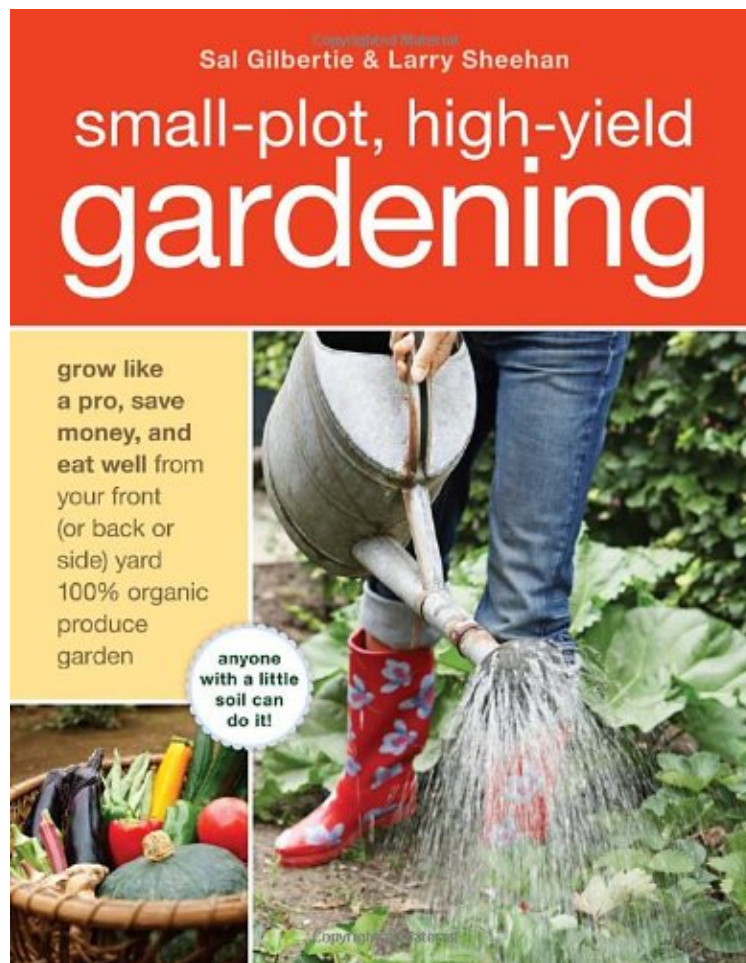


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Small-Plot, High-Yield Gardening: How to Grow Like a Pro, Save Money, and Eat Well by Turning Your Back (or Front or Side) Yard Into An Organic Produce Garden

Sal Gilbertie, Larry Sheehan

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Sal Gilbertie, Larry Sheehan : **Small-Plot, High-Yield Gardening: How to Grow Like a Pro, Save Money, and Eat Well by Turning Your Back (or Front or Side) Yard Into An Organic Produce Garden** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Small-Plot, High-Yield Gardening: How to Grow Like a Pro, Save Money, and Eat Well by Turning Your Back (or Front or Side) Yard Into An Organic Produce Garden:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Perfect!By Elizabeth K. ShookSmall-Plot, High Yield Gardening is THE book to buy for first-time or beginning gardeners, or experienced gardeners frustrated by bad results. Forget

about the lush photographs of vegetables and gardens in other books, and even worse, the "gardening" books that give you recipes for all the crops they don't teach you how to grow, and buy this book instead. Gilbertie and Sheehan explain the work and wonders of gardening, all in a step-by-step, manageable, no-nonsense way that is both instructive and inspiring, without all the fluff or unhelpful nonsense of other books. They clearly explain how to make a garden in the space that you have and how not to overdo it in the first few years. I don't want to say that this book changed my life, but in fact it did. I went from not being a gardener, to being one -- all because of what I learned through this book. Worth every penny! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Must have for Gardeners By debraintexas Very good book lots of great tips for successful gardening. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. WOW!!! Excellent book for teaching beginner gardeners!! By Rebekah I checked this book out of my local library and after renewing it once and making copies of several pages in the book, decided to purchase this amazing book. Sal Gilbertie really speaks to beginner and advanced gardeners. He's so easy to follow and really breaks down gardening. He has amazing tips for each crop as well!

Are you tired of throwing away time, energy, and money on a perfectly manicured, water-guzzling, weed-producing lawn? Are you longing to feed your family in more healthful and eco-friendly ways but shocked by organic produce prices at the grocery store? Do you fantasize about growing your own food but hesitate to take on more than you can manage? If you answered yes to any of these questions, its time for you to get down and dirty and take the plunge that will please your taste buds and your pocket-book! In *Small-Plot, High-Yield Gardening*, Sal Gilbertie and Larry Sheehan will help you turn your sprawling suburban acreage or postage stamp sized plot into a low-impact, all-organic, totally sustainable produce garden. You'll learn about the most effective natural fertilizers, drought-resistant cultivation methods, pest-repellent companion plantings, trends in heirloom herb and vegetable varieties, and raised-bed techniques for achieving maximum productivity in a limited space. You can even add a cutting garden so you'll always have fresh flowers on a kitchen table that's groaning under the weight of incomparably fresh vegetables seasoned with a variety of home-grown herbs. Whether you're filling a 10 x 10 sandbox or digging up your 3,000-square-foot tennis court, any yard has the potential to produce a multi-crop bonanza. And anyone with a little soil and a lot of heart can do it!

One of life's great pleasures is a delicious meal prepared with fresh, organic produce from your own garden. Whether you have a real garden or just a window box, I can think of no better guide to creating a sustainable herb and vegetable garden than Sal Gilbertie. For more than 30 years, I have turned to Sal for healthy, productive plants and, with this useful and informative book, he can help you, too, cultivate your garden.--Martha Stewart, Founder of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Inc. About the Author Sal Gilbertie is the third-generation proprietor of Gilberties Herb Gardens in Westport, Connecticut. Established in 1922 by Sal's grandfather, Gilberties is the largest herb grower in the United States today, shipping hundreds of varieties to more than 800 garden centers, plant nurseries, and farms. Coauthor Larry Sheehan has a long list of writing credits that includes newspapers, magazines, television documentaries, and dozens of books including the best-selling *Living with Dogs* and *The Sporting Life*. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. I. Gardening at a Glance You Don't Have to Be Italian to Grow Good Peppers I have a customer who is the consummate gardener from the old country. If he eats a delicious peach, he saves the pit and plants it somewhere in the yard. He has a one-third-acre lot in the middle of town, but if he eats a dozen good peaches in the season, he'll plant a dozen peach trees. Some of the peach pits do germinate, and one or two occasionally survive the ravages of the neighborhood kids and dogs, and my friend eventually gets peaches off them. But when one of the trees dies in the spring, does he cut it down? No. He plants pole beans at the base of the trunk. By summer the branches of the tree are covered with thousands of dangling beans. So he gets another crop out of the tree, dead or alive. It is in this man's make-up to grow things, not because he is Italian, but because he grew up in a family who happened to have a garden. I've noticed that many of our visitors to Nanas Garden, which is on the grounds of our garden center as a kind of demonstration plot, have an inferiority complex about gardening because they're not of Italian or Yankee heritage. In my part of the country, East-Coast Yankees and older Italians are believed to have the proverbial green thumb. I tell our visitors that good gardening is not in the genes. It's in the jeans—the pants you wear when you have to work hard at something. It's the product of knowledge and experience, and if you didn't grow up with a gardening background, you're going to have to acquire the knowledge and experience on your own, with the help of friendly neighbors, neighborly friends, and books like this one. Offhand, I can think of a veritable melting pot of outstanding gardeners among our customers: a Swede who specializes in early peas, a Scot with a knack for lettuces, an African-American who grows an amazing variety of medicinal herbs, a Greek who raises giant Spanish onions. . . . Obviously, vegetable gardening is not, cannot be, and should not be a contest among races, religions, and creeds. No one is born with a green thumb. Anyone can learn to garden successfully. All that aside, in case you ever want to win an argument about who may be the best gardeners in the world, I suggest you consider the implications of a list compiled by the United Nations ranking countries according to agricultural output per acre. It reveals that many of the nations small in geographical size are in fact the most productive in their farming techniques. The Top 10: Republic of China (Taiwan) United Arab

Republic (Egypt)The NetherlandsBelgiumJapanDenmarkGermanySouth KoreaSri LankaNorwayId just like to know what happened to the Italians.Why Bother?The ostensible reasons so many of my customers are turning to vegetable gardening are to save money and to eat better.Why are vegetables so expensive?There are fewer farmers growing them, mainly. Not long ago, New Jerseyknown as the Garden Stateannounced it had lost tens of thousands of its traditional truck-farming acreage to soybean-farming enterprises. A single big-cash crop like soybeans happens to be a lot easier for a farmer to manage than a mess of vegetable fields. With world population expected to exceed 7 billion any minute now and to reach 9 billion by the year 2040, there is going to be a lot more pressure on farmers who are in the business of growing varied crops to either sell their land or convert their fields to the big basic crops.Truck farms are also being lost to real-estate developments all over the country, which is nothing new but its continuing to erode the supply of fresh vegetables. As most such farms tend to be located fairly near their outlets in metropolitan areas, theyre naturally regarded as attractive and potentially valuable building sites.There are fewer farmers, period. The rural life that Thomas Jefferson and the other Founding Fathers extolled and promoted has practically disappeared. As late as the 1880s and 1890s, some 25 percent of Americans lived on farms. Today less than 1 percent do. We have more people living in prisons than on farms these days.The most recent Census of Agriculture, conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) every five years, shows some hopeful signs, however. The number of farms in America peaked in 1935, at 6.8 million, and declined for several decades after that. In the last two decades, it has leveled off between 2 million and 2.5 million. The number of small farms increased by 4 percent from 2002 to 2007, with most of the new farms being part-time operations. Although often disparaged as farmettes or hobby farms, they represent a significant amount of farmland saved from disuse or development. Another encouraging sign: there were 18,200 organic farms in 2007, compared with about 12,000 in 2002. Within the farming community, the balance of power continues to shift from small to humongous. Consider the fact that about 900,000 of the nations farms generated \$2,500 or less in sales per farm in 2007. In contrast, 5 percent of total farmsabout 125,000 operationsaccounted for 75 percent of agricultural production. Not surprisingly, those operations receive the majority of government farm subsidies. In 2001, for example, a mega-operation called Tyler Farms in Arkansas received \$8.1 million in subsidies90,000 times more than the median farm subsidy of \$899and nearly equal to the total of farm subsidies to all farmers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island combined.Big Oil, Meet Big SoilBut there is also good news on the good-food front. The Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) movement, started in 1984, now has more than 3,000 small farms growing food crops for subscriber families who pay a fee in advance to the farmer, then collect fresh organic produceusually on a weekly basisthroughout the growing season. Many of these CSA farms also offer organic meat products to their members. (Sales of organic poultry and dairy products soared in the 1990s.) Each CSA farm represents acreage saved from development and another farming family saved from extinction.There was a 40 percent increase in farmers markets between 2002 and 2006 (totaling 4,385 markets nationwide at the end of 2006). And nothing epitomizes the glories of fresh local fare better than a good farmers market. Shoppers at the farmers market in Seattle, for example, can take home the Ozette, a fingerling Spanish potato; the Geoduck, a clam-flavored mollusk; the Pluot, a cross between a plum and apricot; and bushels and bushels of that staple of the Pacific Northwest, sour pie cherries.Apart from supplying their customers with glorious produce and a wide range of locally made food products, farmers markets often feature free performances by local musicians and the handiwork of local craftspeople and artists. A farmers market is a vital gathering place for the community it serves, a place where people make friends with farmers, home chefs and restaurant chefs alike find delectables for their menus, and everyone chews the fat about everything under the sun.Also making gains in recent years are food co-ops, community gardens (despite the loss of federal funding in the 1990s), and a national USDA-funded farm-to-school program, designed to get local produce into local schools as part of the effort to deal with the epidemic of obesity and diabetes among our children. (Kids arent the only fatties. Our fast-food-and-agribusiness-based diet has led to a population in which 65 percent of all adults are overweight, and 30 percent of them are clinically defined as obese. Yikes! Hold off on those second helpings.)The demand for home-grown food has led to a new cottage industry: vegetable gardeners for hire. Two organic gardeners in the metropolitan Portland, Oregon, area, for example, have made a business of maintaining backyard gardens for some forty customers who range from food-stamp recipients to lawyers and other professionals. The pair tend, weed, and water each garden and deliver a harvest basket to each clients back porch once a week throughout the growing season.Then theres the Slow Food movement, founded in Italy in 1986 to combat the dark side of fast food and to preserve one regions unique cuisine and associated food plants, seeds, domestic animals, and farming practices. Today Slow Food has 83,000 members with chapters in over 122 countries. In the United States there are 16,000 members, including Berkeley, California, restaurateur and food activist Alice Waters, and respected food writers Michael Pollan, Eric Schlosser, and Corby Kummer.Nationwide, we are down to 2.2 million farms from a high of nearly 7 million prior to World War II. It doesnt take an expert economist to see that with fewer farmers growing vegetables, the consumer is going to end up paying higher prices for the produce. This is what has been happening.High prices might not be so bad if the vegetables sold in the typical supermarket were worth it.Certain vegetables are constitutionally unfit for mass marketing. It is not the fault of the big food conglomerates that peas, corn, and asparagus invariably leave their flavors somewhere in transit or on the vine because they are harvested too

early. Such vegetables you must eat in or near the garden to savor their true qualities. Other vegetables have lost their old-fashioned virtues in the process of being adapted to the needs of large-scale farming. Wholesale seed catalogs don't even mention flavor in listing varieties available to big growers. I just picked up one at random and read through eighteen detailed accounts of different peppers. Only two entries bothered to describe the taste. Commercial varieties of lettuce and tomato have been bred and selected not so much for bite and taste and afterglow, but for their ability to grow to a uniform size, so they fit into the supermarket package, and for sturdy skins, so they get to the store with a minimum of cracks and blemishes. I'm not sure there's hard evidence that chemically grown, genetically modified, mass-packed, and shipped store-bought vegetables are significantly less nutritious and contain dramatically less valuable fiber content than home-grown vegetables. However, if you blind-tested ten gourmet diners with a series of choices between the two, I'm willing to bet that all ten of them would pick the homegrown vegetables and ask for seconds. Mass-produced tomatoes taste flat unless you sprinkle salt on them. Mass-produced strawberries taste bland unless you sprinkle sugar on them. That's another minor savings if you grow your own: you don't have to spend as much on ketchup, mustard, and other condiments, and all the sauces used to give flavor to flavorless foods. Some of my customers have started gardens because they've observed that their youngsters will actually eat good fresh vegetables. Not long ago, Consumer Reports analyzed the offerings at a sampling of all our leading fast-food chains—the ones where youngsters like to eat. The study showed that the nutrients most commonly in short supply in a meal served up at McDonald's, Kentucky Fried Chicken, or Hardee's were biotin, folacin, pantothenic acid, vitamin A, iron, and copper. Guess where your kids can get those nutrients? From fresh fruits and vegetables. Apart from chains like Whole Foods, health-food stores often carry fresh vegetables, but the choice is usually limited to a few items, piled in there between the towering banks of vitamin jars, and for most budget-minded shoppers, the prices for organic foods are just too high. Deprived of quality, on one hand, and of economy, on the other, it's not surprising that many families and individuals have turned to home gardening. Let me state the bind in another way. We've reached the point where there is no way that large-scale growers using chemical fertilizers, insecticides, pesticides, fungicides, and herbicides, and raising varieties suited to mechanical handling and processing are going to be able to offer significantly better vegetables than are already on the market. And it is equally unlikely that growers using nonchemical farming techniques on a smaller scale will be able to offer lower prices for their produce. In fact, I've noticed that even prices at farm stands, those traditional bastions of bargains, have skyrocketed. All this leads me, somewhat indirectly, to the key question that every newcomer must face before the first assault on the earth in spring: should you garden organically, or should you garden chemically? It is quite possible to garden productively on a small scale without the use of chemicals of any kind, as I've tried to demonstrate to customers in Nanas Garden. And I believe there is much more personal satisfaction to be gained by growing vegetables organically. In recent years evidence has mounted that a lot of other people feel the same way. There has been a quiet counterrevolution in support of organic farming and gardening practices, a desire on the part of growers and consumers alike to take control of their food supply. Recent volumes like *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser, *In Defense of Food* by Michael Pollan, and *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* by Barbara Kingsolver have made Americans more aware of the rusty links in a national food chain largely controlled by corporate agriculture. Consumers are now more cognizant of the healthful and environmentally friendly alternatives offered by small, independent local growers and providers, including families who have decided to grow their own produce not only for reasons of better taste and nutrition, but to save money too—a motive not to be scoffed at in hard economic times. The growing popularity of the various movements and organizations described earlier in this chapter attest to a broad underlying support for a new and better way of feeding ourselves. It's great to grow organic, but it's even better to grow productively organically—harvesting our peas and spinach, beans and broccoli, and corn and tomatoes as fast and as bountifully as we can. That's what this book is all about. Chemical gardening is easier, and just as productive over the short run, regardless of what the more outspoken advocates of organic gardening may say on the subject. However, as odd as it may sound, organic gardening teaches the science of gardening better than chemical gardening does. Dishing up 5-10-5 fertilizer from a 50-pound sack hardly stretches the mind or taxes the imagination. Building up the nutrients in your soil by organic means can and does. Attacking bugs or soil-borne disease with the appropriate insecticide or fungicide is a simple matter of spraying and hoping you don't kill too many bees and other beneficial critters in the process. Preventing these problems from occurring in the first place is a complex proposition involving thoughtful garden design, proper soil-enriching methods, and various other sound gardening techniques. But why bother? The answer to that is there appears to be another, deeper reason why more and more people are turning to vegetable gardening, and in this lies the attractiveness of the organic approach. It's important for people to save money and to eat better—and maybe to get their teenagers to swallow something containing vitamin A. But if I read my customers right, it's also important for them to make contact with something as solid, vital, and challenging as the home-gardening experience. Verlyn Klinkenborg, who lives on a farm, said it well on *The New York Times* editorial page on February 15, 2009. Part of the [economic] crisis we face is a sense of alienation and powerlessness, he wrote. You don't meet many alienated gardeners, unless it's been a terrible woodchuck year. Gardening brings people in touch with the realities of land and sky, heat and cold, rain, wind, and drought, and the life cycle itself. If you are lucky enough to be able to watch things grow naturally, these are

wonders that are free for the asking. As a devotional activity for mind and body, gardening beats TV, and it beats joining the therapy-of-the-month club. People are tired of secondhand entertainment and self-absorption, fed up with the synthetic nature of many of the products and services in our culture generally, and anxious to exercise more control over their own lives. Pardon the brief lecture, but that, it seems to me, is why they bother.