

# GardenRack Growing



The Free Standing,  
Portable,

Low~Cost  
Alternative  
to



In~Ground  
Gardening



Victoria Rosendahl

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## The Free Standing, Portable, Low~Cost Alternative to In~Ground Gardening

By Victoria Rosendahl

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Come visit the GardenRack site at [www.garden-rack.com](http://www.garden-rack.com) and glimpse the future of gardening.

While you're there, feel free to sign up for our "keep in touch" list so that you'll always know what's going on at GardenRack.

There's even a box to sign up for The Frugal Gardener, a FREE monthly ezine to keep you ahead of the curve when it comes to tips, tricks and techniques for saving a ton of money in the garden -- and look good doing it!

Enjoy!

# GardenRack Growing

## The Free Standing, Portable, Low~Cost Alternative to In~Ground Gardening

Congratulations! You've stepped into a new phase of your gardening career by investing in GardenRack. Preparing the soil, planting, weeding, and harvesting have never been easier – or more comfortable.

You'll now be able to walk out onto your deck, patio, balcony, or into your yard and do some gardening – all without bending or kneeling. GardenRack, designed to protect your back and knees, is every garden lover's dream.

Once we prepare the planting tubs, we'll be ready to fill with soil and have a garden started in just an hour or so. Let's go!

## Getting Ready to Plant

The first step in every successful garden is good soil preparation. In the past, this could be a daunting chore if you've never gardened before. Soil takes years to adjust if it's too sandy (water runs right through it and doesn't stay in the roots of your plants) or too compact (like clay so that roots can't get a good head start and spread out properly to flourish).

Having perfect soil in the garden is something that all gardeners dream of but also something more difficult to achieve than you think. It takes years of soil amendments to get the kind of garden loam you'll have in an afternoon.

## Drill the Tubs

The first thing you'll want to do with your two plastic tubs is drill some drainage holes in the bottom. I suggest drilling 10 quarter-inch holes (five on one side and five on the other) in each tub. This size is just big enough to allow water to drain out.

The next step is to rinse the tubs out well before inserting them in your GardenRack – but don't worry about scrubbing them

with any kind of soap or bleach. Just rinsing them will be fine.

Set the tubs in the GardenRack. Then spread a thin layer of pea gravel or small stones in the bottom. Some pea gravel might fall out but that's fine. Gravel in the bottom will help with drainage and keep soil from sneaking out the drainage holes when you water.

This next step is the most obvious but also the most critical. You want to fill your garden tubs with soil – but not just any soil. I've tried many different mixes and find that the best mix is the kind used for potted plants.

There are many varieties out there including something called "garden soil". This soil is great if you're amending soil in the ground. It's not great if you're putting it in any kind of container and that includes your GardenRack growing tubs.

The reason garden soil doesn't work well is because it's too heavy. Now, it isn't the physical heaviness in the tub that worries me, it's the lack of drainage and compactness that you get with garden soil. As you know, if your soil is compact the roots of your plants will not grow and spread well. Your plants will be stunted and won't produce.



Find a potting mix that already has plant food and water retention crystals in it. The water retention crystals will help the soil retain



Personally, I like Miracle-Gro products. I think they are high quality and reasonably priced and have all of the elements you need for a good soil. Remember, you're not going to have to change this soil unless you want to or are moving.

For soil maintenance, each spring I refresh it by adding some new potting mix, some compost or composted cow manure, and vermiculite or perlite.

The compost renews nutrients in the soil that were taken out during the last growing season. Vermiculite or perlite helps the soil remain light and airy so that the roots of plants can spread evenly and easily for terrific production, whether it's vegetables, flowers or herbs.



## Airy Soil

**Vermiculite** – This product is found in bags, is fine like sand, and easy to apply. Just spread some on top of your soil and mix it with your trowel.

**Perlite** – Similar to vermiculite, this product is also found in bags but looks like little white pebbles. It also helps aerate the soil and you mix it into the soil the same way you do vermiculite. A warning about perlite: it's quite dusty so take care not to get any in your eyes.

You'll need about three to four large bags of potting mix to fill both tubs. When you add soil, don't fill the tub all the way to the top. Treat this just as you would any other container and leave about an inch or two at the top so that the soil doesn't spill over when you water. Also, you want enough room to mix in compost and other amendments.

## A Word About Compost

**Compost** – This product – called "black gold" by gardeners – is made out of kitchen scraps, leaf clippings and, occasionally, dried leaves. Compost is something wonderful to have because it does double duty:

- It replaces vital nutrients back into the soil, and
- Recycles kitchen scraps

You never want to use any kind of meat (like poultry, beef, or pork) or bones in your compost pile. The only kind of kitchen scraps you want to use are things like vegetable and fruit peelings or leftovers, bread, eggshells or any other scrap that isn't meat or meat-based.

For more information on creating and using a compost pile and compost tea as a natural fertilizer, please go to [www.money-saving-garden-tips.com/organic-gardening.html](http://www.money-saving-garden-tips.com/organic-gardening.html).

**Composted Cow Manure** –I use this product when my own compost pile is low. You can buy at home centers and it comes in a large bag very much like potting soil does. Because it is dehydrated and composted, it has no smell. Don't worry – you're not to be opening up a bag and thinking you're in the middle of a pasture full of cow flops.

### Attach a Trellis for Vertical Growing

A trellis can be attached to any side of the GardenRack to increase your growing versatility. Plants like tomatoes, pole beans, any flowering vine like morning glory or trumpet creeper, and just

about any other plant that grows tall rather than wide is perfect for growing up along the trellis.

The materials needed to construct a trellis and how to attach it are detailed in your second free e-book, ***How to Add a Trellis to Your GardenRack.***

One of the things you'll want to be aware of is how to keep your non-vining plants – the ones that don't have tendrils to wrap around the trellis and keep themselves upright – from falling over into your garden.



There are a couple of ways to do this and I've found one way to be superior to all others. The concern you'll have about attaching a plant to a trellis with something simple like kitchen string or twine is that you could easily damage the stem of the plant. String, if it's attached too tightly, can create an indentation in the stem and the stem can actually grow around the string.

The best analogy to this is that of a puppy growing out of

its collar but never having the collar changed. When that happens, skin grows around the collar and it becomes very difficult to get the collar off the dog.

Here's a great, inexpensive solution to support plants with string or twine. It's something that crafters and sewers have been using for years: Velcro. Gardener's Supply Company ([www.gardeners.com](http://www.gardeners.com)) has a product called Garden Velcro that comes in a 75-foot roll for about \$10. You can cut it to any length you need and it's reusable



It's brushed soft on the inside and Velcro on the outside.

I use Garden Velcro to stabilize tomatoes, cucumbers, peas, muskmelons, and just about any other plant that needs support.

If you're growing something light like pole beans, morning glory, vining nasturtium, or trumpet creeper, you probably won't need

to worry about securing it to the trellis. These plants all have the ability to attach themselves to the trellis without external support.

If you decide you want to grow something perennial like clematis, you'll want to secure that to the trellis. One plant I wouldn't recommend is wisteria simply because it's a vigorous grower and if your GardenRack is anywhere near your house, wisteria has a nasty habit of growing up under roof shingles.

## Start Planting

Okay, you have the tubs in the GardenRack, they're filled with soil and ready to go and you have a trellis on one side. Let's get planting!

The first thing you need to do is decide what to plant. Now, this assumes you've already placed your GardenRack exactly where you want it and you know how much sunlight it will get during the day.

If you have a shady balcony, deck or patio, you'll want to plant shade plants like impatiens, coleus, or torenia. Anything that requires eight to 10 hours of shade a day would be perfect in the shady spot. For more information on shade gardening, head over to [www.money-saving-garden-tips.com](http://www.money-saving-garden-tips.com).



However, if your GardenRack will get eight to 10 hours of sunlight a day, you'll be able to plant vegetables flowers and herbs with ease. Make sure you check plant identification tags to see what the grower recommends for sunlight before buying and planting. Learn all you need to know about growing sun-loving plants at [www.money-saving-garden-tips.com](http://www.money-saving-garden-tips.com).

## Square-Foot GardenRack Gardening

Since the planting tubs in your GardenRack measure 2 feet wide by 3 feet long, a garden plan like square-foot gardening works really well here. Why? It's all about economy.

Square-foot GardenRack gardening is a great way to grow a lot in a small space.

In 1981, Mel Bartholomew came out with a book and PBS series called "Square-Foot Gardening" and this form is still popular today.

If you measure your GardenRack space off in 12 inch by 12-inch increments (or one square foot), you'll end up with 6 square feet per tub -- 2 feet across and 3 feet down. For neat and even squares, use a tape measure. If you want to mark off each square, use small



pieces of scrap lumber or just score a line in the soil. Anything that tells you where one square ends and another starts will work fine.

## Growing GardenRack Vegetables

Keep in mind that you'll want to grow as much vertically as you can. As stated above, this includes growing vegetables like tomatoes, pole beans, melon, cucumber and certain types of squash.

By the way, if you want to grow zucchini in a square-foot garden, it needs up to 3 feet of space. You'll need either to devote an entire bed to it or grow a different kind of squash.

For bush beans, you can plant 9 plants to a square-foot, 16 beet plants, or one broccoli plant. You can also have one cabbage plant, 16 carrots, and 4 Swiss chard plants. Mel Bartholomew advises that you can grow this much produce in one four-foot square area over the span of two months:



- 32 carrots
- 12 bunches of leaf lettuce
- 18 bunches of spinach
- 16 radishes
- 16 scallions
- 16 beets
- 9 Japanese turnips
- 5 pounds of peas
- 1 head of cabbage
- 4 heads of romaine lettuce
- 1 cauliflower
- 1 broccoli

### GardenRack Flowers Galore

All kinds of flowers work well in the GR especially if you want to have a cutting garden. Look at seed packets to see how far apart plants should be – you'll probably plant a bit less but you'll still have a nice garden.

Just as you do with a traditional garden, place tall flowers in the back and shorter flowers in front. Use the trellis for vining flowers like sweet peas, morning glory and trumpet vine. For a nice nighttime bloomer, try a version of morning glory called Moonflower.

They're white and only open at night. A perennial like clematis would work well on the trellis, too.

You don't have to start plants from seed when you're square-foot GardenRack gardening. You can easily do this with plants that you buy at a nursery or home center. The whole idea behind square-foot GardenRack gardening is growing a lot in a small space.

Now, I admit you can't grow absolutely everything in a one foot by one foot square, particularly if you're doing it in GardenRack. For instance, zucchini needs lots of room to roam around and so do pumpkins. Corn and sunflowers need lots of space, too, but you can buy a dwarf sunflower if you're really set on them and small gourds should work well on the trellis.

For more information on square-foot gardening, please visit [www.money-saving-garden-tips.com/square-foot-gardening.html](http://www.money-saving-garden-tips.com/square-foot-gardening.html).

## Growing Inside

The GardenRack isn't just for growing outside during gardening season. You can also use it inside a greenhouse or a garden room where you grow in the wintertime.

You'll do the same kind of set up in your greenhouse or garden room that you have done for outside growing.

If you're moving your GardenRack from outside to inside, you'll want to empty the soil out and start fresh. That way, you won't be taking any insects that have nested in the soil inside with you. GardenRack is slightly wider than an average single doorway but if you have double doors or can use a heated garage as a grow room, moving it inside should be a snap.

If you're growing inside in a garden room, you'll need to use the appropriate grow lights for your plants. Remember, you don't want to use warm grow lights if you're starting seeds or cultivating any kind of vegetables because they'll tend to grow too tall too quickly. For seedling growth, I recommend plain old shop lights. Why? Because they emit mostly blue spectrum which keeps things from jumping up too fast. Keep the lights down close to the germinated seedlings and raise them as they grow. Most seeds prefer to germinate in a dark warm place ... like on top of your water heater ... and don't need lights.

The exception to the shop light rule is if you're growing flowers like African violets. Warm grow lights throw out a lot of red light and are perfect because they'll help those flowers bloom.

## Putting GardenRack to Bed for the Winter

GardenRack doesn't require anything more strenuous than pulling out plants that have died back, using a hand fork to remove any root balls left behind, and turning the soil over with your trowel.

I routinely flip the tubs from front to back at the end of each season. To do this, you'll need a second person to help you. You'll want to use a piece of lumber underneath the tub to lift it above the surface of the GardenRack so that you can turn them around and drop them back in.

Why? Because disease can winter over and if you plant the same plants in the exact same place next season, you could infect them. By switching the tubs around, you'll ensure a healthy growing medium from year to year.

## Conclusion

GardenRack growing is a great alternative to high-priced containers and in-ground gardening. You'll grow a lot in a small space. It's perfect for gardeners who have downsized from large homes to townhouses, condominiums or apartments and is ideal for gardeners with bad backs or sore knees.



GardenRack lets you grow nearly anything in the same amount of space your washer and dryer use.

Where else could you have a garden ready and growing in just an afternoon?

Be sure to let us know how GardenRack is doing for you and send us some photos. E-mail us at [info@garden-rack.com](mailto:info@garden-rack.com).

Happy GardenRack gardening!

Yours for a bountiful garden,

Victoria





## About Victoria Rosendahl

Victoria Rosendahl, the Frugal Garden Guru, has been gardening since she was 10. When she isn't getting her nails dirty in the garden, Victoria writes novels and is a full-time freelance copywriter for individuals and businesses. Her newest mystery, *Bitter Tastes*, will be released in fall 2006 through Stargazer Press.

