

# My Child's First- Spring Container Vegetables Cherry Tomatoes & Basil

- Have your child follow along with you as you start your container garden.
- For more in-depth information, go to the websites listed at the end of this article or talk to your local nursery about other vegetable/herb options.

When to start your container garden: A general guideline is the end of March to the beginning of April for warm-weather plants.

Days to harvest: Tomato plants can be harvested in 55 to 70 days. A basil plant can be harvested when the plant has 3 to 5 sets (pair) of leaves. If you grow basil from seed, you can harvest in 88 days.



Photo: public-domain.net

## 1) **Purchase** (from your local garden nursery)

- The Gardening Staples
  - Gloves
  - Hand Shovel
  - Watering Can
  - Container (at least a 14" pot – will produce more in a larger pot. Make sure the container has a drain hole)
  - Saucer for the Container
  - Tomato cage for support
- The Living 'Stuff'
  - 5 lb. bag of potting soil
  - Fertilizer- 10-10-10 or 5-5-5 (equal amounts of nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous)
  - Plants-
    - Cherry Tomatoes (1 plant)
      - Ex: Sweet 100 or Suncherry
    - Basil (1 plant)
      - Ex: sweet basil



***Tip: Remember to always read your plant labels!***

## 2) Plant

- Put the saucer under your container
- Fill your container  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with potting soil
- Mix in fertilizer (follow instructions on the bag)
- Add water – make sure soil is moist
- Place the tomato plant in the soil up to the first set of leaves (if you need, the stem can be planted horizontally)
- Place the basil plant in the soil deep enough to cover the roots
- Water the plants in the container

## 3) Maintain

- Place container in a sunny spot
- Water as needed (stick your finger in the container to see if it's moist)
- Add fertilizer (check recommendations on the bag)
- Check for bugs and hand remove any bugs on the plants
- Towards the end of the season, when your basil starts flowering, pinch off the flowers to encourage continued leaf growth
- Harvest when?
  - Tomatoes are red (if they are not quite red, they will ripen after two weeks if kept between 65 to 70 degrees)
  - Basil plant has doubled in size (you can pick up to  $\frac{1}{2}$  the leaves on the plant)

## Websites for more information:

Recommended varieties, fact sheets & problem solving:

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/vegetable/>

Container Grown Tomatoes:

<http://extension.psu.edu/plants/gardening/fact-sheets/vegetable-gardening/growing-great-container-vegetables/tomatoes>

