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University of Idaho Extension  
Extension Educator  
Mike Bauer                      263-8511

April 14, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## PATIO GARDENING

By Kit Cooley

Just because you don't have a lot of land, that doesn't mean you can't have your own victory garden. As long as you have some space on a patio or porch and the basic requirements for plant life, you can grow your own food.

What plants you grow depends on what you like to eat, what your space can support, and how much time and effort you can put into your potted garden. Most herbs do quite well in pots and are easy to grow. For vegetables, think small: no cabbage or watermelon or giant sunflowers. Patio type tomato varieties, peppers and leafy greens are easy to grow in containers. Beans, cucumbers and small squash can be grown successfully if a trellis is used. Edible flowers, such as nasturtium, heartsease, and marigold will brighten your patio.

Containers can be anything with drainage: plastic, clay, ceramic, wood, or metal. Lightweight, movable pots or pots on wheels are handy, as you can move them to catch the best light. Most vegetables need at least six hours of sunlight per day. Lettuce can still be grown if there is too much sun by using shade cloth. A bright surface as a backdrop can be used if there is too little sun. If your growing area gets hot, be aware that plants can suffer. For those inevitable cold snaps, have frost cloth or old blankets at hand to shelter both plant and pot.

The simplest source of soil for your container garden is a good all-purpose potting soil mix (not topsoil). Do not use garden soil, even if it is of good quality, as this will cause compaction problems in containers.

Potted plants dry out more quickly and need more water than those in the ground, so try to position your containers near a water source. A hot location will cause container plants to use even more water. Most potted plants need water twice a day in the summer.

For more information, *The Bountiful Container* by McGee & Stuckey is an excellent book to help you set up your patio garden, and many seed catalogs will also have sections devoted to

container-appropriate plants. Be creative with your containers and your choice of edible plants and you can have a beautiful as well as productive patio garden.

*Kit Cooley has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 2008.*

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