

Grow Organic Produce at the Barn

Make the most of your barn resources with an eco-friendly garden.

By Lucinda Dyer

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In this new green tip from Lucinda Dyer, author of *Eco-Horsekeeping: Over 100 Budget-Friendly Ways You and Your Horse Can Save the Planet*, we find out the affordable way to grow your own organic produce. Even better—you can weed, water, and fertilize in between riding lessons and grooming sessions.

Instead of planting flowers around the barn this spring, consider something that's both colorful and edible—vegetables and melons. Gone are the days when gardens demanded a quarter-acre and a plow. These days, you can raise a bumper crop of great organic produce—everything from tomatoes and snap beans to radishes and squash—in a few square feet of soil or even within the limited confines of a container.

There is now a literal truck load of books on the market about how to create a mini-garden, but these are two of my favorites: *All New Square Foot Gardening: Grow More in Less Space* by the elder statesman of small space gardening, Mel Bartholomew; and *The Bountiful Container* by Rose Marie Nichols McGee and Maggie Stuckey.

The best melons I've ever eaten were grown in my friend Michelle's compost piles. Okay, so she is English and we know they can garden anywhere, but as melons are fertilizer and water hogs, a compost pile is the ideal place to grow everything from cantaloupes to watermelon. Here's how:

- Select a spot that gets lots of sun and not a lot of wind—melons don't like being chilly.
- Create 2 to 3 foot "mounds" of approximately 50 percent soil and 50 percent aged compost (it must be ripe aged compost or the melons will feel like they're in a deep fryer) and site the mounds 4 to 6 feet apart.
- Plant your melon seeds 1 inch deep. Thin the seedlings so you have two plants per mound.
- Give each mound 1 to 2 inches of water a week, especially while the fruit is maturing.
- Since planting times and variety of melon you can grow will vary from region to region, consult your local Extension Office or garden center if you have any questions.

To make your barnside gardening even greener, recycle gently used muck buckets (just remember to put holes in the bottom for drainage) and use them as containers, and instead of dumping your water buckets in the driveway, use that water on your veggies and melons.

Get more green ideas, as well as detailed information on how to start and maintain compost in Lucinda Dyer's book *Eco-Horsekeeping*.

[Click here for more tips on green horsekeeping.](#)