

URBAN FARMER

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How to: Get into Market Growing

A happy niche between hobby gardening and farmer for a major profit is becoming a market grower. Market growers can produce a small profit by selling their produce and farmed items like goats' milk, eggs, honey or more at local farmers markets. Lately, there has been a nationwide push to "shop small" by purchasing local items, especially the items that stock peoples' refrigerators. Market growers can have a direct impact on their local community and feel the excitement of selling their produce for profit when they use farmers markets as an avenue for exposure.



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What is market gardening?

While market gardening is gardening on a larger scale than gardens for leisure, it is not quite as large as a full-scale farm production. This means gardeners with just an acre or a few acres can reap the benefits or market gardening.

How to get into market gardening?

Just like starting any business, you will need a business plan before you launch your product into all the nearby farmers markets. Create an idea of what exactly you want to sell - flowers, vegetables, animal products or something else. This can be based on what the ability to produce the product from a soil standpoint, as well as evaluating the space you have to grow your product.

Picking your market:

Before you sign up and pay for a booth space at a market, you should research

several nearby areas. If you're hesitant to purchase space at a farmers market, try tailgate marketing first instead. This is the practice of placing marketing materials on your vehicle, parking it somewhere and selling your produce out the back of the vehicle. It's a cheaper method than purchasing farmers market space, and it will help you gauge the reaction, preferences and taste of your consumer. This will also give you practice in selling your product.

When it comes to farmers markets, there are some markets that don't require you purchase space for the whole season. Markets also don't require you to bring a steady haul to each market - many market growers will vary between completely stocking their market booth to only selling the produce they currently have in stock. Out of tomatoes or did pests ravage your lettuce? Fill your space with other vegetables and crops. This gives market goers an



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opportunity to try different produce from you, as well as it gives you time to allow your plants a break if they need more time to grow between harvests.

Also, before selling your harvest at any market, make sure you read up on food safety rules for growing and packaging your produce before you can sell it.

Selling your product in a store:

Although big-box grocery stores may be the most difficult market to break into, check out your local farm-to-table restaurants to offer to sell your produce to utilize in menu items.

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