspberry bush, and you'll have to stay on your toes. I have a couple of raspberry bushes that send up so many shoots I have a hard time keeping them under control.

- Raspberries will produce fruit the year after planting
- Keep raspberry thickets pruned and they will last 5 to 10 years
- Look for everbearing varieties that will produce fall and spring

## Blackberries

Provide vitamin K, manganese, and a healthy dose of vitamin C

- Take, on average, two years to produce fruit
- Blackberries can live 15 years
- Usually like temperate climates, (*there are warm-weather versions*)

## Bush Cherries

- Cherry bushes (not trees) that can produce 25lbs of fruit per year.
- They make a great hedge or border planting because passers-by are unlikely to eat your fruit.

- Most people don't know bush cherries exist. This makes it an excellent choice for an emergency garden.
- Note: The birds know they exist, so you may have to net them.
- Plant in full sun
- Two cultivars required for most varieties (another variety of bush cherry)
- One cherry bush can provide 25 lbs of fruit per year
- Types of bush cherry to research: Nanking, Juliet, Valentine, Cupid, Romeo, Crimson Passion, and Montmorency
- All bush cherries come from sour cherry parentage, but the sourest of them all is Montmorency.
- The higher the sugar content, the sweeter the berry

## Mulberry Tree

Mulberries provide iron, riboflavin, vitamin C, vitamin K, potassium, phosphorus, and calcium. Mulberry trees have received a bad reputation because they pump out pollen that irritates allergies, and they can be messy if planted in the wrong location.

- At maturity, a Mulberry tree will produce a whopping 600 pounds of fruit per year
- 5 to 10 years before they bear fruit
- Leaves are the only food source for silkworms

## Strawberries

- Strawberries reproduce via ground runners and seeds.
- The mother plant will last 4 to 5 years, but her offshoots and seedlings will continue to expand indefinitely.
- This is a food that's good for the survival garden, plant it in the right location, and you don't have to do much to maintain it.
- Rabbits and birds love strawberries
- Strawberries provide Calcium, Iron, Magnesium, Phosphorous, Potassium, Vitamin C, Folate, and Vitamin A.
- They have shallow roots so keep them moist
- Grow in full sun
- Replant strawberry runners in spring to increase your strawberry patch.

### Types of Strawberry

- **June bearing Strawberries** produce one large crop during a small window of time.
- **Everbearing Strawberries** produce a crop in spring, and late summer, with intermittent production in between.
- **Day-neutral Strawberries** produce continuously between 40° and 90° F



- **Alpine strawberries**; tough little buggers that tolerate poor soil and produce all summer.

## Gooseberries

An easy to grow berry popular in parts of Europe. Gooseberries can be eaten fresh, in pies, jellies, jams, or fermented.

**Gooseberries Provide:** vitamin C, Vitamin B5 & B6, Copper, Manganese and Potassium.

- Gooseberries will produce fruit for 15 to 30 years (*depending on the variety*)
- **One of the few fruiting bushes that like partial shade**
- Shrubs have thorns and require pruning for maximum harvest.
- Self-fertile (*plant two varieties and you'll get bigger fruit and more harvest*)

## Fruit Trees For The Emergency Orchard



### What Is One Of The Best Ways To Preserve Tree Fruit?

Fermenting fruit juice for long-term storage is one of the best methods of preservation. Under prime conditions, a fresh apple will last 1 to 2 months. A carboy of hard- apple-cider has a shelf life of 24 months.

### Fruit Trees: A Good Option For An Emergency Garden?

Fruit trees are a time investment and take up a lot of garden space. There are, however, dwarf varieties, and pruning techniques that allow for growing in smaller spaces.

***Just to be upfront, fruit trees are a lot of maintenance. If you want to do it organically (without man-made pesticides), it can be difficult.***

That said, I say plant them if you can.

## **Fruit Trees For The Emergency Orchard**

- **Apple**
- **Apricot**
- **Nectarine**
- **Peach**
- **Plum**
- **Pear**
- **Figs**
- **Citrus** (for warm weather climates)
- **Limited space-** consider self-pollinating varieties of peach, nectarine, sour cherry, or apricot.

## **Nut Trees For The Emergency Garden**



Hazelnut

**How Long Will Nut Trees Take To Produce?**

Depending on the type of nut you choose, the start of nut production will take from 2 to 20 years from the day of planting.

### **Nut Trees: Years to Harvest**

<b>Nut Tree Type</b>	<b>Years To Harvest</b>
<b>Almonds</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Walnuts</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Pistachios</b>	<b>4 to 5</b>
<b>Hazelnuts</b>	<b>2 to 5</b>
<b>Chestnuts</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Pecan</b>	<b>6 to 10 +</b>
<b>Butternut</b>	<b>20</b>

## **What Is The Best Nut To Grow For An Emergency Garden?**

**If I could only plant one nut tree in my survival garden, it would be hazelnut.**

Hazelnuts, also called filbert nuts, are compact trees that make them easy to harvest. Also, they start producing earlier than other nut varieties, and they are easy to propagate with air-layering.

### **Interesting Facts About Hazelnut:**

**Hazelnuts provide:** Protein, Healthy Fats, Potassium, Calcium, Vitamin C, Vitamin B-6, and Magnesium

- They are compact for a nut tree. 10' to 20' foot tall with a 15' foot spread
- Require a pollinizer (another compatible hazelnut)
- Oil can be used for food preparation
- Produce up to 80 years
- Flour is popular in Germany for making baked goods
- Scottish Archeological evidence suggests hazelnut consumption 9000 years ago

## **35 Tips For Starting Your Emergency Food Garden**

1. **Garden Zone**, find out what it is [USDA Hardiness Zone](#).
2. **What Grows Best** In Your Zone- start by going to your state's agricultural extension. Here is the link to the USDA site [Cooperative Extensions](#)
3. **Test Your Soil**: admittedly, I haven't tested my soil. I learned the hard way by planting to see what would thrive. You will save yourself some time if you know the ph (acid to alkaline) and your soil composition; clay or loamy. The more clay-like your soil, the wetter plant roots will be, some plants don't mind it, and some die.
4. **Microclimates**: Observe different areas of your yard to see how wind, water, and sun affect them.
5. **Start small**- It's more manageable and fun to start small. You have a better chance of success. A small garden is a testing ground, much better to learn from your mistakes with a 100 sqft garden than a 1000 sqft garden.
6. **In the Beginning, Focus On A Few Types of Perennials or Fruiting Trees** to keep from getting overwhelmed.
7. **Stay Close To The House**-You will be more likely to have success if you don't have to walk two acres to get to your garden.
8. **Perennials**-focus on getting perennials and self-seeding varieties started. Perennials provide food year after year. Self-seeding types are also suitable because they plant themselves. Annuals require that you plant them year after year.
9. **Learn The Methods of Plant Propagation**-cutting, air layering, division, budding, and grafting. This will allow you to start your plant nursery of trees, bushes, and perennials to plant out and expand your garden. I've propagated willow, apple, pear, hazelnut, comfrey, and so much more.
10. **Water And Irrigation**-think about this before you plant
11. **Plant Open-Pollinated Seeds**- heirloom seeds will produce crops roughly identical to their parents regardless of which plant pollinates. This is called "true to type." These are the kind of seeds you want to harvest and save.
12. **Store and Preserve**- Learn about canning, freeze-drying, dehydrating, brewing, and pickling, so you have a way to store your bounty.
13. **Calories and Nutritional Value**- You don't have to do this out of the gate, but once you get a substantial garden going it's worth thinking about
14. **Pests and Disease**- Choose plants that will thrive, not just survive; this will take some trial and error. If a plant isn't hardy, I replace it with something that is. Down the road, this leads to a garden (other than annuals) that is on auto-pilot.
15. **Plant Requirements** Consider the space where you want to plant. Is it partial-shade or full sun. Try to match the location of your garden with the best sun exposure.
16. **Man-made Products**- consider a compost pile, compost teas, and cover crops instead of chemicals.
17. **Companion Planting**- Plant things together that help each other grow or have a symbiosis.
18. **One-Crop Failure**-don't plant just one type of crop in case one fails.

19. **Fill Nutritional Gaps** with perennials, annuals, herbs, and stored foods. **Use Cover Crops**- to provide biomass for composting, to improve your soil with organic matter, nitrogen, and for weed suppression (Buckwheat, Vetch, Clover, Willow, Black-locust.)
20. **Use Cover Mulches**-a standard mulch is wood chips, but you can plant a green mulch like comfrey. I propagate a comfrey plant for every tree I plant. The bees love it, and it makes a great mulch.
21. **Use Rainwater**- Don't depend on municipal water. Keep water in place and cut down on evaporation by using cover mulches, and swales (permaculture techniques).
22. **Protection from Critters**- Make a simple fence with chicken wire to keep deer and rabbits at bay.
23. **Windbreaks**- the wind is tough on young plants, and it dries soil out quickly. If you have severe winds, you may want to plant nitrogen-fixing trees like black locust or berry bushes to protect your tender annual garden.
24. **Garden tools**: Start with well-made handtools. A basic shovel, rake, and a small set of miniature planting tools are a good start. As time passes, you will likely purchase tools that fit your taste and gardening style. I use a shovel and a hori-hori more than any other garden tools.
25. **Garden Bed Preparation**: You have the option of tilling the soil or no-till. Mulch is the key to no-till gardening. If you're making your first raised bed and you want to get started, you may wish to amend your soil with some soil from a big box store.
26. **Experiment with staple crops** to see which fit your climate, microclimate, and resources.
27. **Plan for food preparation requirements** (fuel and water.)
28. **Plant for multiple uses**: an edible herb like mint is good for pollinators, for tea, as a spice, and medicinally as a digestive aid.
29. **Heirloom varieties** tend to be more pest resistant, and they produce more.
30. **Use Succession Planting** use of space and timing.
31. **How long will the staple last in storage?** Can you store it? Sell it or Barter.
32. **Are you maximizing your growing space?** Include vertical growing techniques, crop rotation, and polycultures (complimentary planting like the three sisters). You may have a very small foot-space, so maximize it.
33. **Is the plant pest-free?** Ok, most plants have some pests, but you don't want to plant anything that tends to get decimated in your area. I have apple trees that get destroyed by Cedar Apple Rust. I didn't do my research and wasted years.
34. **Is the plant drought-resistant?** Maybe you live in the Sonoran desert, and you depend on captured rainwater to supply your garden. Choose your crops to fit your water supply.
35. **Does this crop fit my growing environment and zone?** If, for whatever reason, you aren't satisfied with a plant or tree, yank it, compost it, and try something else.

## Terms To Research For Starting An Emergency Garden

**Forest Gardening-** A sustainable gardening system that incorporates fruits, nuts, and vegetables to mimic the forest edge. This is the primary method I used to plan my survival garden.

**Silvopasture-** is the integration of trees, forage, and grazing animals in a mutually beneficial way. If you are interested in raising livestock, check this out.

**Permaculture-** "Permaculture integrates plants and animals with natural landscape and buildings to produce a life-supporting system." *Bill Mollison* (the father of permaculture)

## Reference Books In My Library

- ***The Holistic Orchard, Tree Fruits and Berries the Biological Way*** by Michael Phillips
- **GAIA'S GARDEN, A Guide to Home-Scale Permaculture** by Toby Hemenway
- ***Sepp Holzer's Permaculture*** by Sepp Holzer
- ***The Resilient Farm and Homestead*** by Ben Falk
- ***Common Sense Forestry*** by Hans Morsbach
- **The Market Gardener** by Jean-Martin Fortier
- ***Silvopasture: A Guide to Managing Grazing Animals, Forage Crops, and Trees in a Temperate Farm Ecosystem*** by Steve Gabriel