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News Release

## **Costs Considerations of Home Gardening**

Americans planted victory gardens during World War II as a way to support the war effort. By growing produce to feed themselves and their communities, these home gardeners allowed the nation to divert more of the national food and fuel supplies to the troops. People felt personal pride in the labor they contributed, and the food they grew helped offset the hardships caused by war. Some 20 million Americans answered the call of "Plant More in '44." Altogether, they produced about 40 percent of the vegetables consumed nationally that year. The victory garden concept changed gardening from a practical pastime to a civic duty and patriotic gesture.

Sixty-five years later Americans are again struggling to make ends meet, and food gardening is experiencing a revival. This time around, the reasons have less to do with patriotism and more to do with saving money and promoting self-sufficiency. However, what started as a simple trend appears to be growing into a full-fledged movement as activists try to rekindle the fervor for home food gardening as a means not only to harvesting edibles but also to building community and increasing environmental awareness. More reasons for having a home garden today include better-tasting and better quality food, to save money on food bills, and to grow safe food.

As planning your garden takes place, consider the associated costs. Options for gardening costs range from the labor-intensive — growing everything from seed — to the neighborly, such as swapping plants with friends or asking a successful gardener down the street for cuttings. Some gardeners average the cost out over a 10 or 20 year period, since they plan to garden for many years.

Before spending a lot to have a garden, make a list of the items you need, check to see what you already have, set a budget, and stick to it! Remember that each garden will have different needs and you may already have the tools you need. Some suggestions for holding down costs of a home garden are:

- Grow from seeds
- Start your own plants
- Start with smaller plants
- Buy a large plant with a friend and divide it
- Share and swap tools with family and friends
- Wait until after Memorial Day, when plants go on sale

If there are items you enjoy eating, but may not have in your garden, visit your local Farmers Market (the new St. Clair County Farmers Market opens Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> from 2-5:30 p.m.

in Pell City). Farmers markets have a rich history in the United States and are enjoying a strong revival. With the increase in number of small market gardens, farm operations, and specialty food producers, farmers markets cut out the middleman, making the transaction more profitable for farmers and more economical for consumers. By bringing farmers and consumers face to face, it also creates a stronger sense of community.

Another source available for you is Extension's Master Gardener program. This organization is made of a diverse group of individuals with a common interest in learning about gardening. The only requirements for becoming a Master Gardener are an interest in learning about gardening and horticulture, having the time to attend an intensive training course on all areas of horticulture, and a willingness to share what you learn with others. For more information on becoming a Master Gardener, check with your local Extension office, or visit our website at <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1120>

To learn more about how Extension can help you, to volunteer, or just to ask a question, please call us, the St. Clair County Extension office, at (205) 338-9416 or visit us on the web at [www.aces.edu/StClair](http://www.aces.edu/StClair). For more information about this topic, please contact Regional Extension Agent Ruth Brock at [brockru@aces.edu](mailto:brockru@aces.edu).

Source: National Gardening Association