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Vegetables That Give Year After Year

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Want to enjoy home-grown food year after year without having to start your garden from scratch each spring? Then it's time to discover the perennial food garden.

Growing perennial plants in your garden could mean less work in the long term. The key is that you won't have to reseed or replant each year to enjoy a harvest of food. Just plant these vegetables in your garden once, and your plantings should last for several years. Plan accordingly and your garden will reward you.

What is a perennial? A perennial is a plant that comes back year after year. This differentiates it from annuals, which must be planted each year and biennials, which only live for two years. While the plants listed below are perennials, they may not grow perennially in all locations. Check for compatibility with your region before you buy anything.

- Asparagus is a great choice for almost any area with a more permanent option for a production area, as it is productive for 15-20 years.
- Grow beautiful artichokes either as annuals or tender perennials.
- Consider some types of onions such as the fall-planted bunching and Egyptian onions, which produce new onions even when some are harvested, try ramps or wild leeks
- Strawberries are a delicious and easy crop to grow in the home garden. Once established, strawberry plants can give the home gardener an abundance of fruit for several years
- Tasty rhubarb for pies and tarts makes an attractive addition to your landscape as well
- Round out your perennial vegetable garden with spicy horseradish and unique Jerusalem Artichoke

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Perennials are not maintenance free. To thrive, perennials require occasional fertilizing, good soil preparation and soil nutrition. Asparagus needs nitrogen yearly and other plants' requirements depend on their unique growing conditions. Check your soil first to learn how to nourish your plants. Routinely monitor for any pests which will be easier to manage when detected early.

You won't get the same instant gratification that you may be used to with annual foods. Some perennials don't produce food for the first three to five years. Some perennials can spread to the point of becoming invasive. Blackberries, mint, chives and horseradish are just a few examples of plants that you'll need to keep an eye on. You may want to plant these known spreaders in containers, so you can keep their growth in check.

Incorporating more perennial foods into your garden is a smart way to save time and money. You won't have to prepare the planting area or spend money on seeds or seedlings at the start of each growing season, and once your plants are established, they may be less susceptible to drought or other unfavorable growing conditions.

Talk with your local Master Gardeners or county extension office before you plant your perennial food garden, you'll find out what works best in your climate, what precautions you need to take, and what sorts of pests and problems you can expect over the course of the growing season.

On February 23rd we will be hosting a Sustainable Organic Gardening Workshop, at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park, 95682. Sustainable Organic Gardening will help you develop a backyard food source that's cost-effective, improves your family's nutrition and food security, and offers a healthy hobby for the whole family. Whether you have a patio container garden or a quarter acre to farm, you can grow an abundance of healthy, delicious food through sustainable organic gardening practices. There is a fee for this one-day workshop, lunch included, \$25.00. To learn more and to pre-register, please visit our website <http://ucanr.edu/sustainable-organic-gardening> or call (530)-621-5528.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center. The garden is open on the second Saturday of each month, 9:00 to 11 a.m., November 2018 through April 2019.

For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.

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References:

<http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/Vegetables/>

<https://www.groworganic.com/organic-gardening/videos/fall-perennial-vegetable-care>