

# NASA needs your help: Do you know how to grow plants in space?

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Do you know how to maintain a family-sized garden without unlimited soil, natural sunlight and Earth's gravity? If the answer is yes, then call NASA.

The Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Miami in partnership with NASA is calling all "makers" to participate in its "Growing Beyond Earth Maker Contest." The challenge is to reinvent the systems used to

grow [edible plants](#) on the International Space Station and beyond.

Fairchild and NASA began their partnership in 2015 to find more ways to sustain plant life in [space](#). Last summer, the [botanical garden](#) received a nearly \$750,000 grant from NASA to support its Growing Beyond Earth Innovation Studio, a community work space dedicated to the technology of growing food.

As NASA looks to sustain human life in space, it faces the challenge of long-term food production. The Maker Contest hopes to find a new method to create a "3-D growing space" aboard spacecrafts, to maintain the plants without [human intervention](#), and to design a robotic, automated planting and harvesting system.

For those of you who don't know what a "maker" is, it's a word used to describe those who enjoy using electronics to invent new or reinvent old things.

So the Maker Contest is open to anyone who professionally or self-identifies as such. That means you can have an interest in biospace, engineering, agriculture or even manufacturing to enter.

The contest will be divided into three categories—professional, college and high school teams—with a winner selected from each group.

In the first phase, contestants must enter and submit designs by Feb. 3, 2020. The judges, which are NASA engineers and botanists, will select 15 teams will move onto the second phase and be awarded \$500 to support prototyping and testing of their design.

The winners of each category will receive a stipend to attend the 2020 Nation of Makers annual conference and be considered for implementation on future NASA missions.

To find more information or enter the contest, visit  
[www.instructables.com/contest/beyondEarth](http://www.instructables.com/contest/beyondEarth) .

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