

Growing for a happy home

Enjoying nature and getting involved in growing doesn't have to mean stepping outside or having access to lots of space. Whilst there are many benefits to gardening outdoors, not everyone has the opportunity or ability to do so but this doesn't mean the joys of sowing seeds, nurturing plants and harvesting food should be out of reach.

Add a house plant to your living space

There's a huge range of plants that thrive indoors, including plenty that are perfect for beginners. As well as bringing colour and life to a space, houseplants purify air by removing carbon dioxide and other pollutants and releasing oxygen.

You can purchase houseplants at dedicated shops or from a garden centre. Another option is propagating from a friend's plant – often well-looked-after plants will produce baby versions which will happily move to a pot of their own.



Propagating

Propagating means to grow a full plant from a smaller plant. This can be done in a few ways: cutting off a part of an adult plant, picking baby plants from a mature plant, or dividing an adult plant at the roots.

Once you have your cutting or baby plant, remove any leaves towards the bottom of the stem. Fill a jar or container with water and place the stem inside, ensuring that no leaves are underwater. After a few weeks, roots will have developed. Once these are strong enough you can move the cutting to a pot of soil, ready to grow into an adult plant. Not all propagation is successful, so don't be too hard on yourself if it doesn't work out – one of the joys of growing is trying again!



Grow your own food from kitchen scraps

Food that often gets thrown away or composted, like carrot tops and spring onion roots, can actually be propagated to grow more plants to enjoy. Whilst this method of growing doesn't tend to result in a huge harvest, it's a brilliant way to get a taste of some home-grown veg and will usually grow enough to use as a sandwich filling or garnish. Follow our step-by-step guide below, and remember that trial and error is all part of the fun with growing!

Regrow kitchen scraps

- 1 Cut your veg, leaving about 2-3cm of growth above the roots. Rinse the roots to remove any soil or dirt
- 2 Fill a container with water and place your roots inside, ensuring the tops are above the waterline
- 3 Leave the container in a bright spot but avoiding lots of direct sunlight, refreshing the water every three days or if it begins to look cloudy
- 4 After a few days, you'll see new growth. As the plant grows, ensure the roots are always covered in water
- 5 Harvest your plant once it's grown long enough, or transfer it to soil for extra nutrients, leading to a stronger plant and better flavour
- 6 Each bulb will regrow a handful of times

Veg to try regrowing

Spring onion
Carrot tops
Celery
Lettuce
Basil
Garlic cloves

Looking for more inspiration on growing in small spaces? Our Gardening in Urban Spaces resource has plenty of information and ideas to get you started

Feeling inspired? Take a look at our Growing Potatoes in Bags or Bee-Friendly Herbs resources for more growing projects to do indoors.



Beginner houseplants



Snake plant

Originally from Africa, this plant needs infrequent watering and a bright spot out of direct sunlight. When the soil has dried out, water the plant deeply and then leave until the soil has dried again. Whilst these plants aren't very demanding, if you notice their leaves are dry they may need an extra water, whilst if they're yellowing you're probably overwatering.

Spider plant

This evergreen plant looks great all year and thrives in humidity, needing moist soil and regular misting, or a home in a humid bathroom or kitchen. They should be kept in a bright spot but not with direct sunlight as it can burn the leaves – if the leaves begin yellowing it may need more light.

Aloe Vera

This low-maintenance plant is particularly skilled at purifying air and needs bright, indirect light with thorough but infrequent watering when the soil is completely dry. It's a desert plant, which means it does well with dry soil.

Money plant

Needs plenty of light and well-draining soil to stop it getting soggy, with frequent watering in spring and summer but less in autumn and winter.

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