

## Food Plant Solutions

### Starting a garden

- *Plan:*
  - Identify a suitable location for the garden. Factors to consider include:
    - a site that receives 6-8 hours a day of sunlight and is not shaded by buildings or trees.
    - easy access – a garden that is difficult to get to will not be maintained.
    - protection from predators like native animals. If this is an issue, consider what can be used as a barrier and install it before planting.
    - adequate and easily accessed water, whether it be a garden hose or a watering can.
- *Size:*
  - Gardens can be all different sizes. Plan the size of your garden – what space is available and how much time do you have? Start small and increase the size as you become more confident.
  - If space is limited, remember plants can be successfully grown in containers or pots.
- *Tools and equipment:*
  - What do you need to turn over the soil, to plant seeds and seedlings (e.g. shovel, hand trowel, hoe) and how will soil be moved to cover seeds (e.g. rake). Can you borrow tools to reduce your start-up costs?
- *Build:*
  - Clear the area, removing any existing plants and large weeds (turn the soil – dig, lift and turn it over onto itself).
  - Once the soil has been loosened, spread compost and work it into the soil. Avoid stepping on freshly turned soil, as this will compact the soil and undo your hard work. Once the digging is complete, smooth the surface with a rake and water thoroughly.
  - Allow the bed to rest for several days before planting.
  - Use a good quality potting medium if using pots and containers.
- *Plant:*
  - Seeds and seedlings can be purchased from nurseries, garden centres and most hardware stores. A packet of seeds will grow a lot of seedlings, but take longer to mature than seedlings directly transplanted.
  - Plant seeds and seedlings in accordance with their specific directions and apply sufficient water to ensure the soil around the seeds and/or seedling roots is moist.
  - Consider how tall and wide each plant will grow when planning the space between plants. Information on seed packets or seedling labels will indicate the appropriate distance between neighbouring plants.
  - Add a thick layer of mulch around seedlings to help keep the soil moist.
  - Make small signs to stick in the ground to show what you have planted.
- *Maintain:*
  - Plants need regular watering, which should occur either early in the morning, or late in the day, never in the heat of the day.
  - Weeds will compete with the plants for nutrients and water, so it is important to keep them to a minimum. Hand weeding and adding mulch around seedlings will help keep weeds under control.