# Vegetable and Fruit Gardening

More and more homeowners are growing vegetables and small fruits. Here are just a few of the many reasons edible gardening is increasingly popular:

- combat the rising cost of produce
- reduce one's carbon footprint
- ensure toxin-free fruits and vegetables
- 'reconnect' with the earth.

Or, it may simply be the joy of nurturing a seed from germination through its life cycle.

Without a doubt, there is an unbelievable sense of accomplishment in harvesting and storing food you've grown yourself.

The practice of conventional, non-commercial row gardening is slowly giving way to growing food in raised beds and watering by hand or with drip irrigation.* In addition to plants shading the roots of their neighbours and reducing evaporation, the raised beds are superior in a number of ways:

- the soil can be a blend of products formulated specifically for food growing and to help ensure a bountiful harvest
- a good blend does not contain dormant weed seeds, thus reducing weeding maintenance
- simply add compost and/or grow a 'green manure' to boost nutrients year-to-year
- crop rotation and succession planting is much easier to manage
- the close spacing of plants leaves less room for weeds to grow
- if beds are built so the garden can easily be reached from either side, there is never an issue with soil compaction as there is no need to walk on the planting area
- the drip method of irrigation ensures water is going directly to the roots – it is not sitting on the foliage nor is it broadcasting spray that is both wasteful and encourages weed growth.

Drip irrigation for food gardening should be on a dedicated zone(s) as food crops generally require more frequent watering than a xeriscape. It is inexpensive and easy to install and can be adapted from a pop-up sprayer formerly used in a lawn area. Click here for more information on conserving water in the vegetable garden.

* Cane fruits and some vegetables (for example asparagus) perform better planted directly into the ground.