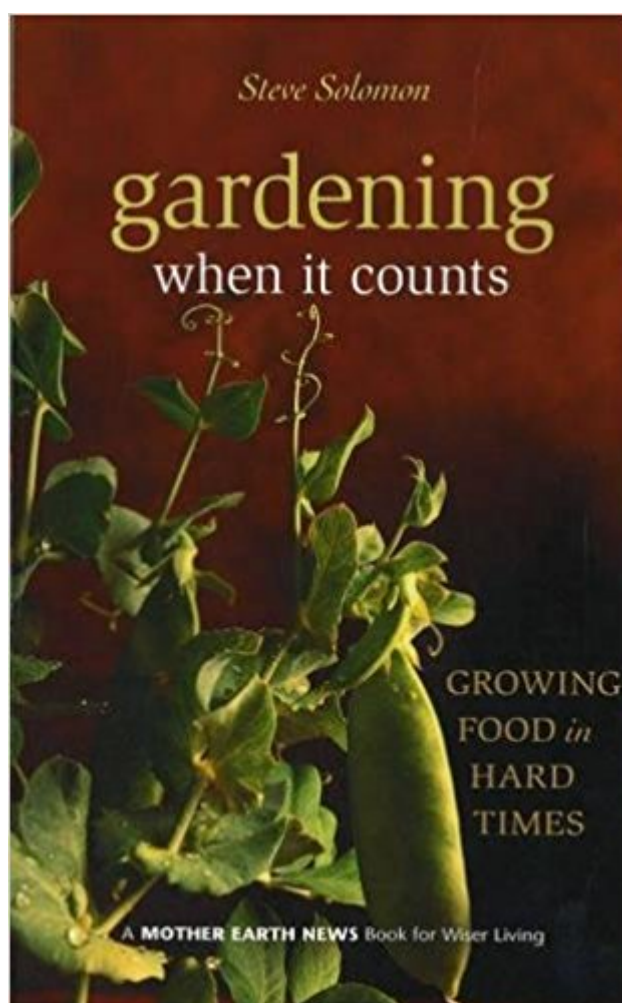


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# Gardening When It Counts: Growing Food In Hard Times (Mother Earth News Wiser Living Series)



## Synopsis

The decline of cheap oil is inspiring increasing numbers of North Americans to achieve some measure of backyard food self-sufficiency. In hard times, the family can be greatly helped by growing a highly productive food garden, requiring little cash outlay or watering. Currently popular intensive vegetable gardening methods are largely inappropriate to this new circumstance. Crowded raised beds require high inputs of water, fertility and organic matter, and demand large amounts of human time and effort. But, except for labor, these inputs depend on the price of oil. Prior to the 1970s, North American home food growing used more land with less labor, with wider plant spacing, with less or no irrigation, and all done with sharp hand tools. But these sustainable systems have been largely forgotten. *Gardening When It Counts* helps readers rediscover traditional low-input gardening methods to produce healthy food. Designed for readers with no experience and applicable to most areas in the English-speaking world except the tropics and hot deserts, this book shows that any family with access to 3-5,000 sq. ft. of garden land can halve their food costs using a growing system requiring just the odd bucketful of household waste water, perhaps two hundred dollars worth of hand tools, and about the same amount spent on supplies — working an average of two hours a day during the growing season. Steve Solomon is a well-known west coast gardener and author of five previous books, including *Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades* which has appeared in five editions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

null (2006-01-17) The decline of cheap oil is inspiring increasing numbers of North Americans to achieve some measure of backyard food self-sufficiency. In hard times, the family can be greatly helped by growing a highly productive food garden, requiring little cash outlay or watering. Currently popular intensive vegetable gardening methods are largely inappropriate to this new circumstance. Crowded raised beds require high inputs of water, fertility and organic matter, and demand large amounts of human time and effort. But, except for labor, these inputs depend on the price of oil. Prior to the 1970s, North American home food growing used more land with less labor, with wider plant spacing, with less or no irrigation, and all done with sharp hand tools. But these sustainable systems have been largely forgotten. Gardening When It Counts helps readers rediscover traditional low-input gardening methods to produce healthy food. Designed for readers with no experience and applicable to most areas in the English-speaking world except the tropics and hot deserts, this book shows that any family with access to 3-5,000 sq. ft. of garden land can halve their food costs using a growing system requiring just the odd bucketful of household waste water, perhaps two hundred dollars worth of hand tools, and about the same amount spent on supplies--working an average of two hours a day during the growing season. Mother Earth News Wiser Living Series (2005-11-16)

Steve Solomon is a well-known west coast gardening guru, and author of five previous books. The founder of Territorial Seed Company, he has taught Master Gardener and Urban Farm classes at the University of Oregon in Eugene. His book, Growing Vegetables West of the Cascades has appeared in five editions.

Judging by the title I expected this book to be about growing food in the worse-case scenario; such as societal breakdown, natural disasters, economic collapse etc... As a full-time survival/preparedness instructor, I hoped this book would help me to develop my own skills and then share vital info to those wanting to prepare for hard times. Instead I found a lot of technical jargon and topics more attractive to the avid gardener rather than the self-reliant survivalist. It's not a bad book by any stretch, but not geared towards the prepper crowd. Thanks, Jerry

Absolutely the most realistic gardening book ever written! Solomon does not write about backyard edenistic gardening that seemingly requires no more effort than ordering from the "seed porn" catalogs--he discusses all the things that will go wrong, and crucially, WHY--and then how to fix it. (HINT: hard work is involved) He's founded a few organic seed companies, so he knows his

agronomy, but he explains it very well to the neophyte. He also reveals some of the dirty secrets of the seed industry, not because it's sensationalistic; they're teaching points that will help you grow food when not being able to do so means you will starve. I have nearly a thousand dead tree books at home, but if the house ever catches fire, this is one of the five books I am grabbing when I leave.

This is by far the best book for anyone getting into gardening. The author writes in a way that anyone can follow even though he goes into in depth discussions on the science behind growing food. Steve has a witty humor and down to earth writing style. I highly recommend this book to anyone getting into gardening, looking to expand on the gardening knowledge, wanting to know how to garden when SHTF, or just wanting a good read. I have used all of Steve's techniques with success and have gardened for over 12 years in very diverse and at times inhospitable conditions with great success.

Well, \*mostly\* he knows what he is talking about. Those of us with decades of gardening experience in clay are of course astonished to find out we weren't really growing anything all along. If you are learning gardening, though, there are two reasons you should buy this book: 1) The chapter on compost alone is worth the price of the book. He wrote a whole book on compost, but alas it is out of print and I can't find a copy. 2) Everyone is writing these ridiculous books about how you can grow 50 plants in a square millimeter with no labor! It's the latest gardening trend, but it's not true. Hobby gardeners can drive down to the big box store and buy another bag of Miracle Grow and ignore the cost, but if your garden is to actually feed you, and feed you long term, you must ignore 90% of the content of those books. This book provides a much needed counterweight -- your personal garden will need tips and tricks from many sources, and this should be one of them. I don't agree with a lot of his advice, but this book still earns a permanent place on my bookshelf next to with Coleman's "Four Season Harvest," Ashworth's "Seed to Seed" and Jeavons' "How to Grow More Vegetables."

I have gardened for many years. I have tried the newer methods of intensive-spaced gardening and weed/grass control methods such as different approaches to mulching. I have been disappointed in the results. For example, last year, I did the multi-layer newspaper approach with bark mulch on top for weed/grass control. It did not work-the bermuda grass just finds a way! Point being: I read Solomon's book about promoting the old-fashioned ways of just simply hoeing the garden-go figure. This is something my elderly Dad has been telling me for years-that I didn't want to believe. I read Solomon's book and decided to try it this year...and I have to admit that Solomon and my Dad are

right! I finally have a grass-free, beautiful garden, and I have spent a fraction of what I normally spend-no money on mulch! Thirty minutes every other day hoeing out grass with an old-fashioned hoe is the best thing that has happened to my garden in 15 years. The bermuda grass roots are already dying. By the end of the season-the garden will be free of bermuda grass (and roots) completely and next year will get easier!! am becoming more of an old-fashioned gardner every day-thanks to Solomon...tried and true methods are tried and true for a reason.

The people who've given this book poor reviews seem to not understand the author's purpose in writing it. We raise nearly every vegetable we put in our mouths, along with much of our meat, and Steve is right. The more garden space you have, the better.I've given the whole raised bed, square foot gardening thing a heroic try, and found true exactly what Steve says as well - the soil is worn out rapidly because the plants are overcrowded. Artificial fertilizers become a near necessity.If you're wanting to raise a veggie garden in your suburban back yard, this is probably not the book for you. You don't have enough space. But if you're on a decent sized patch of ground (a few acres) and want some techniques to manage all that space, this book cannot be beat. The drawings of the root space of each plant are worth the price of the book.I bought the Kindle version and am going to be forced to buy a hard copy that I can take to the garden.One other thing: Saving seed is not as easy as many reviewers seem to think. I've done it successfully with squash (with the occasional odd looking fruit because of cross contamination), tomatoes, pumpkins. But for many veggies, it's a very difficult two season process. That's the reason that Steve seems to downplay doing so. He realized how difficult it can be.And I don't mean in any way to denigrate suburbanites who are trying to supplement their grocery lists with homegrown vegetables. That's a good thing to do, and I would encourage you to do so. Just don't think you're going to be able to feed your family of four on a suburban city lot. You simply are not.

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