

How to make a Keyhole Garden

EAST AFRICAN STYLE



For groups and gardeners with a bit of unused space and a little ambition, keyhole gardens are ideal. They act like an organic recycling tank, using your food and garden waste as fuel to grow vegetables!

That's why they are part of Send a Cow training for people who receive help from us in Africa. When families are able to make the most of what resources they've got to hand, they can produce two or three times as many vegetables from their land. Simple techniques like this make a world of difference.



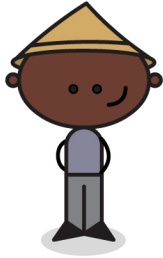
Rose is an orphan from Rwanda. She looks after the keyhole garden with her brother Fidele.

They feed the garden with compost and they water it using a gutter from their roof. Now they get three times more crops than they used to.



Monica and Charles Namuteza from Uganda, have a thriving garden with several keyhole plots.

They use cow manure in their garden and have seen great results, with bumper crops! They use banana leaves from their garden as a mulch on the soil.



TO MAKE ONE, YOU WILL NEED...



Large stones, bricks or logs



Garden soil, compost, well rotted manure



Several 5ft garden canes



Straw or something similar



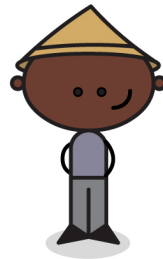
A length of wire



Broken lengths of pipes, or old cans



Worms!



HOW TO DO IT - TEN STEPS



Find a space in your grounds that's about 3m², with good sun, access to water, close to your classroom and relatively sheltered - clear it of weeds and dig it over.



Measure out the arm span of whoever will use the garden with some gardening twine. Halve this length and then add another 30cms – this is the radius of your garden (you can make any size you like, however!). Tie a stick to each end, plant one in the centre of your space and use the other end to draw your circle in the ground.



Draw out an entrance triangle to your keyhole from the edge of the circle to its centre, starting at a width of two feet.



Now take the canes and lay them on the ground, with a 5-10 cm space in between each one. Wire the canes together top and bottom by wrapping the wire around each cane and attaching it to the next until they are all in a line. The total length of canes should be about 125cm for a diameter of 40cm. Now make a cylinder with them and push into the ground at the centre of your space. You have just made your basket!

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Line the inside of the basket with straw (to keep the compost from falling out) and then half fill with top-soil, composted material, and rotted manure if you have some.

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Lay your stones, bricks or logs around the perimeter of your garden – this could be a single layer or more, enough to keep the soil in. Make a layer of broken lengths of pipe, rubble or cans (rustier the better) to improve the drainage.

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Now start filling the garden with a mixture of garden soil, compost and well-rotted manure (if you have some). If you can include some worms, they'll help to circulate the soil. Remember to make sure that the soil goes into the garden in the order that it came out of the hole it came from NB the top-soil goes on top! Keep piling up the soil until you have a mound, which slopes away from the basket – this increases the surface area that you can plant on.

8

Your keyhole garden is now ready for planting! You can segment the area into different crops to enable you to rotate them next season. Or, if you are a seasoned gardener, you will know how to do some intercropping and companion planting.

9

You can mulch with some wood chippings or something similar and put some colourful wool lines in to remind you what you've sown and to brighten it up a bit. To start with you'll need to water in the basket and the soil surface until the roots grow.

10

Now you can carry on your composting by adding uncooked, organic food-waste into the basket using the entrance and water with waste washing up water into the basket too (this contains phosphorous, which some plants really like). Putting a circle of carpet over the top of the basket will help retain heat and speed up the composting process. The water should permeate the garden and water the roots of your crops with lots of lovely nutrients!

You should now have easy access to your garden and be able to reach in to plant, weed, and pick your vegetables.

Download a sign, and tips and advice from:

www.sendacow.org.uk/africangardens

Stick your sign in so that everyone can see what a great job you've done!