



In such a large space (241 square feet), Love & Carrots can introduce clients such as Timmons to unfamiliar plants, including **Claytonia perfoliata**, a wild lettuce variety nicknamed miner's lettuce that is common in California and high in vitamin C.



Trellises are made out of 2-by-2-inch pieces of pine and deer netting for climbing plants such as cucumbers and varieties of peas. "You're creating space vertically for more growth," Sheperd says. "We'll have cucumbers up the trellis, and we can grow lettuce right underneath there."

Sheperd prefers **raised garden beds** because they have better drainage and delineate pathways nicely, she says. In tight spaces, "it's good to use the space as well as you possibly can." Beds should measure no more than **three feet** wide. "You can easily reach the middle. Four feet is a bit of a stretch, and you can get a backache."

From the ground up

A homegrown garden company

BY KRIS CORONADO

In spring 2010, Meredith Sheperd wanted to grow her own garden. There was just one issue: "My yard had no sunlight," says Sheperd, who lives in Eckington in Northeast Washington. "Walking around noticing everyone's yards with beautiful sunlight, I was jealous and thought, *Well, maybe I could grow my garden in my neighbor's yard. Maybe he wouldn't mind?* Then I thought, *Maybe he'd pay me for it.*"

Soon after, that seedling of an idea grew into Sheperd's company, Love & Carrots (loveandcarrots.com). Instead of asking neighbors for lawn space, Sheperd, now 29, printed fliers and e-mailed community discussion groups about her start-up, which builds organic vegetable gardens for D.C. area customers. "People have no idea anymore how to start a garden, whereas most people's grandmothers had a garden," Sheperd says. "There's a

gap there, and I'm trying to fill it in."

Today, Sheperd employs a team of seven and estimates that Love & Carrots has installed 125 gardens (\$800 to \$15,000), in sites such as apartment rooftops and a local coffeehouse's patio. "It's the right time in D.C. for it," she says, citing an increased awareness of local food. "People see ... the difference between vegetables in Giant versus vegetables in the farmers market. They realize that it matters."

Here, using client Rachel Timmons's garden space in Cleveland Park, Sheperd details how she brings a garden to life.



Next to vegetable beds is a **pollinator garden** including lavender and daffodils, which attract native pollinators, such as bees, creating a healthier garden ecosystem, Sheperd says.

After living in Beijing from 2003 to 2006, Timmons developed a taste for the greens she'd eaten there, so she and her husband decided to grow their own. Her favorite? **Hakurei turnips**. "We could eat them every day," she says.



Kale is one of the most popular plants in Sheperd's gardens. "A lot of our clients are juicers and are on raw foods diets," she says. This variety, **redbor**, has bolted and gone to seed (produced a flowering stalk that will create seed). The flowers are edible, Sheperd says. "They taste delicious in salads. They taste like broccoli."

