

APPENDIX

TEN LISTS OF TEN ESSENTIALS FOR EVERY ASPIRING GARDENER

TEN REASONS TO GROW A FOOD GARDEN

1. HEALTH

More nutrient-dense than conventional produce, homegrown fruits and vegetables can improve the eating habits of adults and children and help prevent diabetes, obesity, and some cancers. The *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* found that children more than doubled their overall fruit and vegetable consumption after their parents grew a food garden in their yard.

2. TASTE

Homegrown, fresh-picked vegetables, herbs, and fruit offer an unparalleled taste experience: juicy, crisp, with a great depth of flavor and intensity.

3. SAFETY

Foodborne illnesses such as salmonella and *E. coli* are routinely found on produce grown on industrial farms. In 2006, spinach tainted with *E. coli* from cow manure on industrial farms in California sickened hundreds of Americans and took five lives. There is no safer source of food than your own backyard.

4. EXERCISE

Working in a garden is an antidote to the sedentary, indoor lifestyles that are becoming increasingly prevalent in a technology-driven world. The joy



of physical activity in a natural setting to produce something tangible is not only good for your body but fulfilling to the spirit.

5. FOCUS

Gardening helps overstimulated and hyperactive kids focus and perform better academically. A 2004 report from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign found that green outdoor settings, including gardening, reduced symptoms of ADHD in the more than four hundred kids in the study.

6. CLIMATE

The equivalent of about four hundred gallons of oil is used annually to feed each American. This accounts for the energy that flows into petrochemical pesticides and fertilizers as well as fuel for farming machinery, irrigation, food processing, and distribution. By comparison, an organic food garden can have a zero-carbon footprint or even a positive climate impact, due to the absorption of carbon dioxide by its leafy plants.

7. BUDGET

Gardens can considerably reduce grocery bills. A recent National Gardening Association study found that the average family with a vegetable garden spends just seventy dollars a year on it and grows an estimated six hundred dollars' worth of vegetables.

8. COMMUNITY

Growing food brings families together in the garden and at the table. The tending and harvesting rituals slow down one's lifestyle and encourage more home-cooked meals. Gardens can also be social magnets that get neighbors talking over the fence, connecting families to their communities.

9. HAPPINESS

Dirt makes you feel good. A 2007 study from the University of Bristol in England showed that when injected in mice, a specific soil bacterium, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, targets immune cells that release chemicals, which, in turn, stimulate the serotonin-releasing neurons in the brain—the very same neurons activated by Prozac and other antidepressants.

10. NATURE

Growing food offers an accessible way to connect with the natural world. The basic lesson that when we take care of the earth, the earth takes care

of us is learned hands on. I certainly want my kids to be computer literate, but I also want them to be exposed to the wonders of plant growth and natural ecosystems.

HOW TO GROW A FOOD GARDEN, IN TEN STEPS

1. GOALS

Articulate your goals: Why do you want to grow a garden? How much food do you want to grow? An average-size garden for a family of four would be roughly eight feet by sixteen feet if planted in a raised bed and ten feet by twenty feet if planted in the ground.

2. SUNLIGHT

Most fruits and vegetables require loads of sun, so pick a spot for your garden that gets at least six to eight hours of sun per day (you can measure the amount of sun you get with an affordable device like a SunCalc). If your location has limited sun (five to six hours), choose crops that can tolerate less sun, such as leafy greens, cucumbers, beans, and herbs. (See pages 142–43, 149–51.)

3. SOIL

Nothing is more important to the success of your garden than soil health. Whether you are working in the ground or in a raised bed, you ideally want to plant in twelve to eighteen inches of well-aerated, nutrient-dense soil. Use a generous amount of compost. You really can't use too much, though if you want help determining how much to add, Gardener's Supply Company (gardeners.com) has a helpful online soil calculator. Follow the directions that come with your granulated organic fertilizer. Be sure to aerate your soil and add compost and fertilizer annually. If you are planning to garden near an old house or in the city, test your soil for lead or other toxins. (See pages 15, 20, 98–100, 137–38, 151.)

4. PATHS

Without paths, the soil in a garden can get compacted, which makes it hard for roots to spread and chokes off the oxygen that's essential to plant growth. Be sure to clearly demarcate the paths around your rows with straw, wood chips, stone, or another medium. (See pages 15, 152–53.)



5. FENCING

Rabbit-proof fencing extends two and a half to three and a half feet high and at least four inches belowground; the holes in the mesh should be no bigger than one inch by two inches. Deer-proof fencing can range from five to eight feet high depending on the size of the deer population and the amount of open space around the garden (the more space the deer have to run and jump, the higher the fence should be). (See pages 151–52.)

6. IRRIGATION

Some gardeners enjoy the task of hand watering. But if you have only an hour a week to spend in your garden, use that time to tend your plants and install a watering system on an automatic timer. (There are affordable timers with sensors that measure soil moisture and then prompt your system to irrigate as needed.) I particularly like drip-line tubing because it delivers water to plants at their roots.

An ordinary sprinkler connected to your garden hose can work as well, particularly when attached to an automatic timer. (Be sure to time the sprinkler to irrigate in the early morning or evening so that wet plants are not scorched by the midday sun.) (See pages 152–53.) For information, equipment, and other resources, go to dripworks.com.

7. PLAN

On paper, map out where you want to put paths and rows and the rough location of each crop; be sure to account for companion planting and put tall plants on the north side of the space so that they don't shade the others. If a row has paths on both sides, the row should be no wider than four feet so that plants can be reached and tended from both sides. If a row can be reached from only one side, make it roughly two feet wide.

The single most common problem I encounter in gardens is overplanting—try to use restraint in the planting process! Read the information on the back of your seed packet closely or reference the online Kitchen Garden Planner at gardeners.com, which has great advice about planting density and garden layouts.

When you are planning your garden after the first year, keep in mind that it is best to rotate your crops, as soil can get depleted and plants are more prone to problems when you grow the same crop in the same place every year. I pay particular attention to rotating where I plant my tomatoes, as they are susceptible to soilborne disease.



8. SUPPLIES

All your supplies—fertilizer, compost, seeds, labels, plant supports, trowels, round-nose shovels, hard rakes, and broadforks—can be purchased online or from a local nursery. Organic seedlings can also often be purchased from local farmers at your farmers market. All types of compost from your local nursery or home improvement store work well—just go as organic as you can. Seed catalogs are a fantastic resource for seeds, tools, plants, and advice. A few of my favorites are johnnyseeds.com, seedsavers.org, and highmowingseeds.com.

9. PLANTING

There are two basic ways to plant—by placing seeds directly in the ground or by putting plants (seedlings) in the ground (transplanting). The seedlings get you a head start on the season, as they're grown in a greenhouse, cold frame, or indoors during the late winter or early spring. I always plant tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, and other large fruiting crops as seedlings. Vegetables including carrots, beans, and radishes I always plant from seeds. (See pages 20, 110.)

You can think of crops in two basic categories—cold-tolerant crops that can be planted in early spring and will germinate and grow in cool soil and air temperatures (such as spinach, broccoli, and peas) and heat-loving crops (such as tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers) that must be planted in the late spring or early summer after the threat of a frost has passed. (See pages 21, 205–206.)

Find out which USDA Hardiness Zone you live in (go to the National Gardening Association's website: garden.org/zipzone). This will help you determine what to plant when in your region and will also give you an idea of the timing of the first and last frosts.

10. TENDING AND HARVESTING

Critical tending activities include thinning your plants so that they don't crowd each other, staking plants to support vertical growth, and weeding regularly by hand. Fertilizing to give your plants a boost is optional but does wonders for plant health and productivity. I like to use a liquid organic fish emulsion and seaweed spray every other week, and side dressing with granulated organic fertilizer once a month during the peak growing season. (See pages 49–50.)

I also like to walk through my gardens at least once a week, doing “rounds” to observe their needs—taking the time to notice if any plants are



leaning over that need staking; if any leaves are discolored, indicating that the plants may need nutrients; or if any pests have arrived that need troubleshooting.

My harvesting advice is simple: Don't wait too long and don't be shy—if something looks and smells ripe to you, pick it and taste it. The best way to become a good harvester is to learn by doing.

TEN WAYS TO TACKLE WEEDS AND PESTS WITHOUT CHEMICALS

1. HEALTHY SOIL

The soil acts as the immune system of your plants. If plants are getting what they need from nutrient-dense, well-aerated soil, they will be much more resistant to disease, and fewer pests will prey on them. A generous layer of compost spread annually has the added benefit of helping to reduce weeds.

2. BENEFICIAL INSECTS

Use companion planting, crop diversity, and interplanted flowers to attract beneficial insects to your garden that will deter or attack harmful insects. Basil planted among tomato plants, for instance, will draw insects that prey on tomato hornworms. (See page 47.)

3. PROTECTIVE LAYER

Deter weed growth with a protective layer of alfalfa hay or straw around your plants; the layer can starve potential weeds of sun and prevent their growth. An added benefit is that this layer helps retain moisture and provides nutrients to the soil as it decays. (See page 152.)

4. WEED BY HAND

Far and away the most effective method for keeping out weeds is to pull them up at the root by hand or hoe. (If snapped off above the root they will grow back quickly.) The key is consistency—pull the weeds out when they're still young and never let them get established. If you stay on top of it, weeding won't take more than thirty minutes a week in most gardens. Never let the weeds go to seed, or produce seed.



5. HANDPICK BUGS

If you have Japanese beetles, squash bugs, or cabbage worms, arm your kids or your neighbors' kids with cups of soapy water and tell them to pick off the bugs and drop them in their cups. This may be the least appealing task in an organic food garden, but kids love it.

6. GARLIC BARRIER

A natural insect repellent, Garlic Barrier (garlicbarrier.com) is a preventive measure, so apply it before bugs arrive to deter them. You can also make your own garlic spray at home with a simple recipe that's easily found online. I routinely mix it with Neptune's Harvest (neptunesharvest.com) fertilizer spray and apply it every other week to plant leaves, so that the vegetables and fruits get nourished with a protective scent of garlic that most bugs don't like.

7. BT

The certified organic insecticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt for short) is derived from a bacterium that is common in soil and benign to humans. It's especially effective at killing caterpillars as well as beetles, flies, and mosquito larvae.

8. SAFER SOAP

The best way to handle aphids is to first remove them from plant leaves with a hard spray of water from the garden hose and then spray them with a layer of Safer Brand Insect-Killing Soap (saferbrand.com) to finish them off. Safer Soap can also tackle mealybugs and whiteflies.

9. SAFERGRO MILDEW CURE

This organic spray (safergro.com) helps prevent "powdery mildew," a common disease that afflicts pumpkins, squash, and melons in particular.

10. SLUGGO

A barrier of Sluggo scattered around a plant or bordering the entire garden is the best way to deter snails and slugs. The granulated pellets made with iron phosphate are pet- and wildlife-friendly (www.montereylawnngarden.com/products/organic/#Molluscicides).



TEN EASY-TO-GROW VEGETABLES FOR THE NOVICE GARDENER

1. ARUGULA AND LETTUCE

Don't wait too long to harvest these greens—they grow fast. If you start from seed, they should be ready just thirty to forty-five days after planting. Young arugula and lettuce are tender and sweet, but they get tougher and ultimately bitter as they grow.

2. BEANS (GREEN, PURPLE, YELLOW, HARICOT VERT, EDAMAME)

Start harvesting beans when they are young and tender. Harvest frequently to ensure that the plant keeps producing more. With edamame, especially, it's very easy to miss the harvesting window; as soon as pods are slightly plump, open them up and taste them.

3. BEETS

After the greens have emerged from the soil and are about one inch tall, thin the plants (pulling out the extra baby plants) so they're a fist's length apart, then mound soil around each plant. (Don't hesitate to eat the thinned-out sprouts—they're delicious!) Harvest roughly sixty days after planting—pull and see if the bulb is roughly one and a half inches in diameter. If you want bigger beets, wait.

4. BROCCOLI

Don't wait too long to harvest—florets will open, get yellowish, and ultimately flower. Harvest time depends on variety, fifty-five to seventy-five days from planting. Judge readiness by the texture of the head, not the size (it's ready when the florets look tight and green). After you've harvested the main head, look for side shoots to harvest throughout the season.

5. CARROTS

Thin your young carrots aggressively: When the tops are about two inches tall, pull out the weakest-looking plants so that you have roughly two inches between those left in the ground. Carrots are sweetest when planted in the summer for fall or early winter harvest.

6. CUCUMBERS

These plants are very prolific. If you plant six to eight seeds, leave only the healthiest, largest one-to-three-inch seedlings in the ground or you will be



overwhelmed by too much fruit. Cucumbers are well camouflaged—look closely as they could be hiding from you! They may be harvested young—or you can wait for bigger fruit.

7. GREENS (SWISS CHARD, KALE, AND COLLARD GREENS)

Thin aggressively so that plants are eight to twelve inches apart—you will be rewarded with more growth. Eat the thinned-out greens along the way. Harvest the leaves from the bottom up, starting with the outside of the plant, and keep some leaves in place so that the plants will continue to regenerate.

8. PEAS

Pods are most succulent when they are young and tender. Once they are ripe, harvest frequently. The taste is best if you eat them immediately after harvesting. You can grow three types of peas: sugar snap (eat the whole puffy pod), English or garden type (eat only the peas inside the pod), and snow or Asian (flat, edible pod).

9. POTATOES

When the potato plant is six to eight inches aboveground, mound soil or compost in a hill to cover two-thirds of the plant. When you bury the stem, it grows more potatoes. The best time to harvest the first new spuds is right after the flowers bloom. Once the foliage starts to yellow and die back, the tubers are fully grown. If the weather is not too warm or wet, they will keep in the ground for at least several weeks. Have fun growing blue, red, or gold potatoes and all types of fingerlings.

10. TOMATOES

Tomatoes are tall vining plants that benefit from growing in a cage that offers them support. Be sure to gently train the stems to grow vertically within the cage. Foliar feed tomato plants with a fish emulsion and seaweed liquid fertilizer sprayed on the leaves every other week. If squirrels or chipmunks are munching on your tomatoes, harvest them on the early side of ripe and put them on your windowsill to finish ripening.



TEN FAVORITE GARDENING PRODUCTS

1. HO-MI OR KOREAN HAND PLOW

This sickle-shaped hand plow designed like an ancient Korean gardening tool is great for weeding, digging, mounding, and leveling. It's weighted so that if your soil is heavy or rocky, it slices right through clumps.

2. SELF-WATERING CONTAINERS

If you are planting on a rooftop, terrace, porch, or fire escape, gardeners.com has great self-watering planters, window boxes, and containers. I also like the EarthBox Organic Ready-to-Grow Kit, which you can find at earthbox.com. You can also make your own self-watering container from five-gallon buckets, following DIY instructions online.

3. TRADITIONAL GERMAN VEGETABLE HARVEST BASKET

You can wash and drain vegetables directly in these baskets made of galvanized wire mesh. The wooden handles are comfortable so you can really load them up. You can find them at kinsmangarden.com.

4. BLUNDSTONE BOOTS

These leather Australian slip-on boots are my everyday work shoes—they are incredibly comfortable and durable, and they clean easily. To my eye, they're also great looking. Find them at blundstoneus.com. (On hot summer days, I go for Keen sandals—the closed toe is great for garden work: www.keenfootwear.com/us/en/.)

5. TEXAS TOMATO CAGE

My favorite way to grow tomatoes is in a Texas tomato cage (tomatocages.com) and with tomato trellis clips from johnnyseeds.com. (Gardeners' Supply Company also has lots of great vertical plant supports; go to gardeners.com.)

6. SUNDAY AFTERNOONS HAT

I rarely go into a garden without a wide-brim hat. Sunday Afternoons has a great selection of lightweight, full-coverage hats. (Go to Sundayafternoons.com.)

7. SOLO TWO-LITER PRESSURE SPRAYER

This bottle sprays a fine mist that's great for applying liquid fertilizer to plant leaves, as well as organic solutions that kill insects and prevent disease (www.solousa.com/store/browse/handheld_sprayers.html).



8. RAISED BED KITS

If you don't have the time or skill to build a raised bed from scratch, gardeners.com has great, affordable, easy-to-assemble kits. For the folks who want to splurge, Williams-Sonoma (williams-sonoma.com) also sells high-end raised-bed kits in their Agrarian line.

9. BROADFORK

The five-tine broadfork from Johnny's Selected Seeds (johnnyseeds.com) deeply aerates while preserving soil structure and bringing minimal weed seeds to the surface.

10. IPHONE APPS

I'm no technophile, but I love these apps for the iPhone and iPad: iGarden USA has encyclopedic but accessible information on vegetables, fruits, and herbs, and offers planting and harvesting dates for your particular geographic zone (the planting and tending directions it offers are not exclusively organic, but the app is useful anyway); Herbs+ has excellent information and images on every herb you'd ever want to plant, complete with tips on cooking with herbs and recipes for herbal remedies. The Organic Gardening Planting Planner app by Rodale is a condensed version of my favorite indispensable gardening book with a location-specific planning/weather component. It even includes moon phases for all those biodynamic gardeners out there.

TEN TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR GARDENING WITH KIDS

1. MAKE IT FUN!

Don't make gardening an unpleasant chore. It's just as important for kids to relax and explore in this space as it is for them to master specific skills. The more time children spend enjoying a garden, the more they will absorb its best benefits—learning to slow down, focus, engage their senses, and strengthen their powers of observation.

2. OWNERSHIP

Let kids have an area of the garden where they can decide what they want to grow. Here they should have the freedom to do all the steps. Suggest some fun, interesting crops such as baby gherkin cucumbers or fun-shaped gourds.



3. PARTICIPATION

Kids will follow your lead in the garden. Slow down your own life for an hour or two a week and work with children on all garden tasks: weeding, planting, harvesting. You can guide toddlers and even babies as soon as they can crawl in simple pleasures such as patting the soil and munching on the harvest.

4. COLOR

Grow vegetables of unusual color: rainbow carrots, Easter egg radishes, blue and red potatoes, purple asparagus, tricolor beans. Spend time looking at seed catalogs with color photos to help kids choose what they want to grow; Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds has a fun catalog. (Go to rareseeds.com.)

5. LABELS

Let kids who can write make the plant labels. I like to get the large wooden plant labels at johnnyseeds.com, which have plenty of space for kids to write the name of each plant and decorate.

6. PATHS

Clearly marked paths are crucial when gardening with kids so you don't have to constantly remind them not to step on the plants or compress the soil you've worked so hard to aerate.

7. KIDSGARDENING.ORG

This is a great online resource from the National Gardening Association, with information and tips on family and school gardening. NGA has delivered to date more than four million dollars in funding for youth gardens, and applications for their grants and awards can be found on the website.

8. *How Groundhog's Garden Grew* by Lynne Cherry

Lynne Cherry has written a beautifully illustrated children's book that captures the miracle of plant growth and shows how everything from peas to pumpkins matures from seeds to foods.

9. *A Seed Grows: My First Look at a Plant's Life Cycle* by Pamela Hickman

I used to give a copy of this illustrated picture book with flaps to every client with kids. It contains everything a child needs to know about the life cycles of vegetables and fruits and is great to read to children as young as three or four. It is a favorite of both of my daughters.



10. EDIBLESCHOOLYARD.ORG

The website for Alice Waters's Edible Schoolyard Project is hands down the best online resource for school gardening curricula and ideas.

 TEN HEROES TO FOLLOW

1. ALICE WATERS

Chef, writer, and activist Alice Waters has been at the helm of the sustainable foods movement since 1971, when she founded her seasonal, organic restaurant Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California. The Edible Schoolyard Project she created in 1995 at Berkeley's Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School has since inspired a nationwide trend in school gardening.

2. MICHAEL POLLAN

Perhaps no one has educated more Americans on the problems of our industrialized food system than Michael Pollan, author of the bestselling books *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and *Food Rules*. Pollan has criticized in particular the prevalence of corn-derived ingredients in the American diet that are fueling the obesity epidemic and are grown with heavy petroleum inputs.

3. WES JACKSON

The president of the Land Institute, which he founded in 1976, Wes Jackson sees farming as the root of all problems we face as a civilization. As he sees it, fossil fuel dependency, environmental pollution, overpopulation, and global warming stem from the moment when humans first started tilling the soil. He advocates small-scale "natural-systems agriculture" that nourishes the soil rather than depletes it.

4. MARK BITTMAN

A longtime weekly food columnist for *The New York Times*, Bittman has been on a mission for decades to help Americans understand how to cook and eat healthy, whole foods simply and affordably. Recently he has been exposing the links between meat consumption, obesity, and global warming, and has been advocating vegetarianism.



5. MARION NESTLE

New York University professor Marion Nestle is an indispensable voice working to reform the agricultural policies in the United States that are supporting the industrialized food system and putting small organic farmers at a disadvantage.

6. MICHELLE OBAMA

First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" campaign has pushed the food issue into the public consciousness, showing how America's fast-food diet fuels childhood obesity. She planted the first vegetable garden at the White House since Eleanor Roosevelt's victory garden during World War II.

7. WILL ALLEN

At his three-acre Growing Power farm in Milwaukee, Will Allen has demonstrated that urban agriculture can bring not only good food to the inner city but good jobs as well. Allen now employs more than one hundred urban farmers, most of them formerly homeless or incarcerated, and has brought the essential goal of social justice to the food movement.

8. WENDELL BERRY

Farmer, activist, and author Wendell Berry has published more than twenty-five books, none more influential than his 1977 masterpiece *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, which arguably touched off the movement to reform the American food system. His writing is grounded in the notion that your work must be rooted in the land and the place you inhabit.

9. JAMIE OLIVER

The provocateur formerly known as "the Naked Chef," Jamie Oliver has brought an edgy but passionate voice to the sustainable food movement through his hit TV show *Food Revolution*, in which he teaches middle- and low-income Americans, many struggling with obesity, to cook healthy food from scratch.

10. ELIOT COLEMAN

Farmer, author, researcher, and educator Eliot Coleman has helped define and push the limits of organic farming. On his Four Season Farm in Maine, Coleman produces year-round food crops under extreme winter conditions, using highly efficient and minimally heated greenhouse structures.



 TEN BOOKS, MAGAZINES, AND WEBSITES TO READ

1. *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson

An impassioned exposé about the human and ecological impact of pesticides first published in 1962, *Silent Spring* is widely credited with helping to launch the environmental movement. Its publication led to the 1972 ban of the pesticide DDT and the book has since sold millions of copies.

2. *Rodale's Ultimate Encyclopedia of Organic Gardening: The Indispensable Green Resource for Every Gardener*

This canonical book taught me how to garden. You'll find it has virtually everything you need to know about growing organically, from apples to zinnias.

3. *The Vegetable Gardener's Bible* by Edward C. Smith

This book has an easy-to-use format for the novice or more experienced gardener, with great photos and simple instructions for soil preparation, composting, organic methods of weed and pest control, and information on specific crops. Smith is also the author of another great book, *The Vegetable Gardener's Container Bible*, on growing vegetables in self-watering containers.

4. *American Grown: The Story of the White House Kitchen Garden and Gardens Across America* by Michelle Obama

The First Lady offers a behind-the-scenes peek at how the White House garden was designed and how it has evolved as a part of White House life. Hopeful and inspiring, the book includes stories of garden projects nationwide and their positive impacts on children.

5. *Food Rules: An Eater's Manual* by Michael Pollan

This "eater's manifesto" lays out a set of simple rules for eating wisely, and shows how different cultures through the ages have arrived at the same enduring wisdom about food.

6. *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment* by Sandra Steingraber

Living Downstream is the closest thing we have to a modern *Silent Spring* by a preeminent ecologist and cancer survivor who investigates the impacts



of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides on human health in America. (Go to livingdownstream.com.)

7. *The Elements of Organic Gardening* by HRH The Prince of Wales

A beautiful and inspiring book full of photos from several royal estates, Prince Charles's *Elements of Organic Gardening* demonstrates organic gardening with style. There are many decades of experience and wisdom within these pages.

8. *Organic Gardening Magazine*

Organic Gardening (organicgardening.com) is an accessible monthly magazine that often has great gardening tips, products, essays, recipes, and photos.

9. FOODPOLITICS.COM

This indispensable blog of food activist Marion Nestle meticulously tracks problems and progress in the legislation that governs our food system. It is named after Nestle's excellent book *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*.

10. GRIST.ORG

This hip and humorous website of environmental news and opinion tracks the sustainable food movement with writing that's as smart and serious as it is entertaining.

TEN ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT

1. SLOW FOOD USA

This organization has become a nerve center of the international slow-food movement. Now millions strong, the movement celebrates the cultural and biological diversity of homegrown, local food traditions, and advocates policies that will protect them. (Go to slowfoodusa.org.)

2. URBANFARMING.ORG

Founded in 2005, this organization has since spawned more than forty-three thousand urban food gardens all around the world thanks to millions of dollars of funding from Kraft, Coca-Cola, and other companies, and



celebrity support from the likes of Prince and Snoop Dogg. (Go to urbanfarming.org.)

3. ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

This Washington, D.C.–based group has campaigned tirelessly to overhaul federal farm policy to support sound public health and environmental goals. The group’s website (ewg.org) has an excellent “Eat Smart” section and a Meat Eater’s Guide to Climate Change and Health that can help you calculate the carbon footprint of your diet.

4. NATIONAL SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE COALITION

NSAC (sustainableagriculture.net) is an alliance of grassroots organizations that’s on the front lines of the battle for federal policy reform to support local and organic farms.

5. THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

NRDC (nrdc.org) sponsors the Growing Green Awards, which offer annual cash prizes to food producers, business leaders, and food justice leaders.

6. KITCHEN GARDENERS INTERNATIONAL

KGI (kgi.org) is a community of more than twenty thousand people from one hundred countries who are helping low-income communities grow their own vegetables and achieve higher levels of food self-reliance.

7. SCHOOL LUNCH INITIATIVE

Alice Waters protégé Ann Cooper has founded the first comprehensive program in the nation advocating school lunch reform in public schools and promoting student learning in school gardens and nutrition education in classrooms. (Go to schoollunchinitiative.org.)

8. LOCAL HARVEST

Local Harvest (localharvest.org) is the definitive nationwide directory of small farms, farmers markets, and other local food sources.

9. THE KITCHEN COMMUNITY

An ambitious young organization that works to connect kids to real food by creating learning gardens in schools and community organizations across America, the Kitchen Community (thekitchencommunity.org) developed an easy-to-install, affordable, and scalable school garden system.



10. OPENLANDS

One of the most dynamic and effective Chicago-based environmental groups I know of, Openlands (openlands.org) creates greenways, protects open spaces, and funds and facilitates community and school gardens in Illinois.

I'M ALSO INSPIRED by the work of many other Chicago-based groups: Green City Market, the Chicago Botanic Garden, Growing Home, the Gary Comer Youth Center, the Resource Center, Nurture, and Purple Asparagus, to name a few.

TEN WAYS TO BE A PART OF
THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD MOVEMENT

1. PLANT

Grow your own garden at home or at an allotment or community garden. If you don't have a front yard, a backyard, or a rooftop, plant in containers on your fire escape or even in window boxes. Virtually everyone, everywhere can grow their own food.

2. COMPOST

Turn your kitchen waste into fertilizer. Some of my favorite plastic-tumbler compost units include the Tumbleweed, the ComposT-Twin, and the Envirocycle. For the apartment dweller, consider a worm bin or tower.

3. COOK

Fresh, ripe homegrown fruits and vegetables can make a master chef of anyone. Alice Waters has said that the perfect dessert is a bowl of ripe peaches. Homegrown food is the tastiest food on earth and makes cooking incredibly simple.

4. CONNECT

Use social media to connect with your community: Create and publicize events on Facebook and "like" sustainable agriculture pages. Use Meetup.com to create and attend events such as local-food potluck dinners, sustainable agriculture book clubs, or outings to farmers markets. Use Twitter to circulate recipes featuring local products; follow the tweets and blogs of



activists such as Bill McKibben, Mark Bittman, Jamie Oliver, and Tom Philpott. Create a blog about your garden, your lifestyle, and your recipes.

5. CSA

Community supported agriculture has become a popular way for consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farmer. Through a CSA, a farmer offers a certain number of “shares” of the harvest to the public, and regularly delivers boxes of seasonal fruits and veggies to the homes of its members. Find a CSA in your area through localharvest.org.

6. FARMERS MARKET

Your local farmers market is a great place to meet like-minded people in your community and also connect to local farmers. Don’t hesitate to introduce yourself to the farmers, learn from them, and ask if they have organic seedlings you can purchase for your own garden.

7. MEATLESS MONDAY

The quickest way to reduce the carbon footprint of your diet is to eat less red meat and more local vegetables. Give up meat one day a week and challenge yourself to try a new vegetarian recipe instead. (Go to meatlessmonday.com.)

8. FOOD DESERTS

Volunteer to help create an allotment or community garden in a food desert. Or create a “giving garden” in your local community where you can grow fruits and vegetables that can be donated to a local food pantry.

9. RESTAURANTS

The green-restaurant movement is growing fast. Support local restaurants that feature local and organic foods, and encourage your favorite restaurants to expand their sustainable offerings.

10. GET POLITICAL!

Exhort your senators and representatives to support federal legislation that can reform the American food system—removing subsidies from industrial farms and incentivizing small and midsize farms. Ask your local elected officials to support legislation that helps remediate food deserts and fund school gardens.

