



## The DIRT Society

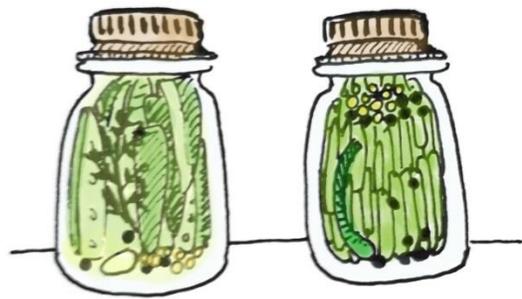
# Choosing Produce for Nutrient Content

While gardens and farms are maintained for many reasons, the original concept is simple; **to provide healthy food**. Hobbyists may choose to experiment with exotic varieties, and farmers may opt to plant a marketable crop, but agriculture persists for neither fun nor profit. We grow nutritious food because our bodies will not function without it.

If you've chosen to grow food in order to augment your diet, you must first learn about what nutrients you require. After that, you must consider what needs you would like to meet with your own produce, and which fruits and vegetables will satisfy the criteria you set. How you apply this information will vary on the time you are able to commit to growing food and the space available for your garden.

**A note for non-growers: This module is extremely valuable to *all consumers*. When buying food, you should be aware of the nutrient content: What do you need? What can you do without? How best can you spend your money?**

To be healthy, we need a balanced diet consisting of carbohydrates, fiber, protein, fats, vitamins and minerals in varying amounts. The quantities necessary depend upon the consumer's age, health, lifestyle, and condition. To best supplement your diet, you must have a general idea of what you consume, and what you may lack. Below, The DIRT Society has broken down these major dietary demands. With each, we've compiled a short list of foods that offer a significantly high amount of each nutrient.



**Carbohydrates:** Cereals, pulses, potatoes, sweet potatoes, apples, bananas, plantains, carob, cocoa and acorns.

**Fiber:** Sweet potatoes, pears, apples, kiwis, rye, buckwheat, coconut, oats, and wheat.

**Protein:** Pulses, nuts, cereals, broccoli, sweet corn, mushrooms, flax, soy and sunflower seeds.

**Fats and oils:** Sunflower, safflower, flax and sesame seeds, legumes, corn, avocados, hazelnuts and acorns.

Vitamins and Minerals are requisite for a functioning body, but tend to be absorbed in adequate quantities without further supplementation. With the advent of packaged and processed foods, however, many consumers are eating imbalanced diets without fresh produce, and may suffer from deficiencies.

**Vitamin A:** Carrots, leaf lettuce, sweet potato, cantaloupe, grapefruit, barley, pistachios, pecans.

**Vitamin B:** Avocado, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, buckwheat, oats, rye, wheat.

**Vitamin C:** Broccoli, bell peppers, cauliflower, grapefruit, kiwi, orange, strawberries.

**Vitamin D:** Mushrooms.

**Calcium:** Broccoli, oranges, kiwi, grapefruit, almonds, sesame seeds.

**Iron:** Broccoli, potatoes, watermelon, wheat, oats.

**Sodium:** Celery, sweet potatoes, carrots, broccoli, radishes, leaf lettuce.

**Potassium:** Broccoli, mushrooms, potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, banana, kiwi, cherries, oats, buckwheat.



This is by no means a comprehensive list of all produce. Rather, this is a short list of some of the most nutrient-rich food by category. This information could prove highly useful to parents of picky eaters, gardeners wishing to supplement their diet, consumers struggling with nutrient deficiencies, or farmers planning community shares.

Furthermore, it is important to understand the principles of nutrient loss. For details about how these nutrients become unavailable with cooking and preserving, read our module "Nutrient Loss in Food Processing."