



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Healthy Loddon Campaspe respectfully acknowledges that the Loddon Campaspe region encompasses the traditional lands and waters of the Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Wurundjeri, and Yorta Yorta people.

We pay our respects to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future.



WELCOME!

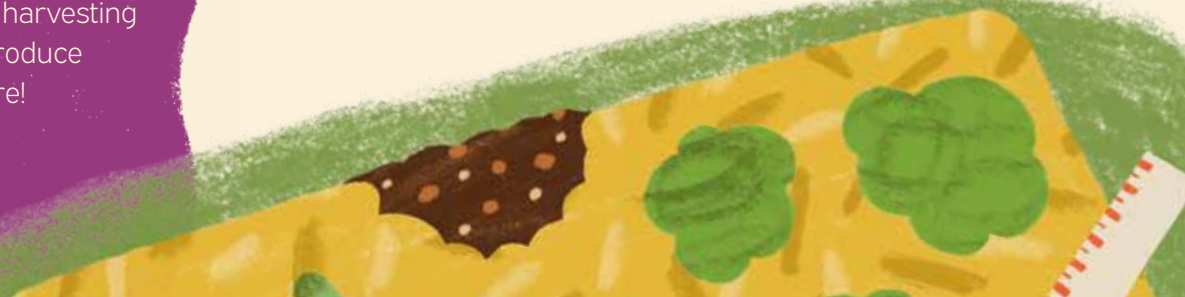
If you're new to gardening and looking to grow with your family, this booklet is here to help you get started. You don't need to know everything or have a perfect plan—gardening is all about experimenting and having fun together.

With simple tips tailored to our region, you'll learn step by step.

Enjoy the process, and before you know it, you'll be harvesting fresh, homegrown produce to cook, eat and share!

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KICKSTARTING YOUR GARDEN ADVENTURE!

You have three main options for growing your fruits and veggies:

- Add them to garden beds you already have,
- Create a special veggie garden or wicking bed,
- Or use pots and containers

Or mix and match!

Think about what you want to grow and how much space the roots need.

For leafy greens, root veggies, climbing plants, and small fruit bushes, a garden bed that's 30-50cm deep is enough.

For big fruit trees, you'll need at least 100 cm of soil.

If you use containers, just remember they dry out faster, so you'll need to water them more often.

USING THE GARDEN BEDS YOU ALREADY HAVE

If you want to turn your current garden beds into veggie beds, you'll need to improve the soil first.

Start by digging the soil about 30cm deep and mixing in plenty of organic matter, like compost. A good rule is to use 3 parts soil to 1 part compost for healthy, rich soil to grow your veggies.



RAISED GARDEN BEDS

A garden bed frame of 40cm upwards can be used to form a raised bed as long as it's sturdy and won't collapse.

Popular materials include corrugated iron, non-treated wood, straw bales or even recycled apple crates.



WICKING BEDS

A wicking bed draws water up from a reservoir below, delivering it straight to the plant roots. It's a super efficient way to water your veggies!

To make a wicking bed work, you'll need to build it carefully, with the right depth and materials for good drainage and plant growth. For more information about wicking beds, watch the Gardening Australia video here:

www.abc.net.au/gardening/how-to/building-a-wicking-bed/9435452



CONTAINERS

If you're planting in pots, containers, or hanging baskets, there are lots of options, from fancy pots to recycled ones.

All your plants will grow best in full sun. Since sunlight changes from summer to winter, the great thing about containers is you can move them around!

Just remember—don't use regular garden soil in pots. It doesn't drain well and breaks down too fast. Use an organic potting mix instead.



SOIL — THE KEY TO PERFECT PRODUCE!

Good soil is the key to a healthy veggie garden!

Soil is made up of tiny mineral bits, air, water, and a little organic matter. The millions of tiny organisms living in the soil help keep it healthy.

To grow great veggies, your soil should feel crumbly, be dark in colour, and hold moisture well.

PH LEVELS

The ideal pH for most plants is between 6.0 and 7.5.

You can buy a soil pH testing kit from a garden centre or hardware store to check if your soil is too acidic or alkaline.

If it's too acidic (low pH), add dolomite or lime. If it's too alkaline (high pH), add some sulphur to lower it.



FEEDING YOUR PLANTS!

Plants need plenty of nutrients in the soil to grow well, especially fast-growing veggies.

COMPOST AND MANURE

Adding compost and aged manure to your garden soil will give your plants most of what they need. You can also improve the nutrients in your soil by checking the soil pH.

FERTILISERS

If you need to use fertilisers, focus on feeding the soil instead of the plants. This way, the plants can take up what they need when they need it.

Before Spring and Autumn, use slow-release pellet fertilisers. During the growing season, add organic fertilisers every two weeks.

Choose organic liquid fertilisers like worm tea, seaweed solution, or fish emulsion.

Avoid synthetic fertilisers because they can have chemicals that may harm young plants.

WATERING RIGHT — KEEP YOUR GARDEN THRIVING!

Water is super important for growing healthy herbs, fruits and veggies. They need a lot more water than native plants do.

How and when you water can help keep your plants healthy and reduce pests and diseases.

CHECK YOUR SOIL FIRST

Before you water, test the soil with your finger.

If it feels damp and sticks to your finger, it doesn't need watering. If it's dry, then give it a drink! This is especially important in cooler months when too much water can cause root rot and other problems.

TIP:

A GREAT WAY TO WATER YOUR
VEGGIE PATCH IS BY USING A DRIP IRRIGATION SYSTEM
THAT DELIVERS WATER RIGHT TO THE ROOTS.

WATER THE ROOTS, NOT THE LEAVES

Plants soak up water through their roots, so aim for the base of the plants when you water. Water on the leaves can lead to mould and mildew.

WATER IN THE MORNING

Water your plants in the morning so they can drink before it gets hot. This also helps keep the soil cool. If you water in the evening, it can lead to mould, especially in warmer months.



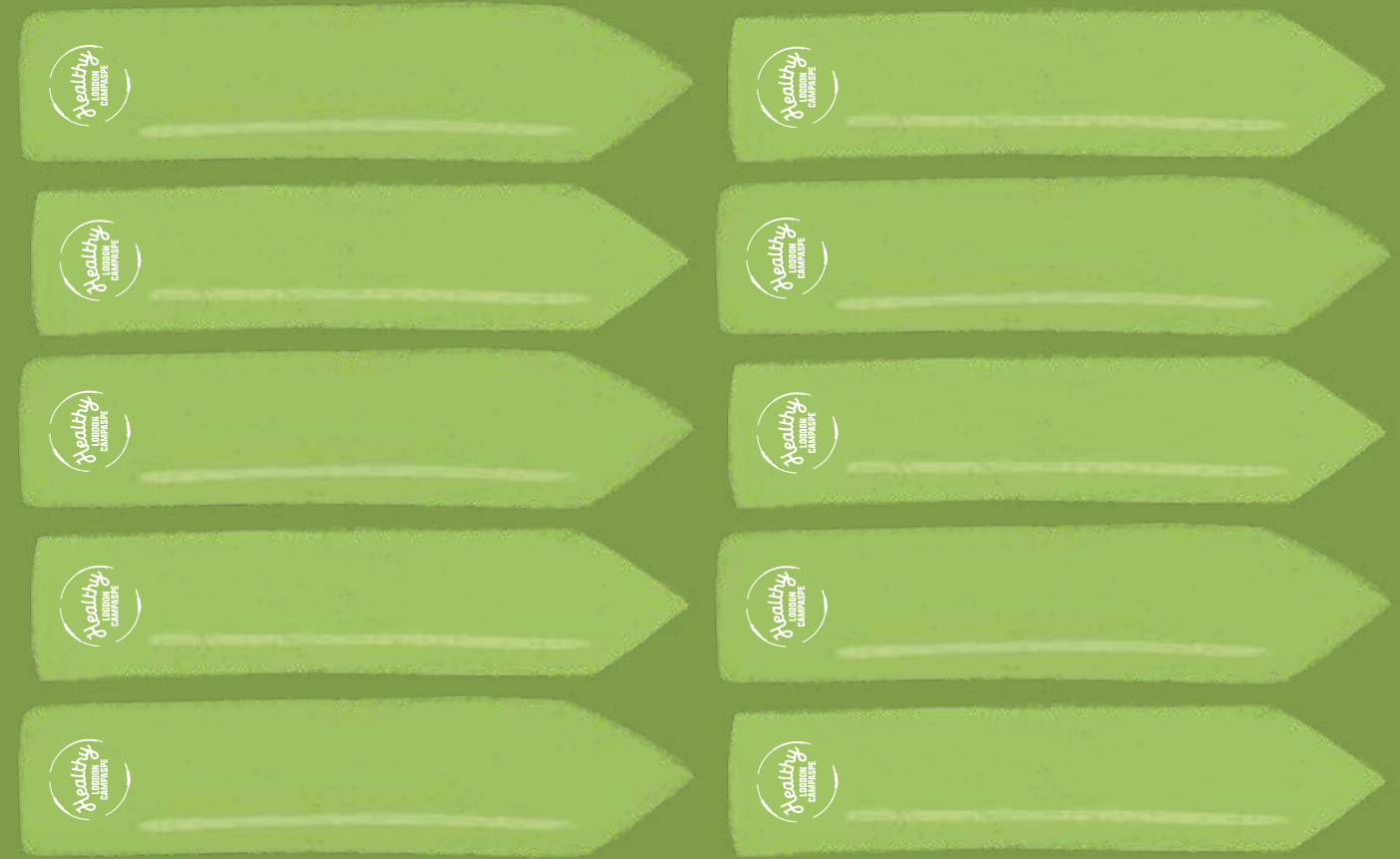
NAME YOUR PLANTS!

Don't forget what you've planted where!

Cut out the plant tags, write the names of your plants on them and put them in the garden next to the plant.

WATCH THEM GROW!

Cut out the measuring stick below to measure your seedling's growth.





AVOID USING GREYWATER

Don't use untreated greywater (water from your laundry and bathroom) on veggie gardens where you grow food. It can contain harmful bugs and chemicals.

You can use it around fruit trees and shrubs, but make sure to apply it below the surface with drippers, and alternate it with fresh water to prevent toxins from building up.

If you're using greywater in your garden, use detergents that are low in phosphorus and sodium. For more details, visit EPA Victoria and search for "greywater."

MULCH MAGIC! FOR HAPPY, HEALTHY PLANTS.

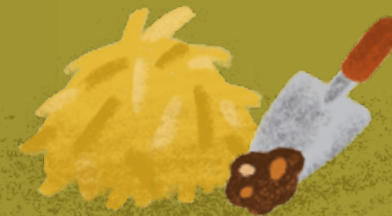
Mulching means putting a layer of organic material on top of the soil.

Cover your veggie garden with straw mulch, especially in summer, to keep water from evaporating too quickly.

There are many types of mulch, but straw is the best choice for veggie gardens and fruit trees.

Straw mulches like pea straw, lucerne, and sugar cane are rich in nutrients and break down faster than wood mulches.

Spreading a layer about 3-5cm deep, helps keep the soil moist, stops weeds from growing, keeps the soil temperature steady, and improves the soil's structure and nutrients as it breaks down.



WHEN TO HARVEST YOUR VEGGIES

PICK YOUR VEGGIES IN THE MORNING

Picking your produce in the morning instead of in the afternoon helps them stay crisp and fresh.

BE CAREFUL WHEN HARVESTING

Sometimes your veggies might need to be cut from the plant, so carefully use clean, sharp pruning shears.

CHECK YOUR SEEDLING INFORMATION CARD

When you purchase a seedling, it will usually come with an information card. This card will tell you how much sun your plant needs, how big it will grow, and will also give you a timeframe for when it will be ready to harvest. Hold onto these cards and write the estimated harvest date on them so you don't forget!

USE ALL YOUR SENSES WHEN HARVESTING

If you're not sure if your veggies are ready to pick, use all of your senses to check them over.

ARE THEY THE RIGHT COLOUR?
ARE THEY FIRM TO THE TOUCH?
DO THEY SMELL RIPE?



SHARING IS CARING!

If you find that your garden is thriving and you end up with too many veggies for you to eat, think about sharing your bounty!

Share with your family, friends or work colleagues. You can also see if your community has a produce stall where you can leave excess produce for others to take.

FREEZING AND STORAGE

Still too many veggies? Think about storing and freezing your produce.

To freeze your veggies, wash them with cold water, dry them thoroughly and then store them in a freezer bag or airtight container. Veggies can be stored in the freezer for several months.

WHAT TO PLANT IN...

AUTUMN & WINTER

Asparagus
Broad bean
Onion
Peas
Spinach

SPRING & SUMMER

Basil
Beans
Beetroot
Brussel sprouts
Capsicum

ALL YEAR ROUND

Asian greens
Broccoli
Cabbage
Coriander
Garlic
Lettuce
Kale
Radish
Rocket
Silver beet
Spring onion

Carrots
Celery
Chili
Chives
Cucumber
Eggplant
Leek
Parsnip
Potato
Pumpkin
Sweet corn
Tomato
Zucchini



FRESH & TASTY: USING YOUR HOMEGROWN PRODUCE!

HOMEMADE PASTA SAUCE

PREP: 15 MINUTES

COOK: 2 HOURS

MAKES: 1KG

SERVES: 2



INGREDIENTS

1 kg ripe roma tomatoes whole, or canned tomatoes (crushed or diced)

1/3 cup olive oil

8-10 cloves garlic finely diced

1 onion finely diced

1/4 cup vegetable stock

4 bay leaves

1 handful fresh basil leaves

**Optional:
smoked paprika
and hot paprika**

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Bring a large saucepan of water to the boil. Add whole fresh tomatoes and ensure they are covered by the water. Bring back to the boil, then remove from heat and drain.
2. Allow tomatoes to cool down enough so you can handle them, then peel the skin and dice into small pieces. Discard the stems.
3. Heat the olive oil in the same large pot. Add garlic and onion and sauté until it's see-through.
4. Add the prepared tomatoes, stock, basil leaves, bay leaves and optional spices (hot paprika and smoked paprika). Stir well and bring to the boil once more, then reduce heat to a simmer and cook for around 2 hours until sauce has thickened and reduced, stirring occasionally. Remove from the heat.
5. Carefully transfer sauce into airtight containers and allow to fully cool down before storing in the fridge or freezer.

Recipe sourced from: WanderCooks

FRESH & TASTY: USING YOUR HOMEGROWN PRODUCE!

LEEK AND POTATO SOUP

PREP: 20 MINUTES

COOK: 32 MINUTES

MAKES: 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 tsp olive oil

2 medium leeks, trimmed,
halved, washed, sliced

2 garlic cloves, crushed

700g potatoes,
peeled, cut into
2cm pieces

2 cups chicken
liquid stock

Chopped fresh chives,
to serve

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium-low heat. Add leek and garlic. Cook, covered, stirring occasionally, for 8 to 10 minutes or until softened. Increase heat to medium-high. Add potato. Stir to coat.
2. Add stock and 3 cups cold water. Cover. Bring to the boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer, partially covered, for 20 minutes or until potato is tender. Set aside for 5 minutes to cool slightly.
3. Blend, in batches, until smooth.
4. Return to pan over low heat. Cook, stirring, for 2 minutes or until heated through. Serve sprinkled with chives.

Recipe sourced from Taste.com





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