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## Recession makes gardens grow

Kiwis struggling with the increasing costs of groceries have returned to gardening, boosting sales in vegetable garden gear and seeds.

Local Kiwi companies Masport and Yates have reported growth of some product lines by up to 33 per cent annually during the tougher economic climate.

Marketing services manager for Masport, Nadia Roberts, said the recession was the driving force behind the trend that was 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 derived from urban customers," she said.

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, said his company's

sales had also been boosted by city gardeners looking to save money. Vegetable seed sales had risen 60 per cent in 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 growing in raised planter beds, where there is a need to maximise yields from smaller spaces."

Traditional favourites such as beans and peas were becoming increasingly popular as well as root vegetable staples including carrots and beetroot, Mr Gray said. Kiwis were also becoming more sophisticated with their tastes with growth in rocket, culinary herbs and exotic lettuce varieties.

Nutritionist Jacquie Dale said home gardens provided a great opportunity for families to spend time outdoors together away from the couch and the TV screen.