

# A tasty pallet

*With careful planting and a little imagination, edible gardens can be grown in all sorts of surprising places.*

With Sarah Heeringa



For instructions how to make these plant markers go to [good.net.nz](http://good.net.nz)



## You will need

- 1 wooden pallet, plus extra bits of wood • hammer and nails • old sacks
- 1 litre Resene waterborne low sheen Lumbersider in a colour of your choice. I used Resene Explorer
- Container mix • Selected plants

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Vertical gardens are a great option when horizontal space is limited or you have an ugly or boring wall you wish to liven up. With the right feeding and watering edibles, annuals and perennials can be successfully grown in a living wall garden. Here's how to make your own in seven easy steps:

**1 Select your spot** Consider where your garden will be best situated. Most vegetables need at least four hours of sunlight a day and a north-facing wall will provide the most warmth and light. Northwest or northeast spots can be okay, but not those that are south facing. Observe the sun's path or try using Google maps to get your orientation.

**2 Pick a pallet** The solid wooden structure of a shipping pallet makes it perfect for the basis of an easy vertical garden project. Start by finding a suitably-sized pallet that is okay to use. Look for the IPPC stamp on the pallet. The code 'HT DB' means heat treated to 56°C and debarked, which is safe to use. The letters 'MB' means the pallet was treated with the toxic fumigant and pesticide methyl bromide. See [www.1001pallets.com/pallet-safety](http://www.1001pallets.com/pallet-safety) for more.

**3 Modify as required** Depending on the design of the pallet you may wish to add sides, a base and a back. Consider how deep you want the planter troughs to be – and if necessary add extra horizontal strips to make the troughs deeper. I used spare bits of wood taken from another pallet to do this, and an offcut of plywood to make a back.

**4 Paint your pallet** With a bit of paint you can give your pallet a protective layer and add a splash of colour to your wall or dull garden corner. I chose Resene Lumbersider because it's a low-VOC and Environmental Choice approved waterborne paint that provides maximum durability in all conditions. Resene Lumbersider can be used on

surfaces used for the collection of drinking water, so it's safe to use in your garden. Pick a shade – I chose Resene Explorer. Clean your pallet as necessary and cover all surfaces with two coats of paint.

**5 Line and fill your garden** Cut up old sacks to line the planter troughs. This will help with retaining moisture. Fill the troughs with a rich container mix. I also mixed in the coconut fibre based soil wetter SaturAid.

**6 Plant your garden** If you're starting in early summer, use seedlings rather than seeds. If this is your first garden, try easy to grow microgreens or herbs such as mint, basil, parsley or chives. Otherwise you might try tomatoes, beans, salad greens, peppers or radishes. Consider available light and root depth. Lettuces have a shallow root depth and leafy vegetables like lettuce and salad greens have a shallow root depth and do well with limited sunlight, making good choices for shady areas. Peppers, cherry tomatoes and other trailing plants look great and make good use of the vertical space.

**7 Tend your garden** Because of the shallow soil depths, your garden will need regular watering and feeding. Set up a reminder on your phone or make watering the garden a soothing part of your morning or evening routine. To keep your plants healthy, boost your soil with worm juice or a liquid organic fertiliser. Be creative and find whatever works for you and your unique situation. Experiment with various plants. Try mixing flowers in with your veggies. If something gets too big or fails to thrive, pull it out and try something else.

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Words and photography Sarah Heeringa. Plants, SaturAid and bamboo canes all from Palmers Garden Centre. Sarah's headshot: Amanda Reelick ADV2015