



**Weekend Sun**  
**Friday 15/01/2010**

Page: 18  
Section: General News  
Region: Tauranga Bay of Plenty, NZ  
Circulation: 59105  
Type: Community  
Size: 183.59 sq.cms.



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## Vegetable gardens a growing popularity

Leaner economic times are seeing New Zealand Kiwis returning to the family vegetable garden in droves.

Kiwi companies Masport and Yates have both reported growth of some product lines by as much as



a third each year over the last couple of years.

Marketing services manager for Masport, Nadia Roberts, says the recession is the driving force behind this gardening trend that is having a substantial impact on Masport's business.

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

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

Marketing manager for Yates, Charlie Gray, says seed sales have also been boosted by city gardeners looking to save money. Vegetable seed sales have increased by 60 per cent over the past two years, says Charlie.

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

"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."

Traditional favourites such as beans and peas are becoming increasingly popular as well as root vegetable staples including carrots and beetroot says Charlie. There is also growth in rocket, culinary herbs and exotic lettuce varieties.

Nutritionist Jacquie Dale says home gardens provide a great opportunity for the family to spend time outdoors together.

Growing produce and spending a few minutes each day out in the garden can also play a huge role in stress reduction, says Jacquie.

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



**By Andrew Campbell**