



FROM THE FILES OF THE DIRT DIVA DIARIES

Vegetable Quick-Start Cards — continued

Root crops, kale, herbs & your personal grow notes

Kale & Chard

Harvest for months

Container: 5 gal · one plant per container **Sun:** ** Partial to full sun **Water:** ☹️ Every 1-2 days · tolerates brief drought **Feed:** Every 2-3 wks · nitrogen for leaf growth **Harvest:** 55-70 days · harvest outer leaves all season **Difficulty:** EASY

Ivy's tip: Kale actually tastes better after a frost — cold converts starches to sugars. Plant in late summer and harvest through winter in milder climates.

Radishes

The 25-day miracle crop

Container: 5 gal · at least 6" deep · direct sow only **Sun:** ** Partial sun · tolerates shade **Water:** ☹️ Every 1-2 days · consistent moisture **Feed:** None needed · quick crop **Harvest:** 25-30 days · pull when 1" diameter **Difficulty:** EASY

Ivy's tip: Radishes are the ultimate confidence crop. Plant every 2 weeks for continuous harvest. They also mark rows of slower-growing seeds so you know where to water.

Basil

The gateway herb

Container: 2-5 gal · grows fast, loves space **Sun:** *** Full sun · warmth is essential **Water:** ☹️ Daily in summer · wilts fast when dry **Feed:** Every 3 wks · light nitrogen **Harvest:** 30-45 days · pinch tops to prevent bolting **Difficulty:** EASY

Ivy's tip: Pinch off flower buds the moment you see them. Once basil flowers, it goes bitter within days. Keep pinching and it keeps producing all summer.

Zucchini / Summer Squash

One plant is probably enough

Container: 10 gal minimum · these get BIG **Sun:** *** Full sun · needs heat and space **Water:** ☹️ Daily · heavy feeder and drinker **Feed:** Weekly · balanced then switch to low-N when fruiting **Harvest:** 45-55 days · harvest at 6-8" for best flavor **Difficulty:** MEDIUM

Ivy's tip: Seriously — one plant. Two plants will bury you in zucchini. Harvest every 2 days or they'll turn into baseball bats overnight.

Eggplant

Heat-lover, beautiful in containers

Container: 5-10 gal · buy as transplant, long season **Sun:** *** Full sun · loves heat even more than peppers **Water:** ☹️ Every 1-2 days · consistent moisture **Feed:** Every 2 wks · balanced throughout season **Harvest:** 70-85 days · harvest when skin is glossy **Difficulty:** MEDIUM

Ivy's tip: Dull skin means it's past peak. Harvest when glossy and still medium-sized — flavor is better young. Container eggplant is absolutely stunning as an ornamental too.

Snap Peas

Spring & fall favorite

Container: 5 gal + trellis · direct sow only **Sun:** ** Partial sun · cool weather preferred **Water:** ☹️ Every 1-2 days · even moisture **Feed:** Minimal · fix own nitrogen · light P at flowering **Harvest:** 60-70 days · pick when pods are plump **Difficulty:** EASY

Ivy's tip: Plant peas as early as the ground can be worked in spring — they thrive in cool weather and will die back in summer heat. Plant again in late summer for a fall crop.

At-a-Glance Comparison — All 10 Crops

Crop	Min Container	Days to Harvest	Difficulty	Grow From	Season
Cherry Tomatoes	10 gal	60-70 days	Medium	Transplant	Warm season
Peppers	5 gal	65-85 days	Easy	Transplant	Warm season
Cucumbers	5 gal	55-65 days	Medium	Seed or transplant	Warm season
Lettuce	5 gal	30-45 days	Easy	Seed or transplant	Cool season
Spinach	5 gal	40-50 days	Easy	Seed or transplant	Cool season
Bush Beans	5 gal	50-60 days	Easy	Seed only	Warm season
Kale / Chard	5 gal	55-70 days	Easy	Seed or transplant	Cool & warm
Radishes	5 gal	25-30 days	Easy	Seed only	Cool season
Eggplant	5-10 gal	70-85 days	Medium	Transplant	Warm season
Snap Peas	5 gal	60-70 days	Easy	Seed only	Cool season

Start Here: Ivy's Beginner 5-Pot Garden

- Pot 1 (10 gal):** 1 cherry tomato plant
- Pot 2 (5 gal):** 1 pepper plant
- Pot 3 (5 gal):** Lettuce mix (succession sow every 3 wks)
- Pot 4 (5 gal):** Basil + a few radishes around the edge
- Pot 5 (5 gal):** Bush beans (direct sow)

This setup gives you something to harvest within 30 days, continuous salad greens, and the satisfaction of a full-season tomato and pepper harvest.

My Garden Notes

What I'm growing this season:



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Vegetable Quick-Start Cards

10 top container vegetables at a glance — container size, sun, water, harvest time & Ivy's one best tip

Ivy says: "Think of these cards as the cheat sheet I wish someone had handed me on day one. Every number here is pulled from real container growing data — not optimistic seed packet claims. Grow what's on this list first. Get your wins. Then get adventurous."

*** = Full sun (6–8+ hrs) | ** = Partial sun (4–6 hrs) | * = Shade tolerant (3–4 hrs)
△△ = Daily watering | △ = Every 1–2 days | △ = Every 2–3 days
EASY = beginner-proof | **MEDIUM** = some attention needed | **ADVANCED** = practice first

Cherry Tomatoes Most rewarding container crop

Container: 10–15 gal minimum · deep preferred **Sun:** *** Full sun — 8+ hrs non-negotiable **Water:** △△ Daily in peak summer **Feed:** Every 1–2 wks · switch to low-N when flowering **Harvest:** 60–70 days from transplant · 10–20 lbs/season **Difficulty:** **MEDIUM**

Ivy's tip: Buy a determinate variety (like 'Tumbling Tom' or 'Patio') for smaller containers. Indeterminate varieties produce more but need serious staking.

Peppers Sweet or hot — your call

Container: 5 gal · one plant per container **Sun:** *** Full sun — they love heat **Water:** △△ Every 1–2 days · consistent moisture **Feed:** Every 2 wks · low-N when flowering **Harvest:** 65–85 days · 20–30 peppers/plant/season **Difficulty:** **EASY**

Ivy's tip: Peppers LOVE heat. Put them in the hottest spot on your patio — against a south-facing wall if you have one. They reward you generously.

Cucumbers Grow up, not out

Container: 5 gal + trellis · vertical is essential **Sun:** *** Full sun · hates cold **Water:** △△ Daily · never let them dry out **Feed:** Every 1–2 wks · high-N early, balanced mid-season **Harvest:** 55–65 days · pick frequently to keep producing **Difficulty:** **MEDIUM**

Ivy's tip: Pick cucumbers when they reach 6–8 inches. Leave one on the vine too long and the plant stops producing. They're productive when you keep harvesting.

Lettuce & Salad Greens Easiest beginner crop

Container: 5 gal · wide and shallow preferred **Sun:** ** Partial sun · shade in summer heat **Water:** △△ Every 1–2 days · keep consistently moist **Feed:** Every 2 wks · light nitrogen **Harvest:** 30–45 days · cut outer leaves continuously **Difficulty:** **EASY**

Ivy's tip: Cut outer leaves and leave the center — the plant keeps growing. One container can feed a family of two all summer if you harvest this way.

Spinach Cool-season powerhouse

Container: 5 gal · can pack densely **Sun:** ** Partial sun · prefers cool temps **Water:** △△ Every 1–2 days · consistent moisture **Feed:** Every 2 wks · high nitrogen for leaf production **Harvest:** 40–50 days · spring & fall seasons **Difficulty:** **EASY**

Ivy's tip: Plant spinach as soon as the ground thaws in spring and again in late summer for fall. It bolts (goes to seed) in summer heat — that's normal, just replant.

Bush Beans Plant, pick, repeat

Container: 5 gal · direct sow, don't transplant **Sun:** *** Full sun · warm soil required **Water:** △△ Every 1–2 days · avoid wetting leaves **Feed:** Minimal · beans fix their own nitrogen **Harvest:** 50–60 days · pick before seeds bulge pod **Difficulty:** **EASY**

Ivy's tip: Direct sow seeds every 3 weeks for continuous harvest. Don't add nitrogen fertilizer — beans fix their own and extra N just makes more leaves, not beans.