



**Priscilla, a farmer living in rural Zimbabwe, learnt how to grow drought-resistant crops.**

*Photo: Richard Wainwright, Caritas Australia.*

# Grow. Share. Sustain.

**Five ways you can grow a more sustainable garden,  
from Caritas Australia's global gardening community**

# Welcome to the global garden

**Hello – and welcome! I’m so excited that you’re joining our mission for a more sustainable, and nourishing world.**

Here you’ll find a wealth of knowledge from Caritas Australia’s global community of gardeners, like Priscilla in Zimbabwe (pictured on the front cover), on how to grow beautiful fresh food.

Around the world, people face food insecurity due to climate change, drought, and other challenges. In this guide, you’ll find real-life examples of how communities in vulnerable regions around the world overcome these challenges.

Today, you’ll find ways to make your Australian garden drought-proof, flood resistant, and sustainable. You’ll be able to feed your whole family – and maybe even your neighbours.

No matter what the future holds, what challenges we face, there’s a way to grow, share and sustain through it all.



**Dan Skehan,**  
Programs Director



**Farmers in rural Zimbabwe  
tending to their nutrition garden.**

*Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.*



# FIVE WAYS

to help your garden grow



Chiquito is a farmer living in Timor-Leste.

Photo: Caritas Australia.

1

## Start with small changes for big effect

Chiquito, a farmer from rural Timor Leste, had just a small garden to feed his family. With limited resources and knowledge, he struggled to make ends meet.

*"We consumed what we grew from our vegetable gardens,"* Chiquito shared. *"Buying food wasn't an option for us."*

But that all changed when he learned new farming techniques.



**Chiquito can now grow a variety of vegetables in his garden.**

*Photo: Caritas Australia.*



**By using sustainable practices, Chiquito increased his yield and was able to sell excess crops at local markets.**

Now, not only does his family have enough to eat, but they also have a stable income.

His success story shows that even if you start small, you can achieve big results with dedication and support.



**Focus on one part of your garden, or even your balcony, and grow food you can easily manage.**

Start by learning the basics, like soil health, understanding the sun in your garden and water management.



**Once you see success in a small area, expand your garden gradually.**

This will allow you to scale up while ensuring your crops are well-tended and thriving.



**Share your success with your community.**

When others see your results, they'll be inspired to follow in your footsteps, and share!

**Chiquito's journey proves that starting small is the key to long-term success, for you and those around you.**

# 2

## Water Conservation

In Australia, water can be scarce, especially during dry periods. Caritas Australia experts in drought-prone countries around the world have shown us that gardens can thrive even when the rain is gone.

With a few simple changes, you can still have a thriving garden when drought hits:



**Rainwater tanks** are a great way to collect and store water for later use. Rainwater is free, better for your plants, and helps reduce your reliance on mains water. Even leaving a bucket out to collect rainwater helps!



**Mulching** is another essential trick for water conservation. By adding a layer of mulch around your plants, you help keep the soil cool and moist, reducing the need for frequent watering. Mulch also suppresses weeds and slowly breaks down to enrich the soil, so it's a win for both water savings and healthier plants.



### **Make your own mulch!**

Collect leaves from your garden, old newspapers, twigs and grass clippings and top your garden beds with them.



Save even more water through **drip irrigation**, which delivers water directly to the roots, minimising waste through evaporation. This can be done cheaply and easily by installing PVC piping through the bottom of your garden beds. Give it a Google!



**Charles, a farmer living in rural Zimbabwe, filling up a water drum.**

*Photo: Richard Wainwright, Caritas Australia.*

# 3

## Keep livestock – no, really

We're not telling you to keep a cow in your front garden. But chickens are an excellent way of having consistent eggs, and for keeping your garden free of pests. Plus, you can use their waste to keep your garden fertilised.

By having chickens, even if the drought does impact what you're growing – you'll always have fresh eggs ready for breakfast.

**Priscilla, in remote Zimbabwe, added poultry to her farm. Now, she can sell eggs to pay for her grandchildren's school fees, books and stationery.**



**Priscilla learnt chicken farming to help boost her family's income.**

*Photo: Richard Wainwright, Caritas Australia.*



***"With the poultry project running, this will be an income-generating source that will help us survive even during droughts."***

**– Priscilla, Zimbabwe**







**Drought is a severe issue for many farming communities around the world, including in rural Zimbabwe.**

*Photo: Richard Wainwright, Caritas Australia.*

## 4 Composting

Composting is an easy way to turn your kitchen scraps and garden waste into nutrient-rich fertiliser for your soil. It's one of the ways Chiquito and others in regions like his make their own fertiliser for their plants.

Instead of throwing out vegetable peels, grass clippings, and fallen leaves, add them to a compost pile – if you don't use them for mulching. Compost improves soil structure, retains moisture, and provides essential nutrients to your plants.

Start with a compost bin or pile in a shaded spot, and in a few months, you'll have rich, earthy compost to spread across your garden beds. Or think about getting some worms – the pets that produce nutrients for your garden!

# 5

## Bring all these tips together with conservation farming

Conservation farming is one of the main techniques for people who live in drought or flood-prone land. It's a technique that focuses on soil health – and healthy soil means happier plants.

Many communities who learn these techniques have been able to double the amount of food they grow in the very first year of adopting the practices.



**Priscilla watering plants in her community nutrition garden.**

*Photo: Richard Wainwright, Caritas Australia.*

Bringing together everything we've already learnt, here are the top ways you can bring this global technique into your own garden:



- **Keep the ground covered using mulch, living or dead plants.** When soil is exposed, it releases vital water and stored carbon.



- **Minimise soil disturbance by not tilling or turning over the soil.**

- **Keep living roots in the ground year-round.** So, when a crop is done, if you have nothing else to plant yet – leave them there! This prevents soil erosion.



- **Rotate crops.** Different plants need different nutrients, and some like beans even put nutrients back into the soil.

- **Livestock integration – the chickens!** The animals leave manure behind and are natural pesticide.

Source: Homes To Love



*"With Gachompo [Conservation Farming], minimum rainfall is sufficient to support growth of our crops as the method ensures better water retention by the soil."*

– Priscilla, Zimbabwe



**Priscilla walking through drought-affected fields in rural Zimbabwe.**

Photo: Richard Wainwright, Caritas Australia.

# Thank you

for exploring sustainable gardening. By following these tips from Caritas Australia global garden, you're joining a movement towards food security.

When food is taken care of, people can think about ways to better their lives and work their way out of poverty.

**Thank you for being part of a more food-secure world, by following this guide.**



Chiquito proudly showing the vegetables he grew on his farm.

*Photo: Caritas Australia.*



**Want to do more?** 

Scan the QR code to see how you can help communities around the world to sustain themselves through sustainable food growing, too.



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