

MANDALA KITCHEN GARDEN FOR THE DRY SEASON

Getting vegetables during the dry season is a big problem for farmers. This is because most farmers rely on rain to grow their food crops. Come the dry season and many rural households have no reliable source of vegetables as lack of water ensures nothing grows at this time. For those farmers without a river frontage (a farm near a river), there are various methods they can use to grow vegetables. One of these is putting up a Mandala garden, named after a farmer in Elitrea who pioneered the first garden of this nature.

A Mandala garden is a small circular kitchen garden made close to the house where the farmer can use water from the kitchen to water the garden and grow such vegetables as sukumawiki, spinach, tomatoes, chillies or any other crops that they need. The seed bed is prepared through digging to make sure the soil is good enough to retain water and the right texture. With a stick and rope, the farmer can make the outline of a circular garden in the seedbed. A watering hole is then made at the centre of the circle. A number of furrows and ridges 2 ft apart are then made following the circular outline. A small water channel is then made stretching from the kitchen to the watering hole at the centre of the circle. The garden is first watered and the desired vegetables planted on the ridges, all the waste water from the kitchen flows into the hole where it is used to irrigate the garden.

To protect the garden from the animals, the farmer can make a hedge around it or even use a net to protect it against birds. Through the use of Mandala gardens households have constant supply of green vegetables through the dry season.