Grow a bigger garden in a smaller space

By Melinda Myers

Whether in the ground or on a balcony or deck, there’s always room to grow your own garden-fresh produce and beautiful flowers. Space-saving gardening techniques and products can help you increase productivity in any available space.

Consider elevated gardens and planter carts that not only save space, but make gardens more accessible. Movable carts like the Demeter Mobile Planter Cart allow you to grow flowers and produce in narrow spaces, store garden accessories and move the garden into the sunlight or out of the way of guests as needed.

Save more space by going vertical. Look for containers and raised garden beds with built-in trellises and plant supports. Just plant your pole beans, peas, cucumbers or tomatoes and attach them to the supports as they grow. Support the large fruit of squash and melons with cloth or macramé slings. Just cradle the fruit in the sling and secure it to the trellis. You’ll not only save space, but reduce disease problems and make harvesting a breeze.



Planter boxes with built-in trellises like this Apex trellis planter enable gardeners to maximize their garden space. Photo/Gardener's Supply Company

Double your planting space by growing shade tolerant greens under cucumbers, growing on a cucumber or A-frame trellis. Set the trellis in place and plant the greens in early spring as soon as the soil is workable. Plant your cucumbers next to the trellis as soon as the soil warms. As your cucumbers grow they shade the greens below keeping them a bit cooler and extending the harvest season. Just make sure you can reach the greens beneath the supports for planting, weeding and harvesting.

Extend the growing season with a year round kitchen garden. Grow greens and herbs under lights attached to a raised bed on wheels. When the outdoor planting season arrives, remove the lights and roll your garden onto the patio or deck. Continue planting and harvesting outdoors until it is time to roll it back inside to start your indoor garden.

Or top your raised bed and containers with frost protective coverings. Many have built-in frames to support greenhouse covers, allowing you to plant earlier and harvest later in the season. And once the weather warms switch out the cover for an insect-protective fabric or mesh. These fabric coverings prevent insects like cabbage worms from damaging cabbage, broccoli and Brussels sprouts and keep root maggots off radishes.

Select planters that complement your landscape design and gardening style. Wood, metal and colorful raised beds and containers add beauty, durability and growing space. Galvanized planters, cedar raised beds, and those in eye-catching colors found at Gardener's Supply make your raised bed a beautiful focal point in the garden. Or fill your planters with tall grasses, cannas, elephant ears and other plants to create an attractive screen.

Look for multi-purpose furnishings and accessories to maximize your space and enjoyment. Fire pits that become a table or bench can double as a cooler, making relaxing and entertaining in small gardens a real possibility. Or how about planters with built-in hidden storage like the green box elevated planter Box. You'll enjoy the convenience of having your garden tools handy, yet out of sight.

Use these space saving ideas to help increase the beauty, productivity and enjoyment your garden can provide. With the right combination of growing techniques and garden accessories you, your family and guests will create beautiful memories throughout the gardening season.

Melinda Myers is the author of more than 20 gardening books, including "Small Space Gardening." She hosts the nationally syndicated "Melinda's Garden Moment" TV and radio program.