



Start a food garden in one weekend.

Saturday for sun, soil and pots. Sunday for planting. After that, a watering habit.

1 Find six hours of sun



- Most vegetables need 6 to 8 hours of direct sun
- Tomatoes, peppers and squash in pots want 8 plus
- Lettuce, beets and spinach take some shade

2 Pick ground, bed or pots



- Heavy or poor soil: build a raised bed instead
- Bed at least 12 inches deep, 4 feet wide at most
- No yard: deep pots on a patio or balcony

3 Size pots by the roots



- Smallest outdoor pot: about 8 to 12 inches deep
- Deeper beats wider for roots in summer heat
- Light-colored pots run cooler than dark ones

4 Potting mix, not garden soil



- Pots get bagged potting mix, never yard soil
- Every pot needs drainage holes
- No gravel in the bottom; it slows drainage

5 Compost the ground



- Loosen the soil about 6 to 10 inches deep
- Mix 2 to 4 inches of compost into the top foot
- Wait if the soil is soggy; dig it just moist

6 Plant what the month wants



- Fall and winter: lettuce, peas, carrots, broccoli
- Spring and summer: tomatoes, beans, squash
- Check the month on the SoCal planting calendar

7 Buy small transplants



- Tomatoes, peppers and eggplant go in as plants
- Pick 6-packs or 4-inch pots over gallon sizes
- Seed takes 4 to 6 weeks longer to mature

8 Sow the easy seeds



- Beans, lettuce, radishes, peas and squash
- Radishes and cilantro are the quick ones
- Sow a little more every 2 to 4 weeks

9 Plant them right



- Dig 2 inches wider and deeper than the rootball
- Bury tomatoes up to their top few leaves
- Shade from late-day sun for about a week

10 Water by touch



- Finger in the top inch: dry means water
- Pots can need water daily in summer and wind
- Water before mid-morning, deep not often

11 Mulch and feed lightly



- Straw or compost mulch cuts evaporation
- Pots: weak liquid feed starting week 2 to 4
- A little fertilizer is good; more is not better

12 Your first harvest



- Pick outer lettuce leaves; the center regrows
- Harvest early in the day, while it is cool
- Keep picking so plants keep producing

Find the sun, fill the pots, plant what the month wants. The rest is water and picking.

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