

Salad Box

Growing Guide



Plant and Share is all about bring people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds together through the joy of growing.

Our four-week salad box growing guide is designed to make starting your growing journey as simple and enjoyable as possible. Inside, you'll find easy tips on what to grow, where to grow it and fun ways to bring people together along the way.

Everything is laid out in four straightforward weeks, so you can dive in at your own pace. Join in with as many activities as you like! Take part in our growing competitions, get hands-on with weekly tasks, or simply use the guide as a spark of inspiration to help you get growing.

What do I include in a salad box?

One of the great things about salad boxes is the variety! They are an easy way to explore new ingredients, flavours and growing methods. Your salad box can be as simple or adventurous as you like.

If you want something very beginner-friendly, you might choose a mix of microgreens, herbs and salad leaves. These grow quickly, need very little space, and are perfect for people new to growing. If you're ready for a challenge that still works in small spaces, you could try potatoes, radishes or tomatoes.

The list of vegetables that you can grow is huge! To keep things easy, we've included a selection of growing guides for vegetables that we recommend.

What can I do with a salad box?

Use your home-grown vegetables to explore new ingredients, try out simple recipes, and discover flavours that you might not usually cook with.

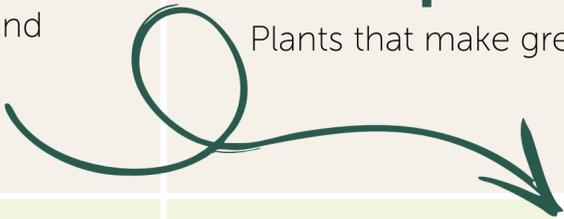
Celebrate and Share takes place just as many of your crops will be ready to harvest. It's the perfect time to cook a meal using everything you've grown and share it with loved ones. This could be a family dinner, a classroom tasting session or a simple snack shared together.

You can also share your harvest with others. Giving home-grown veg to friends, neighbours or your wider community is a lovely way to spread the joy of growing and help bring people together through food.

Salad Box Growing Guide

This four-week growing-guide takes you on a simple, step-by-step journey to start growing your very own salad box. It's designed to help you prepare, plant and get growing, no matter how much space you have or what equipment is available. Growing is for everyone, and with a few basic materials you can get started anywhere. There's no need to take part in every activity here, just choose what suits you!

Week One: Preparing Your Growing Space	Simple Steps to Growing Easy ways to get started with growing	Create Your Own Compost Turn food waste into fertiliser with a 'rotbot'!			Jargon Buster Brush up on your gardening lingo to become a pro planter	
Week Two: Getting Ready to Plant	Savvy Growing Planters Make fun planters from everyday items, such as wellies		Germinate Broad Beans Learn about the plant life-cycle and watch your beans come alive!		Companion Planting Plants that make great growing partners	
Week Three: Planting Week	Microgreens Quick and great for beginners	Potato Planting Join in with the Great Potato Grow- Down!	Radish Planting Super fast and easy to grow	Salad and Herbs Perfect for windowsill growing!	Tomato and Basil Hanging Baskets A fun way to grow with limited space	Don't forget to plant your broad beans!
Week Four: Growing Together	Intergenerational Growing food and growing is a great connector brining people from across the generations together			Community Growing Connect, share and grow with others.		



Simple Steps to Growing

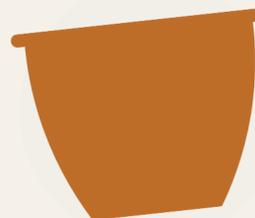
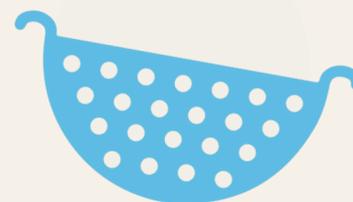
1. Pick a Crop

There are so many varieties of vegetable seeds to choose from it can be difficult to decide on what to plant! Pick something you would like to eat or that you have always wanted to grow and do a quick check as to how big the plant will grow. You could try pea shoots, salad leaves or herbs.



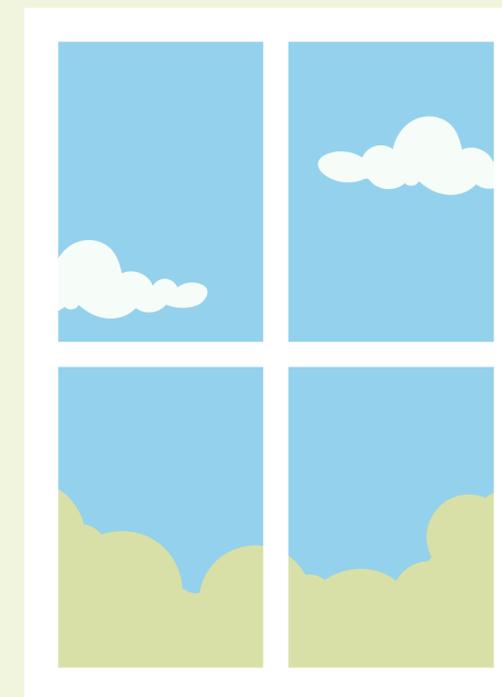
2. Pick a Pot

There are many recyclable objects you can use as a pot, it doesn't have to cost the earth. Toilet roll tubes make fantastic pots for beans, peas and carrots, and the best thing is you don't need to disturb the roots when you put them into a bigger pot or the ground as the cardboard can be planted too! You can also use egg boxes, mushroom trays or re-use old plant pots.



3. Pick a Spot

Your seedling will need light and warmth to grow so choose a sunny windowsill to get it started. If you have outside space, you can start some seedlings off in the garden. Cover them with a clear plastic bottle to create a mini greenhouse.



Make your own compost

Composting is a brilliant way to turn your garden or kitchen waste into fertiliser for your plants. It's a natural process where bacteria, fungi and decomposers like worms break down organic materials and transform them into fertiliser that helps your plants grow strong and healthy.

Composting at home, can be simple, low-cost and doesn't need much space. You can compost on a windowsill, in a small bin outside, or even create your own mini-composting 'rotbot' using a recycled 2-litre plastic drinks bottle.

Activity

How to make a Rotbot

Steps:

- 1) Take the label off the bottle and cut $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around the top of the bottle (but not all the way around) so it acts like a hinge. Make sure the person doing this is confident and safe using scissors.
- 2) Open the bottle and add the below in order, repeating the steps until your bottle is full:
 - A 2-3 cm layer of soil to the bottom of the bottle. If dry, moisten with some water
 - A 2-3 cm layer of fruit and veg peelings
 - A 1 cm layer of soil
 - A layer of shredded newspaper
 - A 1 cm layer of soil
 - A layer of grass and leaves
- 3) Add a little water to dampen
- 4) Tape the bottle closed

You'll need:

- a two-litre plastic drinks bottle
- sharp scissors (handle with care!)
- one cup of newspaper ripped into small pieces
- a small amount of soil
- a handful of leaves and dry grass
- two handfuls of fresh fruit and vegetable peelings cut up really small
- water spray
- sticky tape

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Plant and Share Jargon Buster

This resource explains some of the common gardening terms that you often find on a packet of seeds or in growing instructions

'to sow': to place and cover a seed in compost or soil.

'to plant': to dig or make a small hole and place a plant in that hole, pulling the soil back around it.

'transplant': usually planting a small plant from a pot into the garden. **'true leaves'**: when a plant first emerges from the soil it has a set of two leaves called cotyledons, also known as true leaves. These are actually part of the seed and act as a food source for the sprouting seed. As it grows, it forms two more leaves that look very different to the cotyledons and they now start to photosynthesise.

'drill': a groove or channel made in the soil to plant seeds in. The depth depends on the size of the seed. Small seeds like salads and carrots are usually sown 1cm deep. Larger seeds like runner beans 3cm deep.

'fine tilth': break large clods down with a fork and then rake to form an even fine surface ready for sowing.

'germination': the process by which a seed starts to grow, developing roots and shoots.

'wide bottomed drill': a channel about 10cm wide and flat bottomed. Peas are sown in these.

'harden off': the soft delicate leaves of young plants need to acclimatise to outdoor conditions before they are finally planted out. Gradually introduce young plants over a couple of weeks by placing in a cold frame, sheltered sunny spot and brought inside at night.

'spacing': the distance between adjacent rows. This depends on the size of seed and plant it will grow into. Large seeds need greater spacing and small seeds, closer. If you plant seeds too close together they start to compete for nutrients and space and you get a smaller yield and possibly distorted plants!

'sow direct': to sow seeds into the soil, usually outside in beds or containers.

'sow thinly': small seeds are sown by sprinkling them thinly, so they are well spaced. Each seed is a potential plant so if they are too close together, they will become crowded and prone to disease and competition for nutrients.

'sow under glass/indoors/propagator': some seeds need to be sown indoors in pots or containers and given some heat to germinate and grow, usually 18 – 20°C. Once germinated the heat can be reduced but the seedlings need to be protected from harmful cool temperatures.

Plant and Share Jargon Buster

'successional sowing': if you sow little and often (approx. every two weeks) you can extend your harvest over a longer period. So don't plant the whole packet at once or you may find yourself with too much at one time. Good for carrots, French beans, peas, salads, spinach and rocket. You may also choose to have two batches of courgettes, cucumbers, runner beans and sweetcorn.

'risk of frost has passed': the time of year, usually in late May or early June, when night temperatures no longer drop to 0°C. Frost damage can kill young plants that are not hardened off or able to withstand low temperatures because they come from warm countries.

'thin out seedlings': carefully remove seedlings that are too close together by pulling them out until you have the correct spacing. Sometimes you can replant the seedlings you have pulled out.

'watering up': placing a plant pot into 2-3 inches of water and leaving for 15 minutes to soak up the water.

'well-prepared soil': soil that has been dug over, weeds removed, compost added, raked and levelled to form a fine tilth

'mulching' or 'topdressing': when you spread a layer of nutrient-dense, organic matter, such as compost or manure, to your soil.

'potting on': moving a plant from a smaller container into a bigger one.

'pricking out': carefully moving a seedling from the tray in which it was sown, into a larger pot or tray to grow on before planting in its final position.

'propagate': to grow a new plant from a bigger, mature plant e.g. through cuttings or by splitting roots.

'row': seeds are sown in a drill to form a row or line of plants, to distinguish the seedlings from weed seedlings. It allows for correct spacings between plants and between rows so crops can grow well

'seedling': a tiny plant, usually with its first pair of true leaves.

Savvy Growing Containers

When planting seeds or cuttings, using what you have to hand or what can be collected from the local community can save money and resources. There are so many ideas for unique container solutions. For example, did you know that you can create planters out of old wellies?

Activity

Wellie Planters

Steps:

- 1) Prepare the activity area and put cloths on the tables. Make sure everyone is comfortable at the table, wearing gloves and plasters if they have any cuts
- 2) Select your welly and put a few stones or some gravel in the foot of the welly for drainage. This also adds weight to stop the welly falling over.

TIP: for extra drainage, put a few holes in the bottom of the wellies. You can also cut extra slits into the sides of each welly to fit more plants in

3) Fill the welly up with some potting compost, up to just below your first slit or the top if you haven't added slits. Place your plant, add some more compost to the next slit, add another plant and so on to about 3cm below the top of the welly. You can then plant your last plant at the top.

4) Sprinkle some gravel on top of the compost. This stops it drying out too much if it gets hot and prevents the compost splashing up when watered.

5) Put the wellies outside, and watch the plants grow together!

You'll need:

- gloves
- scoops or trowels
- reusable cloths for tables
- old wellies
- gravel or stones
- peat-free compost (from garden centre)
- plants (strawberries work really well for this!)

TIP: As an alternative to wellies, you can use bright coloured plastic colanders as hanging baskets!

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Germinating Broad Beans

Broad beans are one of the easiest crops to grow, and you can even watch them germinate before they're planted.

Activity

Broad Bean Activity

Steps:

- 1) Fold the paper towel so it fits inside the zip-lock bag. Give it a light spritz of water. It should be damp, not soaked.
- 2) Lay 1-3 broad beans on top of the damp paper towel. Make sure they're spaced out a little so you can see each one grow.
- 3) Close the zip-lock bag, leaving a tiny gap so that air can still circulate. This creates a mini-greenhouse to keep the bean warm and moist.
- 4) Place the bag on a sunny windowsill or in another warm spot.
- 5) Check the bag every day, within 2-5 days, you should see the bean split slightly and a white root begin to grow
- 6) Once the root is around 2-3 cm long, it's ready to be planted! Place the bean root-side down into a small pot of soil.

Broad beans are also fantastic for the planet. Like all legumes, they play an important role in supporting healthier soils. They help slow soil degradation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve biodiversity. Broad beans form a symbiotic relationship with soil bacteria, allowing them to store nitrogen.

After you've harvested your crop, gently pull up a plant and look closely at the roots. You'll see tiny, grain-sized nodules attached to them. Those nodules are home to special bacteria that turn nitrogen from the air into a form that plants can use.

You'll need:

- Broad beans
- A zip-lock bag
- 1-2 sheets of paper towel
- Water in a spray bottle or cup
- A warm, bright spot (like a windowsill)



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Companion Planting

Many growers, no matter how experienced, will have issues with pests from time to time. Using companion planting helps protect your plants whilst being kind to the soil, waterways and animals by being pesticide free. Companion planting simply means growing two or more different varieties of plant alongside each other to maintain a natural balance in your growing space. It helps to combat pests, prevent diseases and attracts pollinating insects like bees, butterflies and wasps. Here are some examples of companion plants:

Companion 1	Companion 2	Benefit
Aubergines	Beans	Repels flea beetles
Beans	French marigolds	French marigolds repel whitefly and aphids
Broad beans	Nasturtiums, summer savory or corn	All deter blackfly
Cabbages	French marigolds, mint & thyme	Deter cabbage moths
Carrots	Onions, spring onions, leeks & tomatoes	All deter carrot root fly
Pumpkins & Squash	Nasturtiums	Deter squash bugs

Companion 1	Companion 2	Benefit
Potatoes	French marigolds & sage	French marigolds deter eelworms Sage deters flea beetles
Sweetcorn	French marigolds & borage	French marigolds repel whitefly and aphids Borage repels worm pests
Tomatoes	Chives & onions	The onion scent deters aphids

Microgreen Magic

Microgreens such as cress are also known as micro-leaves. They are young edible plants which are harvested when they get to between one to three inches tall. They are easy and quick to grow all year round in small spaces, such as in yoghurt pots on windowsills. There's a world of cheap, tasty and nutritious flavours and textures to be found in microgreens. Lots of vegetable seeds will grow into an edible microgreen, such as salad leaves, radishes, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, celery, cabbage, beetroot and pea shoots.

Activity

Steps:

- 1) Spread a layer of compost in your container and pat it flat
- 2) Sprinkle seeds on to the compost, spreading them as evenly as possible
- 3) Sprinkle a thin light layer of compost over the seeds and gently pat down
- 4) Water the tray lightly – the soil needs to be damp but not soaking wet
- 5) Place your container on a windowsill
- 6) Cover the seeds with paper towels until they have germinated (starting to sprout). This will usually take 2-3 days
- 7) Once the shoots have appeared, remove the paper towel so the seedling can get as much light as possible
- 8) Water your seeds regularly, ensuring the soil is damp at all times but not soaking wet
- 9) After one to two weeks, when they have around two sets of baby leaves, your speedy crop should be ready for harvesting. Use scissors to chop some off as and when required, no need to pull them up from the root
- 10) Give them a rinse under cold water, and then eat as they are! You can use them in salads, on pizzas, on pasta, in sandwiches, sprinkled on top of jacket potatoes, as a side, or simply enjoy as a pretty garnish

You'll need:

- any small, recycled container, such as old takeaway trays, yoghurt pots, egg boxes, anything you can put a few holes in the bottom of for drainage
- a tray, saucer or container to put under the pot to collect water drips
- vegetable seeds such as beans, broccoli, cabbage, beetroot, radish or herbs
- multi-purpose, peat-free compost

Important!

Plants from the nightshade family (potato, pepper, tomato, aubergine) have toxic leaves and so aren't suitable to eat as microgreens.

The Great Potato Grow Down

Everyone loves a potato and has a favourite way to eat them. They are probably the most versatile and delicious veg we have. Whatever space you have, they are easy to plant and to grow. Think you can grow the biggest, funniest, or most unusual potato? Take part in our potato-growing challenge and put your green thumbs to the test.

Activity

Steps:

1. Make everyone comfortable at the table, wearing gloves and plasters if anyone has any cuts
2. Follow the instructions in the Garden Organic activity handout.
3. Clear the tables and put everything away.
4. Put the potato containers outside.
- 5) Check them for growth and water weekly
- 6) Add more compost every time the leaves start showing until you reach about 5cm from the top edge.
- 7) Harvest your potatoes!

Fun potato activities

- Take photos of planting and harvesting
- Create a display together to include potato facts, recipes and jokes
- Do some potato printing together
- Organise a tasting session to try different varieties of potato
- Link up with parents and wider family and friends for a potato growing competition
- Cook up some potato dishes together, or make a potato salad

You'll need:

- Gloves
- Scoops and trowels
- Re-usable cloths for tables
- Container at least 30cm deep and wide. You can also use an old compost, rubble or thick bin liner bag rolled down and with drainage holes added
- Peat-free compost from garden centre
- Certified disease free 'seed' potatoes (not potatoes bought for eating) from a garden centre
- Dustpan and brush

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Potato

Suggested varieties: *Colleen, Orla (early); Golden Wonder, Cara (maincrop)*

Vegetable

PLANT



Buy disease-free 'seed' potatoes. Plant 15cm deep. Space 'earlies' 30x50cm apart after six weeks in a cool light place to grow shoots ('chitting'). Plant 'maincrops' at 35x70cm

GROW



Protect shoots from frost with horticultural fleece. Pull soil around stems ('earth-up') when 15cm tall (leave top leaves showing). Water if dry. Mulch to conserve moisture

EAT



Carefully dig up earlies as needed once plants flower; maincrops three weeks after leaves yellow (leave tubers to dry for two hours before storing). Remove all tubers

Growing guide

Give it a go...

Average time to harvest

10 weeks (early); 20 (maincrop)

Equipment needed

Horticultural fleece; mulch

Germination time

Seed potatoes sprout in two weeks

Average plant size

70cm tall and wide

Family group to grow with

Solanaceae: aubergine, tomato

Seed saving group

5 - Specialist or not applicable

Key nutritional content

Vitamin C

Spring Term			Summer Term				Autumn/Winter Term				
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
			■	■							
						■	■	■			

■ Sow indoors

■ Sow outdoors

■ Plant out/transplant

■ Harvest

⌄ Use cloche

2.5cm = 1 inch 30 cm = 1 foot

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Radish

Suggested varieties: *Icicle, Rudolph, Scarlet Globe, Short Top Forcing* (summer); *China Rose, Rosa* (winter)

Vegetable

PLANT



Regularly sow seed 0.5cm deep in rows 10-15cm apart. Thin seedlings of summer varieties to 2.5cm; winter varieties to 10cm (sow from July)

GROW



Remove weeds by hand. Water weekly in dry weather for rapid and continuous growth. Too much water produces lots of leaves and small roots

EAT



Pull up summer varieties when small (from the size of a five pence coin); bigger roots are woody. Pull up larger winter varieties from autumn as needed

Growing guide

Easy!

Average time to harvest
3-6 wks(summer); 10-12(winter)

Equipment needed
None

Germination time
4-7 days

Average plant size
15cm tall, 10cm wide

Family group to grow with
Brassica: broccoli, cabbage

Seed saving group
2 - Annual, can cross-pollinate

Key nutritional content
Vitamin C, folate

Spring Term			Summer Term				Autumn/Winter Term				
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D

■ Sow indoors

■ Sow outdoors

■ Plant out/transplant

■ Harvest

⌄ Use cloche

2.5cm = 1 inch 30 cm = 1 foot

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Salad, Spring and Summer

Vegetable

Suggested varieties: *Endive, Lettuce, Rocket*

PLANT



Regularly sow seed 0.5cm deep in pots or rows. Thin seedlings or transplant, giving more space to produce bigger plants. Can plant between slower growing plants

GROW



Keep soil moist for continuous growth; plants in dry soil produce tough or bitter leaves and may flower early ('bolt'). Remove weeds carefully. Protect from slugs

EAT



Use thinnings or cut seedlings to 2.5cm when plants are 10cm tall (plants regrow many times). Cut outer leaves of semi-mature plants or whole salad heads

Growing guide

Easy!

Average time to harvest

4-12 weeks

Equipment needed

None

Germination time

3-12 days

Average plant size

20cm tall and wide

Family group to grow with

Various

Seed saving group

1 - Annual, self-pollinating

Key nutritional content

Vitamin C

Spring Term			Summer Term				Autumn/Winter Term				
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
											

 Sow indoors

 Sow outdoors

 Plant out/transplant

 Harvest

 Use cloche

2.5cm = 1 inch 30 cm = 1 foot

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Intergenerational Growing

Each year there is a Global Intergenerational Week in April, making it the perfect time to host an intergenerational activity as part of Plant and Share. Grandparents' Gardening Week is part of the Food for Life programme and is another great way to run an intergenerational event. Starting in 2015, the week was created when schools teachers needed help to work on the school garden. Parents were often at work or unavailable during school time, so they asked for help from grandparents. It went on to be a huge success for all involved.

Activity

Give a Pot of Kindness

Four steps to sharing kindness

1. Find a container. Plant pots are perfect but don't worry if you don't have one. Any container will do - get inventive! You could use clean yoghurt pots, coffee jars, teacups, plastic bottles or vegetable containers, even old wellies will do. You could even make a pot from newspaper!
2. Fill with peat-free compost and don't forget to put a draining hole in the bottom.
3. Choose what to plant. You could buy pre-grown flowers for a pot that is good to go. Or plant some easy to grow seeds like sunflower or nasturtium. Then the lucky receiver can watch them grow!
4. Give your Pot of Kindness to a neighbour or family member

Four Key Benefits from Intergenerational Links

- Greater sense of connection. Reduction in loneliness; combats negative stereotypes and ageism.
- Increased feeling of purpose. Everyone has a role and a purpose; new and meaningful relationships also enhance confidence, self-worth and overall well-being.
- More learning opportunities. Intergenerational activities support people to share stories with each other and pass on traditions enabling a better understanding of different lifestyles.
- Better mood. Intergenerational events and activities create lasting and meaningful connections between individuals that can positively impact self-confidence and mental wellbeing



A Guide to Community Events

Plant and Share provides an opportunity to come together in your community and get people involved in gardening. Whatever your experience, whatever the size of your outdoor space, everyone can get stuck in to sow, grow and share. This resource helps anyone who is setting-up a community event for the first time or wants to refresh what they are doing.

Hints & Tips

- 1. What do I want to achieve?** Plan what you want the end result to be and work back from there. If your plan is for everyone involved to be growing a sunflower by the end of summer, plan the steps back from that. This will help with the next step too.
- 2. When do I want to host my event?** Organising it for a time when most people can join in will make your event intergenerational. Can you host at the weekend when people won't be at work or school? Do you want to invite people from your community or is it for an established group like a youth club or after school group?
- 3. Do I need permission?** If you want to close a road for a car-free event in a neighbourhood street or village centre, then you'll need permission from the Local Authority. There is usually a small charge for this. Are you using a community centre or village hall? Make sure you confirm the booking
- 4. Should I build a team?** Running a successful event can take a lot of organising. If you create a team of volunteers or colleagues, you can share the load. You might want to run an activity such as gardening, but might not be the most experienced gardener. You could ask a local allotment owner or community gardener to come and help.
- 5. How do I keep people safe?** If you host an event, it is your responsibility to keep people safe, but there is no need to be daunted. In most cases, all you need to do is consider realistically what could potentially go wrong, what effect this could have on those present and what you need to do to prevent it. Completing a risk assessment and having a plan for the day will help, along with pairing adults and more able people with younger people.
- 6. Do I need insurance?** If you are running an event as part of an established group then your existing insurance should cover you, but you should check. You could also be covered if you are hiring a venue, but again do check. There is no law that says you must buy insurance for a community event, but you might want to make sure you are covered in the unlikely event that something goes wrong.
- 7. Something to take home?** Don't forget to think about what you can give people to take home - will they all have a little pot of planted seeds, or will you give them a recipe to accompany what they have helped plant? Is there another event you want to invite people to?

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Competition time

We'd love to see people across the country getting stuck into growing this spring! Take part for your opportunity to be featured and to be included in our prize draw.

Join the great potato grow down!

Think you can grow the biggest, funniest, or most unusual potato? Take part in our potato-growing challenge and put your green thumbs to the test.

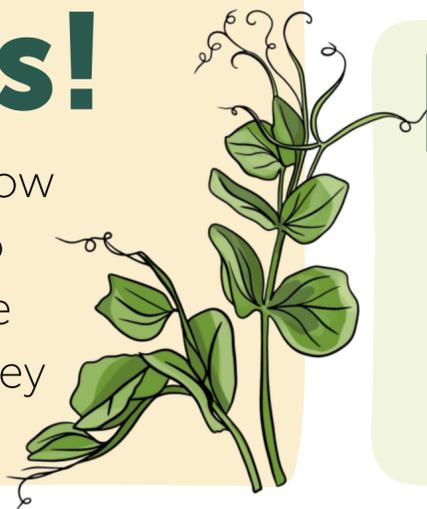


Creative containers competition

Paint it, decorate it, recycle it. We want to see the most inventive and sustainable plant pots that you can imagine. Check out our Get Growing Guide for inspiration!

Grow the most beans!

Plant your broad beans and see how many you can grow! Make sure to use your harvest in a simple recipe or share out your beans so that they don't go to waste.



How to take part:

Simply snap a photo of your potato planting, broad bean harvest or creative pot and email it to us at fll@foodforlife.org.uk

Growing food in small spaces



Tomato and basil hanging baskets

You will learn how to grow tumbling tomatoes and fresh basil, and create a fabulous hanging basket to sell to your community. You can also grow extra plants to make a delicious tomato and basil salad that smells of summer, or to use as pizza toppings!



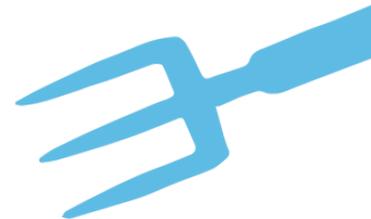
What you will need:

- Modular seed trays
- Peat-free seed compost
- Tomato seeds (ideally a cherry tomato variety like 'Tumbling Tom')
- 10-15cm pots
- Peat-free compost
- Basil seeds
- Watering can
- Hanging baskets (with a liner for drainage)

What to do:

Planting tomato and basil seeds - March or very early April

1. Start by filling your modular seed tray and 10-15cm pots with seed compost and firming it down.
2. Water each tray and pot gently.
3. Carefully place 1 or 2 tomato seeds into each module of your seed tray.
4. Next, take a pinch of basil seeds and sprinkle them thinly across the surface of the compost in your pots.
5. Next, cover the seeds with a thin layer of compost.
6. Place them on the windowsill in a warm, sunny spot.



What to do:

Creating your hanging basket- at the end of May or early June

1. Fill your lined hanging basket with compost and press down gently until firm.
2. Make holes in the compost where the plants will be placed.
3. First, plant a basil plant in the centre of the basket.
4. Next, plant the tomato plants around the edge so that they can tumble over the rim of the basket,
5. Cover the roots with compost and firm down the compost.
6. Water until damp.
7. Hang your basket in a sunny spot or why not sell it at a school event so the community can enjoy fresh, locally grown tomatoes and basil?



Caring for your plants

- **Watering:** it is important to water early in the morning so you will have to be sure to remember each day! Keep the compost damp, but not soggy! If it's too soggy, the roots will rot. Avoid watering the leaves.
- **Sunlight:** place seedlings and hanging baskets in a sunny spot - tomatoes need lots of sunshine to grow and ripen, and basil loves the sun too!

Harvesting and cooking with your produce

- **Tomatoes:** make sure your tomatoes are ripe (fully red) before harvesting.
- If they are ready to harvest, they should twist easily off their stalk.
- **Basil:** pinch leaves carefully from your plant using your thumb and forefinger.
- If you pinch off the leaves often, the plant will grow more leaves.
- Try our simple basil and tomato salad, or add chopped tomatoes and basil as toppings on your pizza.

Did you know?

Tomatoes are sun-lovers - they need about 6-8 hours a day to help them grow sweet and juicy.

Basil is called the "king of herbs" because its name comes from a Greek word for king. Basil likes warm weather and lots of sunshine, just like tomatoes, and can be turned into pesto, a yummy green sauce for pasta.



Potato

Suggested varieties: *Colleen, Orla (early); Golden Wonder, Cara (maincrop)*

Vegetable

PLANT



Buy disease-free 'seed' potatoes. Plant 15cm deep. Space 'earlies' 30x50cm apart after six weeks in a cool light place to grow shoots ('chitting'). Plant 'maincrops' at 35x70cm

GROW



Protect shoots from frost with horticultural fleece. Pull soil around stems ('earth-up') when 15cm tall (leave top leaves showing). Water if dry. Mulch to conserve moisture

EAT



Carefully dig up earlies as needed once plants flower; maincrops three weeks after leaves yellow (leave tubers to dry for two hours before storing). Remove all tubers

Growing guide

Give it a go...

Average time to harvest
10 weeks (early); 20 (maincrop)

Equipment needed
Horticultural fleece; mulch

Germination time
Seed potatoes sprout in two weeks

Average plant size
70cm tall and wide

Family group to grow with
Solanaceae: aubergine, tomato

Seed saving group
5 - Specialist or not applicable

Key nutritional content
Vitamin C

Spring Term			Summer Term				Autumn/Winter Term				
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
		■	■								
					■	■		■			

■ Sow indoors

■ Sow outdoors

■ Plant out/transplant

■ Harvest

🏠 Use cloche

2.5cm = 1 inch 30 cm = 1 foot

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Radish

Suggested varieties: *Icicle, Rudolph, Scarlet Globe, Short Top Forcing* (summer); *China Rose, Rosa* (winter)

Vegetable

PLANT



Regularly sow seed 0.5cm deep in rows 10-15cm apart. Thin seedlings of summer varieties to 2.5cm; winter varieties to 10cm (sow from July)

GROW



Remove weeds by hand. Water weekly in dry weather for rapid and continuous growth. Too much water produces lots of leaves and small roots

EAT



Pull up summer varieties when small (from the size of a five pence coin); bigger roots are woody. Pull up larger winter varieties from autumn as needed

Growing guide

Easy!

Average time to harvest

3-6 wks(summer); 10-12(winter)

Equipment needed

None

Germination time

4-7 days

Average plant size

15cm tall, 10cm wide

Family group to grow with

Brassica: broccoli, cabbage

Seed saving group

2 - Annual, can cross-pollinate

Key nutritional content

Vitamin C, folate

Spring Term			Summer Term					Autumn/Winter Term			
J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
	🌱	🌱									
	🏠	🏠									

■ Sow indoors

■ Sow outdoors

■ Plant out/transplant

■ Harvest

🏠 Use cloche

2.5cm = 1 inch 30 cm = 1 foot

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Growing units for teachers

Unit 5: Salads and herbs

Time of
year?



May

Overview

On the school plot, salads and herbs are your best friends – easy crops that can be harvested for much of the year. We group them together in this unit because they share many characteristics and uses, both on the plot and in the kitchen. Herbs tend to have a stronger flavour, so are used more sparingly.

Salads and herbs are a mind-bogglingly diverse group of leafy plants. How many different types of leaves and herbs can you mix up in a salad? Exactly – the possibilities are pretty much endless.

This unit celebrates their diversity and versatility. The children learn about the many different salad leaves, from freckled lettuces to spicy, purple-leaved mustards. They come to realise that those puffy pillows of salad sold by supermarkets are a pale imitation of what you can grow.

Get the children to investigate the difference in culinary uses between 'soft' herbs, such as mint or coriander, and the more robust 'woody' herbs, such as sage, rosemary and thyme.

Learning intentions

- ★ To explore the wide variety of salads and herbs.
- ★ To know how to harvest and use salads and herbs.

Before the sessions

★ Get clued-up and inspired by the range of salads you can grow. Two key books on the subject are: **The Organic Salad Garden** by Joy Larkcom and **Salad Leaves for All Seasons** by Charles Dowding. With a bit of practice, you can harvest salads deep into winter. See Growing unit 8, **Back to the plot** for more info on varieties suitable for winter growing.

★ Invest in some of the less familiar herbs. Lemon verbena, for example, is a brilliant plant – rub the leaves to release a divine lemony fragrance. Sorrel is tart and addictive – don't let the children eat more than a few sorrel leaves, though, as they contain low levels of an acid that is not healthy in very large quantities. Chocolate mint is another winner, with a proper chocolaty scent reminiscent of After Eights (remember them?). Children love chives, too, so make sure you reserve a spot for them on your plot.

★ Not all children love salad – at first, anyway. In our experience, you usually find a wilful few in any group. Don't make a fuss or force the issue – just make a mental note so that you can subtly try again later. We always urge the children to give new foods a try, but stress that it doesn't matter if they discover that they don't like it. Peer pressure is useful too. Sometimes a few key children wield influence. Convert them, and others are likely to follow.

★ Cross-reference relevant resources from the resource hub:

Relevant recipes: **Simple green salad with French dressing**
Jam jar dressings
Wilted spinach with garlic and nutmeg

Lessons: **How to make interesting salads**

Fruit and veg fact sheets: **Lettuce**
Spinach
Kale

All about fact sheets: **Herbs**

Unit 5 continued:

Salads and herbs

Activity ideas for children

- ★ Explore a variety of different salad leaves, either from the plot or bought in. Taste, count the different varieties, compare and contrast, generate descriptive vocabulary.
- ★ Repeat with herbs. 'What's the difference between salads and herbs?' Establish that herbs tend to be more strongly flavoured. Rub them between fingers to smell the scent. Make up a salad using a mix of both salad leaves and soft herbs, making an explicit learning point that you are leaving the 'woody' herbs such as thyme, sage and rosemary to one side, as these are too intense in flavour and best for cooking.
Useful resources: wide variety of different salad leaves and herbs; salad bowl.
- ★ Model the key skills of harvesting salad leaves so that the children can pick more leaves to add to the salad bowl. With many salad crops, for example, you can 'cut and come again'. In practice, this means you tug or cut away only the larger outer leaves so that the plant can re-grow for subsequent harvests. For more detail, check out the advice from the RHS:
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=618
- ★ Sow a wide range of salads, both into plug trays or containers for planting out and also directly into the soil. Another useful technique is sowing mixtures of salad seed into trays such as recycled blue mushroom trays, lined and filled with compost.
Useful resources: seeds; seed compost; plug trays/seed trays/mushroom trays.
- ★ Encourage the children to use all of their senses to explore and compare different types of herbs. Rub the leaves of rosemary, thyme or sage then smell your fingers. Combine different herbs and describe the effect. Practise different herb harvesting techniques: picking only the outer leaves of a plant; snipping chives with scissors around 4cm above soil level; cutting off a stem of thyme then using thumb and forefinger to strip the leaves; pinching out the growing tips of basil to keep the plant bushy.
Useful resources: scissors.
- ★ Explore the world of edible weeds. 'What is a weed?' 'It is a plant growing in the wrong place and some are edible, too.' Look for and identify common weeds on the plot. Try nibbling plants such as chickweed and Good King Henry, if on hand.
- ★ Start to sell the mixed salad you grow. This is an excellent product on which to base any enterprise projects, or you could offer it to your school chef so they can jazz up the salad bar.
- ★ Finish the session by sharing the bowl of salad you've just made, perhaps mixing up a simple dressing for the leaves. See **How to behave in the kitchen and how to taste**.
Useful resources: salad bowl; ingredients for salad dressings.

Key vocabulary

- ★ Salad leaves
- ★ Woody herbs
- ★ Cut and come again
- ★ Soft herbs
- ★ Harvest

Curriculum links

Science

Naming plants.

D&T

Learning to cook various dishes.

Unit 5 continued:

Salads and herbs

Curriculum links continued

Maths

Various calculations if selling salad.

Key concepts and skills - progression

	Key concepts	Key skills
Foundation Stage	To know that there is a wide range of salad leaves To know that herbs are stronger in scent and flavour than salads	To pick salad leaves and herbs without damaging the plant
Key Stage 1	To know and name a wide range of salad leaves, offering diverse flavours, colours and textures To understand the difference between 'soft' and 'woody' herbs	To use the correct technique to sow and harvest 'cut and come again' salad leaves
Key Stage 2	To know and name a wide range of salad leaves, offering diverse flavours, colours and textures To be able to name examples of 'soft' and 'woody' herbs	To use the correct technique to sow and harvest 'cut and come again' salad leaves To know how to harvest a variety of herbs

On your plot - extra ideas

★ Once the weather has warmed up, the children can sow the seed of more tender plants such as basil, beans, courgettes and squashes. Don't forget edible flowers, too, such as borage, nasturtiums and marigolds.

★ 'Prick out' seedlings of plants that need to be moved to bigger pots. Model how the children need to gently hold the seedlings by the leaves and use a teaspoon, plant label or similar to scoop out the root ball before firming into a small pot. Give it the 'tug test', gently pulling on the leaves to check that it is firmed in.

★ Take 'softwood cuttings' to grow on new plants. This is a technique for snipping off a small section of a plant that you then plant up in a different pot to grow on. These new plants can be sold to raise funds for the plot. This technique works well with a wide range of plants, such as lemon verbena, mint or lavender.

★ Keep on hunting for slugs and snails – collect them up before they get a chance to multiply and remove them from the plot.

