

# Vegie plots sprout in backyard boom

**Georgie Pilcher**  
social trends reporter

**BACKYARD** vegie patches are booming with more than half of Australia harvesting home-grown goodness from their food-filled gardens.

Balconies, small suburban lots and quarter-acre kingdoms are propagating lettuce, tomatoes, carrots and corn with other vegetables, herbs and fruit trees also popular.

Recent Newspoll research reveals 57 per cent of Australians grow fruit and vegetables, with 42 per cent tending a vegie patch to be self-sufficient.

Baby Boomers are leading the trend with 59 per cent growing edible vegetables, but 76 per cent of young Australians say they intend to plant something in their gardens this spring, suggesting a Gen Y gardening boom.

Sustainable Gardening Australia's Helen Tuton said in the past 12 months there had been a huge return to the backyard vegie patch.

"It has been enormous," she said. "It is all about produce — people are wanting to grow their own."

"We have a lot of people in their mid-20s to 30s, first time out of home, growing their own produce for financial reasons or because they are concerned about the environment."

"Also a lot of renters are growing their own produce in movable tubs they can take with them."

Ms Tuton said young families with children were the second-biggest garden lovers.

"It allows their kids to connect with where their food comes from," she said.

Sustainable Gardening Australia offers planting advice through councils to teach people how to garden and grow vegetables in even the smallest of spaces.

Ms Tuton said even inner-city residents could grow herbs, small citrus trees and pots of favourite vegetables on their balconies.

"If you have limited space, just grow the stuff you are going to eat," she said.

And if at first you don't succeed — persevere.

"Every suburb has a slightly different environment and different soil so talk to your

## What to plant this spring

■ **Tomatoes.** Look for the heirloom and heritage varieties and pot cherry tomatoes. Don't forget companion plants basil and marigolds

■ **Cabbage, celery, leeks, lettuce, silverbeet, spring onions, brussels sprouts, capsicums, chillies, eggplant and beetroot**

■ **Go crazy with climbing beans over a trellis**

■ **Try some parsley, chamomile, marigolds, oregano, pyrethrum, sage, rosemary, thyme and echinacea**

■ **Put lemon balm and mint in a pot**

■ **For flower colour try daisies, pansies, violas, snapdragons, verbena**

■ **Pop in some sunflower seeds**

■ **Top up your mulch**

■ **Start weeding!**

**Fresh is best:** Maria Ciavarella with Sophie, 5, and Lilly, 5, in their Donvale garden

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neighbours about the soil and what grows," Ms Tuton said.

"Start a gardening group and meet once a month."

The August research by the Nursery and Garden Industry of Australia also found 71 per cent of people believe children today spend less time in the garden than when they were young and fewer people have a lawn and trees in their

back yard compared with when they were children.

Maria Ciavarella grows tomatoes, cucumbers, herbs, beans and sweet corn and said one-third of her weekly fruit and vegetables came from her garden.

"Give me gardening over housework any day," she said.

The research also reveals:

**86 PER CENT** of Australians have a lawn.

**32 PER CENT** have a balcony with potted plants.

**88 PER CENT** of Victorians have a tree in their yard.

**46 PER CENT** of Australia grow herbs.

**44 PER CENT** of Australians grow fruit trees.

**63 PER CENT** of Australians grow vegetables.

**61 PER CENT** enjoy the aesthetic appeal of their garden.

**44 PER CENT** believe their garden adds to their overall health.

**40 PER CENT** associate their garden with doing their bit for the environment.

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