



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Grow Your Own Pizza Garden? (March 13, 2021)

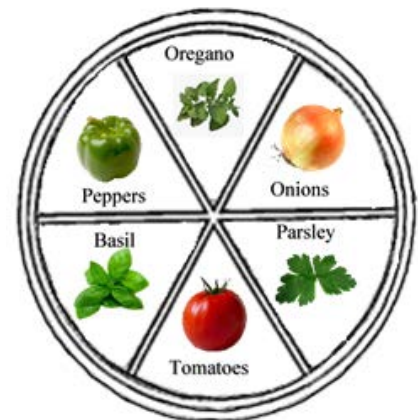
by Susan Schieferle, UCCE Master Gardener

YUM! Who doesn't like pizza, especially homemade pizza! And, the fresher the toppings, the better the pizza! Your kids will like to help you grow their very own pizza garden. Here's how you do it!

1. **Prepare your site:** You need a sunny area to grow your plants. The minimum size is a 3-foot by 6-foot raised bed or garden plot that has been readied for planting. You could also achieve the same garden by using several 5-gallon plastic tubs, the kind used to store playground equipment (just add some drainage holes to the bottoms). But the best idea is to design a circular garden, divide into pie pieces, and grow the different vegetables and herbs in pizza slices!
2. **Soil:** If you are growing in containers, then buy a soil planting mix for vegetables; this usually contains a slow release fertilizer. A bag of planting mix could also be mixed into your garden soil before planting. Or you can make your own container soil with 1/3 peat moss, 1/3 vermiculite, and 1/3 compost.
3. **Seedlings:** 1 Roma or round tomato plant, 1 Green bell pepper, 1 Orange or yellow pepper, 1 Basil plant, 1 Oregano plant, and 12 Leeks or onions
4. **How to Plant:** Divide the bed into 2 halves (2 ft x 3 ft). Place the tomato plant in the center of one half. Divide the second half into 6 one-foot squares. Plant the peppers, basil, and oregano into 4 of the squares and the onions (and/or leeks) into the remaining 2 squares. If using 5-gallon buckets, plant the tomato in one, the peppers in a second, the herbs in the third and the leeks (or onions) in a fourth. Dig a hole slightly deeper and wider than your seedling and carefully lift the seedling from its pot. Gently massage the roots by holding the base of the stem and then place the plant in the hole and cover with soil and press firmly into the soil. Water slowly and deeply to settle the plants in the garden.
5. **How to care for the Pizza Garden:** Water lightly every day for the first week, and then switch to every three days. As the plants grow and the weather warms, water more deeply and only as needed by checking the soil for moisture or dryness. If growing in containers you may need to water daily or even twice daily when the plants develop fruit.

Fertilize monthly with a standard vegetable fertilizer (or 16-16-16) worked carefully and thoroughly into the plants. Use a shower of water to dislodge any insects (like aphids) from leaves. Inspect plants regularly and pick off worms or use an insecticidal soap.

6. When can we make pizza? Remember, vegetables take time to flower and produce, and some take longer than others.
 - a. Tomatoes: 55 to 100 days to harvest
 - b. Bell Peppers: 50-65 days to green, 80-85 to full color
 - c. Onions and Leeks: 50-75 days



- d. Basil and Oregano: These seedlings have leaves which can be pinched off now to use as herbs but letting them grow will produce a bushier and more abundant plant later.

So, in about 2-3 months, you are ready to harvest, make pizza, and “eat” your hard work. Go get started!

April 3, 11 am - 2 pm, Ace Hardware, Visalia

April 10, 10 am - 2 pm, Luis Nursery, Visalia

At this time, we are not in the office to answer phone calls, but if you send us an email or leave a message on our phone lines, someone will call you back!

Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325; Kings County at (559) 852-2736

Visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/