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Kiwis gardening to beat the recession

Kiwis struggling with increasing grocery costs have returned to gardening, boosting sales in gardening equipment and vegetable seeds.

Local Kiwi companies Masport and Yates have both reported growth in some product lines by as much as 33 percent annually during the tougher economic climate.

Marketing services manager for Masport Nadia Roberts says the recession is the driving force behind the growth in gardening.

She says it is having a substantial impact on Masport's business.

"If we look at our top 10 vegetable garden tool retailers, 70 percent of sales are currently derived from urban customers."

The demand for home gardening equipment has even led Masport to re-start production on a previously deleted product, the Masport 'Home Gardener' tool, that was at its sales peak in the 1970s.

Marketing manager for Yates Charlie Gray says his company's sales have also been boosted by city gardeners looking to save money.

Mr Gray says vegetable seed sales have increased by 60 percent over the past two years.

"It's interesting to note the growth in sales of baby or space-saver varieties in the Yates range.

"This is probably an indicator of smaller section sizes and consumers who are growing in raised planter

beds where there is a need to maximise yields from smaller spaces."

He says traditional favourites such as beans and peas are becoming increasingly popular as well as root vegetable staples including carrots and beetroot.

Kiwis are also becoming more sophisticated with their tastes.

There is sales growth in rocket, culinary herbs and exotic lettuce varieties.

The move to home gardening is not only good for New Zealanders' pockets, it also has obvious health benefits says nutritionist Jacquie Dale.

She says home gardens provide a great opportunity for the family to spend time outdoors together, away from sitting on the couch

and watching television.

Ms Dale says growing your own produce and spending a few minutes each day out in the garden can also play a huge role in stress reduction.

"Home gardening is also a great low-cost activity for children.

"They're also much more inclined to eat vegetables if they get to grow and harvest their own.

"Don't let a lack of space put you off.

"These days you can even grow vegetables in containers on the deck."

Ms Dale says just a few hours a week in the garden can do wonders for a family's health as well as its holiday fund.