

Sarah Denkler  
Horticulture Specialist  
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## Gardening on a Budget

I have many requests that come in on how to plant or what to grow and when to plant it. When discussing ornamentals or growing fruits and vegetables there are always at least two ways it can be done. Create the perfect area by spending money to get what you need or thinking outside of the box to create the perfect area without breaking the budget. Below are some ideas that might help you get started without breaking the bank.

Work with a group such as a church, club or neighborhood friends to purchase supplies. Seeds can be ordered in bulk reducing the cost by up to 90%. Supplies such as mulch or tomato stakes may be purchased at a 50% savings.

Recycle household materials. Instead of using a brand new trellis as a wall for pole beans use an old wooden step ladder. Instead of using newly purchased landscape timbers use a fallen tree trunk as an edge for a raised bed. Use strawberry containers (clam shells) as miniature greenhouses to start seeds indoors. Soda bottles may also be used this way.

Seeds are relatively cheap so plant seeds instead of transplants. One transplant may sell for \$2.50 while the seed may sell for \$.50 an ounce. If you want to increase savings on vegetables, keep seeds from year to year. In order to save seeds grow vegetables that are not F1 hybrids. Hybrids will not breed true to the original plant. Pollination can be an issue. Any variety of the same vegetable grown within ¼ mile may cross pollinate. If you grow green peppers they may cross pollinate with peppers from your neighbors garden.

Add hay, rice hulls or newspaper around vegetable plants to prevent weeds. Fine wood mulch should be used in flower beds for the same purpose. These will all decompose and add organic matter to the soil next season. Sawdust, cardboard or leaves can be used in walkways to prevent weeds and will also add organic matter as they break down. Use what you have access to for little or no cost.

Do not waste kitchen scraps or newspaper or leaves. Create a compost pile and put these waste products to use after they decompose. Compost is a great way to improve soil structure and water holding capacity. With proper management the compost will not smell. A container does not have to be constructed but it can simply be a pile. If walls are desired make them out of old pallets instead of buying expensive blocks or lumber.

Consider what plants to place in your garden. For example, if you don't like something don't plant it. If you get something from a friend for free, plant it.

Before a woody plant can outwit the climate extremes of Mother Nature it must have an established root system. This means the root has grown out of the ball or area it was growing in when you purchased it. These plants can be planted in early spring or fall however in fall it will not likely have to overcome the dry weather of summer for at least 8 months. Plant trees and shrubs in fall to have a better chance that they will survive and your money will not go to waste.

What other ideas do you use to save money in your yard? Share these with friends and learn from them as well.

**The Extension office is open Monday - Friday, located in Kennett, Missouri at 233 North Main Street. For horticulture questions contact the horticulture specialist at 573-686-8064. MU is an equal opportunity/ADA institution.**