

HOME, LAWN & GARDEN

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Frank(ie) discussion



Gardening guru Frank Ferragine (alias Frankie Flowers), giving an entertaining how-to on spring container planting at the Mompreneurs show held Saturday at Christ the King Secondary School. Photo by Jon Borgstrom

Try container gardening so you can eat very local

The 'eat local' movement started about eight years ago with consumers looking to local farmers with the 100-mile diet, and it has evolved into this season's 10-pace diet because there is no better way to eat local than to grow food right in your own backyard.

"More and more foodies are becoming gardeners, and vice versa, because they love cooking with fresh herbs and vegetables from their own windowsills or gardens," says Mark Cullen, the garden expert at Home Hardware.

Cullen says that novice gardeners can produce an abundant and flavourful local harvest, all in containers around their decks and patios, if they follow a few simple tips.

To grow your own vegetables, Cullen suggests the Mark's Choice Vegetable Seed Collection as a practical way to get started. The seeds were tested and selected by Cullen himself to provide fresh flavour and perform well in Canadian conditions.

The Mark's Choice Upside Down Tomato Planter makes it easy to grow your own tomato crop a few steps from the back door. This Canadian-made product maximizes the vertical growing space in your yard, balcony, deck, or roof top garden. It drastically reduces plant maintenance and makes harvesting a snap.

"Vegetables growing in containers naturally require added fertilizer on a regular basis," Cullen says. "Tomato plants, for instance, benefit from an application of Home Gardener 20-20-20 fertilizer every seven to ten days."

Cullen also points to the ease of growing herbs in containers. Most popular herbs, such as thyme, oregano, tarragon, and basil, originated in the Mediterranean and love hot, dry growing conditions with just enough water. To provide Mediterranean-like conditions, he suggests positioning containers in the sun and trying a soil mix such as Mark's Choice Veggie and Flower Container Mix, which holds necessary moisture and lets the excess drain freely.

Once you start harvesting your crop, you may find you have more local veggies than you can eat at once. However, with the help of your favourite retailer, canning has never been easier. Next time you're in Home Hardware, for example, take a look at the Kitchen Value 5 Piece Home Canning Kit. It provides all the basics and allows you to enjoy your homegrown vegetables all winter long.

More expert gardening advice and product information is available online at www.homehardware.ca.

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