

Getting your garden ready



As the earth begins to awaken from the restful winter, the promise of spring is all around us, from the buds on the trees and shoots emerging from the soil to birds finding their song again. It's a wonderful time to get outside and warm up your green fingers, but where to start? We'll guide you through some handy tips to help everyone get growing this spring.

Tools and equipment

It can feel daunting to get started with gardening (see our Jargon Buster if you're a bit bamboozled by the new language of the gardener's toolkit) but in reality, a lot of the equipment people need to get started can be found around the house or in the recycling bin!

- To get your seeds started you can use small yoghurt pots, mushroom trays, egg boxes or even an easy to construct newspaper pot. Toilet rolls can be saved and used for growing beans to help develop healthy long roots.
- Kitchen utensils can be used as garden tools, for example using spoons to dig small holes
- Plastic bottles can be used as mini greenhouses or turned into slow release watering
- Kitchen scraps can be turned into compost
- Old wellies and boots can become plant pots
- Cardboard is perfect for composting and bed laying
- Plant labels can be made out of lots of things, like old yoghurt pots, ice lolly sticks, disposable plastic cutlery and plastic bottles



Once you've exhausted your recycling supplies, you may need to look beyond the home for other items

- Compost (peat-free and ideally organic) can be picked up in supermarkets relatively cheaply, but you could make your own, reach out to local gardening clubs or even the council tip might have some top soil for cheap. If you have any outdoor space, use the soil you have access to and use one of our home fertiliser tips to help your plants to grow as happy as possible.
- Specialist garden tools can be borrowed from a Library of Things, or try to find them for free or cheap on eBay, Facebook marketplace, Gumtree, Freecycle or from charity shops. You may even have a local community growing group who are happy to loan tools out.

Tidy up the soil

There might be dead plants still hanging out in the soil which need to be removed along with any unruly weeds.

Prepare your soil

The soil will be dense from settling over winter, so use a garden fork or rake to gently break it up and allow air to get in. If you prefer a no dig approach, you can add some layers of cardboard to stop weeds and 3-4 inches of soil to the clear bed. Regularly feeding the soil with home-made fertiliser such as nettle tea is a fantastic way to top-up soil nutrients throughout the season.



Nettle tea

To make nettle tea, collect and wash young nettles (make sure you wear gloves to avoid stings!) Boil them until the water turns green. The water will take on the nitrogen from the nettles, which once cooled can be poured over your plants to help them grow.

Turn over your compost

If you have a compost bin, it will have been working away during winter. Bring it to the top so you have good-quality compost ready to use on the garden in spring. This is also a good time to start a new compost bin to fill with current waste. Find out more in our compost resource.

Planning what to grow

It can be a bit overwhelming to decide what to grow in your space, so it's good to start small with one or two plants and build up from there. Think about what you'd like to eat and the space you have available. For inspiration, check out our growing resources including Strawberry Wellies, Growing Pea Shoots and Growing Potatoes in Bags.



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