

TIPS FOR COMPACT GARDENS





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INTRODUCTION

With a rapidly growing number of people living in apartments or homes with small outdoor areas in the Kingdom of Bahrain, interest in growing gardens in limited spaces is on the rise.

Members of the gardening community – authors, speakers, retailers and forward-thinking entrepreneurs – are responding with growing methods and products that make growing healthy plants at home easier than ever.



WHY COMPACT GARDENS?

Small gardens, tiny terraces and petite patios may require a little more thought than larger spaces, but even the tiniest plot can be transformed into an elegant outdoor retreat.

Small gardens have lots of advantages – the main one being they're wonderfully low-maintenance. They're also great spaces to be creative, as even the smallest additions, from colourful cushions to stylish garden lighting, will have a dramatic effect.



TIP #1: ADDING HEIGHT

Structural features such as obelisks (bare or clothed in climbers), arches, pergolas and tall structures will all lead the eye skyward, as will tall trees and shrubs.

They'll help to broaden the view of the garden and can help break it up into smaller areas, giving the impression that the space is bigger than it really is.



TIP #2: UTILIZE RAISED BEDS

Living in a hot, dry climate often means soil conditions that lack organic material, which makes it less fertile for growing.

Planting in raised beds is often the best way to garden in hot, dry climates so you have more control over your soil. It's a lot easier to manage. You can pretty much grow any type of herb, flower, shrub, vegetable, or vine in a raised bed.

Plants that can be grown include peas, beans, lettuces, kale, spinach, carrots, dill, fennel, broccoli, cabbage, peppers, watermelon, honeydew melon, cantaloupe, cucumbers, cauliflower, zucchini, tomatoes, fava beans, and beets successfully in my raised garden beds.



TIP #3: SELECT PLANTS WISELY

Focus on plants that love the heat.

Look for those vegetables that were bred for the desert. These include: tomatoes, eggplant, melons, peppers, spinach, cowpeas, and lima beans. Sweet potatoes, okra, and southern peas can handle the most heat. However, even many of these plants may drop their blossoms and stop setting fruit when the temperatures regularly exceed 90 degrees F. Look for varieties that may have been bred to continue fruiting in extreme heat.



TIP #4: PROVIDE SHADE

Giving your garden some partial shade during periods of extreme heat can reduce temperatures by 10 degrees Celsius or more. You can cover your garden with shade cloth, or latticework supported on a frame – even old sheets or sheer curtains. Make sure your shade-producing materials are well-secured against high winds, and are high enough above the plants so that your garden will get good ventilation.

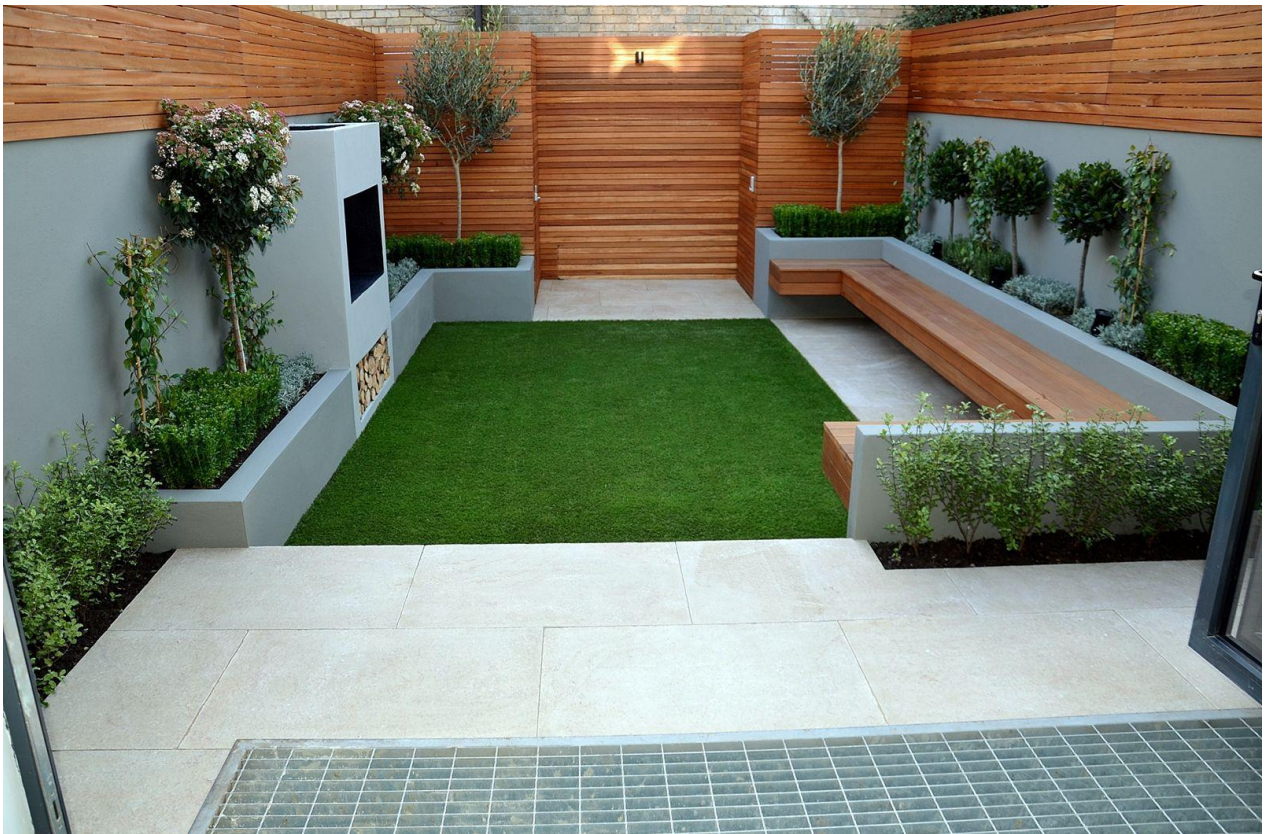
Many gardeners in extremely hot climates have found that providing about 30-40% shade usually works best. Even tomatoes, peppers, and squashes can benefit from shade cloth in desert climates.



TIP #5: SURROUNDING AREAS

Avoid surrounding your garden beds with crushed stone, brick, or concrete paths.

These will absorb extra heat and continue to release it after the sun sets. Your garden will also be hotter if you place it up against an unshaded south or west side of buildings (in the northern hemisphere). You can keep your garden cooler by surrounding your garden beds with lawn grass or organic mulch.



TIP #6: PROPER SEED CARE

Start seeds indoors under lights.

Many seeds will not germinate at all if the soil gets too hot. During periods of extreme heat, one option is to start these seeds indoors under lights, and then transplant them into the garden after hardening them off (gradually adjusting the plants to direct sunlight and wind). Make sure you keep your newly planted seedlings well-watered and partly shaded as they get established outdoors.



TIP #7: HARVEST FREQUENTLY

Keep ripe fruit well-picked.

Ripe fruit (tomatoes, melons, peppers, etc) require large amounts of water from your plants. To reduce heat and water stress on your heavily-producing plants, harvest your ripe fruit frequently and thoroughly (including damaged fruits).



TIP #8: CONSISTENT WATERING

Your watering schedule will obviously be unique to your garden but you should work hard to maintain moist soil conditions. Waiting for plants to start wilting before you realize it's time to water harms your plants' health and reduces your harvest.

Watering consistently is half the battle but you should also try to water at the best times of day. The early morning and evening are the best times to water. Less water is wasted to evaporation because it has a chance to soak into the soil before it's exposed to the mid-day sun and heat.







HOW TO BEGIN?

Be mindful of the weather –

- 1 The summer heat in Bahrain can be a bit too harsh to grow vegetables at home, however as the temperatures drop down during October, you can take up the task as your plants will have a more favourable environment to flourish.

Choose the right spot –

- 2 The area in which you will be growing your vegetables will need to have access to sunlight for a minimum of six hours a day, so avoid any shaded areas or patches near the walls of your home because when the position of sun changes, your garden could end up being in a shaded area.

Prepare the soil –

- 3 In order to grow vegetables at home, the soil needs to be prepped to ensure it has the right nutrients to help your plants grow. The sand you have in the backyard of your home won't be enough. A fail-safe way for any beginner to prep the soil to grow a compact garden in Bahrain is to buy pre-mixed soil. It's easy to manage and you won't have to spend a lot trying to buy the ingredients for the right mix. For more information on [Soil in Bahrain](http://www.agroBH.net), visit www.agroBH.net

HOW TO BEGIN?

Choose your plants –

- 4 Spend time to choose which plants, fruits and vegetables to grow. If you plan to start a vegetable garden from scratch, pick plants that grow in small areas such as cucumbers, lettuce, tomatoes, beans, carrots, spinach and herbs like basil or coriander. You can purchase these seeds or plants from any [Municipality Nursery in Bahrain](#).

Prep your station –

- 5 Once you have everything ready, it's time to set your station. Do so by dividing your space into individual squares using wooden sticks, so that you can grow different types of vegetables in each square. Also make sure to leave enough distance between the squares, say 20-30 cm so that they have enough space to grow.

Start planting –

- 6 Once you've done all the above steps, you can start planting your plants in your garden.



COMMON PLANTS YOU CAN GROW IN BAHRAIN

Tomatoes – These vegetables require several months of warm summer weather to produce a bountiful harvest. Tomatoes are heavy feeders, needing rich soil and fertilizer to thrive. Choose a site that receives full sun and provide regular water and supplemental fertilizer for the highest yields. Wait to transplant outdoors until nighttime temperatures are at least 55 degrees F. Plants will need trellising, caging, or staking to support fruits.

Cucumber– These heat lovers are a favorite crunchy addition to salads, as well as for snacking or pickling. For best results, wait to direct sow seeds until the soil warms up to 60-70 degrees F. Train these vining plants on a fence or trellis, or allow them plenty of room to sprawl. Make sure plants receive plenty of regular water to keep fruit from becoming bitter or misshapen. Harvest frequently to encourage new fruit.

Eggplant – This delicious vegetable is prolific and easy to grow when planted during the heat of summer. In cooler climates, use heat-enhancing methods such as a cloche or black plastic mulch to warm the soil and speed growth. Provide plenty of sun, rich soil, and regular water. Harvest fruits when they are young for the best flavor. For a quick and easy side dish, brush eggplant slices with olive oil and grill on the barbecue. Season with salt and pepper and garnish with fresh herbs, cheese, pesto, or other condiments.

Okra - This easy-to-grow vegetable thrives in warmer regions due to its extreme tolerance to heat and drought. Edible seed pods are produced in just 50-60 days from germination. Directly sow seeds outdoors in rich, well-draining soil when soil temperature reaches 65-70 degrees F. Though okra is drought-tolerant, it produces better yields when receiving regular water. Harvest a few days after flowering when pods are still small for best texture and productivity.

COMMON PLANTS YOU CAN GROW IN BAHRAIN

Carrots – begin by cutting an inch from the head of the carrot and place it in a shallow dish with a bit of water and keep it in a sunny spot indoors, once you see the roots emerge, you can transfer it to the soil to grow a whole carrot!

Peppers/Capsicum – this is the easiest plant to grow. All you need to do is place the seeds in a pot filled with soil, that is in a place with a lot of sunlight. Once you see the sprout, the entire plant can be transferred to the outdoor vegetable garden.

Potatoes – Take the seed potatoes from which eyes (buds) protrude out, cut them into smaller pieces with no less than two buds on each piece and place them in the soil about 3 feet apart.

Garlic – You can grow garlic by planting the entire clove into the soil and water it regularly.

Summer Squash – These heat lovers are a favorite crunchy addition to salads, as well as for snacking or pickling. For best results, wait to direct sow seeds until the soil warms up to 60-70 degrees F. Train these vining plants on a fence or trellis, or allow them plenty of room to sprawl. Make sure plants receive plenty of regular water to keep fruit from becoming bitter or misshapen. Harvest frequently to encourage new fruit.





BALCONY GARDENS

Several fragrant herbs thrive on Bahrain's balconies, like basil, mint, dill, coriander, chives, marjoram, parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme. You can buy them from any [plant nursery](#) or the [Municipality Nurseries](#) in Bahrain. Tomatoes, okra, eggplant, peppers, cucumbers and chilis are also found in balcony gardens across the country.

Tips for Balcony Gardens:

- If using a container smaller than 30cm, make sure that your plant doesn't outgrow it. If this happens, it's time to repot into a larger container...use your hands and be delicate! How to tell if your plant is getting too big for its pot:
 - The roots are growing out of the holes in the bottom or through the soil on the top
 - When watering, water trickles straight through the holes in the bottom
 - The leaves are yellowing, despite you being on top of their watering and sunlight schedule
 - The plant starts growing sideways instead of straight up
- Once the plant starts gaining height, stick a pole or stick next to it, in the container. This gives your plant something to hold on to.
- When growing herbs, delicately pinch the flowers off, once they bloom. This ensures that your plant is working on creating delicious leaves for you, not unnecessary flowers.

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