



## MARCH

A March Guide to  
Growing and Harvesting  
of Flowers, Fruit &  
Vegetables & Herbs



Dear Fellow Allotmenters,

Welcome to March's Guide. You will find many similarities with February's issue, simply due to the fact that seasonally it is winter fruit and vegetables. I hope you enjoy the read.

It is only a general guide and has been composited from the Internet. As usual any questions or queries can be directed to me via our email :

[info@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk](mailto:info@yeovil-allotments-association.co.uk)

Many thanks for reading,

Gareth Richards  
Treasurer  
Eliz Flats, Plot 14

## March Gardening: Your Monthly Garden Guide

The days are noticeably longer in March than in preceding months, providing an opportunity to get out into the garden to enjoy some early spring sunshine. Frosts and sometimes windy weather mean that some tasks must wait, but there is optimism in the air with warmer weather and longer days ahead. As the temperatures continue to rise and plants start to wake up, so do pests and diseases, so it's useful to make some early checks on the health of your garden. With the arrival of spring, there's no shortage of options when it comes to choosing what to grow in March, so it's time to dust off your tools and get busy in the garden again.

### What to plant in March and other March gardening tips

If you're considering what to do in March in the garden, then you're almost spoilt for choice. It's a great time of year to start planting fruit, vegetables and herbs so that you can harvest delicious homegrown crops later in the year. To find out what to plant in March – whether fruit, herbs, bulbs or flowers – choose a category below and enjoy our top March gardening tips for a rich and plentiful garden.

### Grow your own

With the seasons changing and the days getting longer and brighter, there's plenty to be done in the garden in March whether you're growing fruit, veg, herbs or spices. Options for planting are abundant and you'll also likely find yourself collecting a sizeable harvest. Above all though, it's a crucial time of year to do some garden maintenance, as the seasons

are changing, bringing new opportunities and challenges for your plants. View the sections below for some ideas of what to plant in March.

## Vegetables

If you tend a vegetable patch, then this is likely the time of year when you find yourself wishing you had more space, as there is an abundance of vegetables to grow in March. Not only is it a great time to plant vegetables, but it's also harvesting season for any plants sown in summer or autumn. There are lots of options for things to do this month, so choose from the sections below for plenty of inspiration.

### What vegetables to plant in March

It's a prime time to sow vegetables and there are so many options to choose from. Consider the space you have available and pick your favourites from below. We suggest growing a mix, and growing more than just your favourites. A wide variety of veg seeds means something tasty is always coming through; perfect for a balanced diet, staggered harvests, and learning what works best in your patch. Plus, if one crop struggles, another might thrive. Try some veggies you've never grown or even eaten before – especially the weird and wonderful ones you won't find in the shops.

Plant seedlings of the following

### How to grow peas

**Nothing beats home-grown peas for their tenderness and taste. That's because when they are picked, their sugars start to turn to starch and so they quickly lose their sweetness and flavour. Pick them when small, steam within an hour of picking with a sprig of mint and you won't taste any better.**

## Pea varieties

There are lots of different types of peas and numerous varieties. To produce crops all summer long, start by sowing an early variety, followed by a main crop.

Mangetout peas are eaten pod and all, picked before the peas have developed. Sugar snaps are also eaten whole, but once the peas have swelled. Both are generally easier to grow than podding peas, and are definitely worth growing if you've had problems with podding peas in the past.

- **Early:** Early Onward, Feltham First, Hurst Greenshaft, Little Marvel
- **Main crop:** Cavalier, Kelvedon Wonder, Onward
- **Mangetout:** Delikata, Oregon Sugar Pod
- **Sugar snap:** Sugar Ann, Sugar Snap



## Cultivation of peas

Peas need a sunny position that is sheltered from strong winds, to ensure insects can pollinate the flowers.

Improve the soil with lots of garden compost to help keep the soil moist, but free draining. Peas, being legumes, prefer an alkaline to neutral soil (pH7 and greater); add **lime** to acidic soils in late winter.

Peas need plenty of soil moisture, especially at flowering and when the pods are filling, otherwise the crops are poor and the peas are small, dry and tasteless. To ensure they don't go short of water, dig a trench approximately 30cm (12in) deep in autumn and fill it with moisture-holding material, such as garden compost, shredded newspaper and unrotted garden or kitchen waste. Fill the trench with soil a fortnight before sowing or planting out.

## When to sow peas

You can start sowing in March, providing the soil is warm enough. You can pre-warm it by covering with cloches or sheets of polythene 2-3 weeks before sowing. For an earlier start, you can sow the seeds indoors in small pots filled with potting compost.

The easiest way to sow is to dig out a flat-bottomed trench 5cm (2in) deep and 20-25cm (8-10in) wide. Lightly fork over the bottom of the trench, water the soil and then sow the seeds evenly, roughly 7.5cm (3in) apart, pressing them lightly into the soil. Fill the trench with soil and lightly firm down. Sow at fortnightly intervals to give a succession of crops throughout summer. By growing different varieties and sowing at different times of year, you can pick fresh peas from June until October.

## Choosing your spot and which peas to grow

Your peas are going to need a sunny, moisture-retaining and nutrient-rich position and you will need to support taller varieties so make sure there is plenty of room for that.

As with most grow your own, there's a choice of variety from early-maturing to super sweetness, so take a little time to choose which ones will suit you best. Before you are ready to sow, make sure your dig and prepare the ground, adding plenty of compost or well-rotted manure well in advance.

If you are planting straight into the ground, do so in spring (March to June) making sure the soil is warm and the seedlings are well **protected from cold and frost**. Your seeds will rot if you plant into cold soil.

### Sowing peas

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Sow at fortnightly intervals to give a succession of crops throughout summer.

By growing different varieties and sowing at different times of year, you can pick fresh peas from June until October.

## How to care for peas

Water well during dry periods, especially during flowering and pod set, giving the soil a good soaking once or twice a week. Mulch the soil around the plants to preserve soil moisture. You can also feed weekly with a high potassium liquid feed (such as a tomato feed) to promote bigger crops.

Apart from dwarf varieties, peas need supports for the plants to grow up. Insert twiggy branches alongside the plants when they're 7.5-10cm (3-4") high. Pea netting supported by stout canes is another option, but it's very difficult to untangle the plants at the end of the growing season. Chicken wire is a better option. Lightweight wooden trellis or willow panels are attractive alternatives, especially when growing peas as an ornamental feature.

## When to harvest peas

As they start to mature, keep an eye on your peas as the earlier they are picked the sweeter they'll be. Don't rest on your laurels though, **harvest regularly** to encourage your plants to keep on producing.

Start from the bottom of the plant where the peas mature first and work your way up. Although you can freeze your peas, they really are at their tastiest eaten straightaway.

## A few facts about peas

- Round, smoother pea seeds are hardier than wrinkled ones, which tend to be better for sweetness.
- They've been around a long, long time! So long in fact that peas were discovered in Egyptian tombs.
- The pea plant tendrils are edible.

- One serving of peas contains as much vitamin C as two large apples and more fibre than a slice of wholemeal bread.

## Common pest and disease problems with peas

### Powdery mildew

**Powdery mildew** is a fungal disease that appears as a white mildew on pea plants, stunting growth and causing leaves to shrivel. Drought-stressed plants are more susceptible to this disease.

- Dig organic material into the soil before planting to improve soil water retention
- Space plants when planting to ensure good air circulation
- Remove any affected growth promptly
- Water regularly in dry periods

### Pea Moth

Pea moths lay their eggs on pea flowers. The larvae live in the pods, feeding on the developing peas. Caterpillars can be seen inside pods when shelled.

- Grow crops under insect-proof mesh
- Early spring and early summer sowings are less affected

### Mice

Mice will dig up and eat peas sown in the ground.

- Cover the ground with a thick layer of prickly holly leaves
- Start seeds off in pots out of reach of mice and plant them out as seedlings

## Pigeons

Pigeons can strip the leaves off pea plants, leaving them bare.

- Grow plants under netting

## Key features of peas

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Alkaline
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 1.2m (4ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 45cm (18in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

## How to grow onions

The basis of so many delicious dishes, onions (*Allium cepa*) are an essential ingredient in every cook's store cupboard. With so many tasty types of onions available, why not grow your own and try some of them out? Follow our simple guide to growing onions.

### What are the best onion varieties to plant?

With so many types of onions available, it can be difficult to choose which one to grow! Here are a few of our favourites:

- Onion 'Stuttgarter Giant': produces firm, tasty, slightly flattened bulbs, good for storing.

- Onion 'Red Baron': a late maturing variety with dark red bulbs, stores well.

- Onion 'Jetset': an early maturing variety with yellow-brown bulbs, stores well.

- Onion 'Sturon': a reliable variety with good bolt resistance, producing flavourful round bulbs that store well.

- Onion 'Troy': suitable for autumn planting, with good bolt resistance, producing tasty yellow-skinned bulbs.



### Onion growing equipment list

To grow onions at home, you will need:

- Onion sets (like bulbs, but harvested earlier)
- Spade
- Fork
- Supply of compost or well-rotted farmyard manure such as **Miracle-Gro Premium All Purpose Compost**

- **Fertiliser**

- Netting

### When to plant onions

Some onion varieties can be planted in autumn for an early summer harvest, but the bulbs may rot in heavy, wet soils. The best time to plant onion sets is in early to mid-spring.

Onions need a rich, fertile neutral or alkaline soil in full sun. To prepare the soil for spring planting, dig in lots of compost or well-rotted farmyard manure in autumn and leave it to settle over winter.

### How to plant onions

Although you can grow onions from seed, it's simpler to grow them from sets. Sets are young onion bulbs, grown especially for planting.

1. Before planting in spring, dig over the plot, clearing it of all weeds and stones. Tread down the soil and rake it to produce a level surface with a light, crumbly texture.
2. A couple of weeks before planting, rake in 35g/m<sup>2</sup> of granulated fertiliser or 75g/m<sup>2</sup> of dried chicken manure pellets. If you weren't able to dig in compost or manure in autumn, then double the amount of fertiliser used.
3. Plant onion sets 20cm (8in) apart, with the tips just showing above the soil. Allow 30cm between rows.

4. Water in after planting – this helps to settle the soil around the bulbs.

5. Cover the area with netting to stop birds pulling up the young plants.

### Caring for onions

Follow these tips for a good onion harvest:

- Keep the plot well weeded. Hoeing between rows risks damaging foliage and bulb tips, so weed by hand where possible.
- Water regularly in dry periods.
- Remove any flowerspikes as soon as they appear.
- Stop watering once the leaves start yellowing – this means that the bulbs are starting to swell.

### Harvesting onions

Spring-planted onions should be ready to harvest in late summer and early autumn. Autumn-planted onions will be ready to harvest from early to mid-summer. Once the foliage starts to yellow and topple over, the bulbs are ready to be harvested. Use a fork to lift them carefully, taking care not to bruise the bulbs.

### Storing onions

1. Place the bulbs in a single layer on a drying rack or on a slatted shelf that allows air to circulate around the bulbs.
2. Leave them outside in the sun or in a greenhouse for a couple of weeks to dry.
3. Once the skins are dry and papery, store the bulbs in net bags or plait the foliage to form bundles.

4. Store somewhere light, cool and well-ventilated. Bulbs stored in the dark are more likely to sprout.

## Common pests and diseases of onions

### Onions bolting

Bolting occurs when onions stop developing their bulbs and instead produce flowers. It can be triggered by stress, such as sudden dry periods or cold snaps. Onions that have bolted can't be stored but are still edible.

- Choose varieties that have been heat-treated to reduce the risk of bolting, or look for bolt-resistant varieties.
- Cover plants with fleece to protect them against sudden cold snaps in spring.
- Water plants regularly in hot, dry periods.

### Onion fly

Onion flies lay eggs in the soil around the base of onion plants and once the larvae hatch, they burrow into the bulb and eat it. Leaves yellow and wilt, and small maggots can be seen in the bulbs.

- Grow onions under insect-proof netting.
- Onions grown from sets are less at risk from onion fly.

### Allium leaf miner

Adult leaf miners feed on the sap of onion leaves, and larvae feed on the bulbs themselves. Lines of small white dots appear on leaves and maggots can be seen in the bulbs.

- Grow crops under insect-proof netting.
- Avoid planting onions in soil where allium leaf miner has been a problem.

## Onion white rot

**Onion white rot** is a soil-born fungus that causes leaves to yellow and wilt, and bulbs to rot.

- No chemical controls are available.
- Avoid planting onions in soil where this has previously been a problem.

## Leek rust

Leek rust is a fungal disease which can affect all alliums. It appears as orange spots on leaves, and is more likely in wet conditions. Heavy infections can affect yield.

- Space plants well to ensure good air circulation.
- Remove and destroy any affected leaves.
- Don't plant onions in soil where this has previously been a problem.

## Key features of onions

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full shade, Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)

<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 10cm (4in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	5 months

## How to plant, grow and care for spring onions

Spring onions (also called scallions, bunching onions and salad onions) are a delicious addition to a whole range of dishes, from summer salads to stir-fries. Harvested before the bulbs start to swell, they have a milder flavour than mature onions, and the whole plant, bulb and leaves, can be used in cooking. Quick to grow, they're ideal as a filler crop between slower growing vegetables.

## Spring onions varieties

Growing spring or salad onions from seed gives you a wide range of varieties to choose from. Here are a few popular varieties to look out for:

- Spring onion 'White Lisbon' – quick to mature and ideal for successional sowing through summer. September sowings will last through winter.
- Spring onion 'Apache' – a purple-skinned variety with a mild flavour and crisp texture.
- Spring onion 'Feast' – a good performer, with excellent tolerance to heat and downy mildew. Good for successional sowing, giving harvests through summer.

## What you'll need to grow spring onions

- Rake
- Garden spade
- Garden fork

- Trowel
- Spring onion seeds
- Well-rotted **farmyard manure** or soil conditioner
- Granulated fertiliser**
- Horticultural fleece

For growing spring onions in pots:

- Container with drainage holes
- Compost**

### Sowing spring onions

Spring onions are easy to grow from seed and will grow in any fertile, well-drained soil, in full sun. For a continual harvest in summer, sow spring onions at three-week intervals from March to August. To grow spring onions over winter, sow in September and harvest in spring.

- 1.Prepare the soil in autumn for spring sowing by clearing any weeds and stones, and dig in soil conditioner or well-rotted farmyard manure to improve drainage.
- 2.A couple of weeks before sowing, rake in some granulated fertilizer. Tread the soil down and rake it smooth, so that the surface has a fine, crumbly texture.
- 3.Using a stick, the tip of a trowel or the corner of a rake head, draw shallow channels (known as drills) in the ground, 0.5cm (1/4in) deep and 15cm (6in) apart.

4.Sow the spring onion seeds thinly in the drills and cover over with soil. Cover the ground with fleece to stop birds pulling up the young seedlings as they appear.

5.Sow new seeds every three weeks for a continual supply through summer.

### Growing spring onions in pots

To grow spring onions in pots, choose a container with good drainage holes and fill it with good potting compost. Scatter seed over the surface and cover with 1.5cm (1/2in) of compost. Water just enough to moisten the compost.

### Growing spring onions in water



If you don't have space to grow spring onions outdoors, you can re-grow shop-bought spring onions indoors in a jar of water, giving you a readily available supply of tasty leaves for cooking. Here's how to grow spring onions in water:

1.Choose spring onions that have a few roots at the base of the plant.

2. Trim the tops of the leaves.

3. Place the spring onions in a clear glass jar and fill it with water so that the white bulb ends of the plants are underwater. Place the jar in a sunny position.

4. Cut off the green leaves of individual plants as you need them for cooking and leave the bases in the water to regrow fresh leaves.

5. Change the water every 2-3 days to keep it fresh.

### How to care for spring onions

Water during dry periods, and water container-grown spring onions regularly to keep the compost moist. Don't over-water, as this could leave the plants prone to diseases like downy mildew.

Weed regularly, preferably by hand, as spring onions have shallow roots which could be damaged by hoeing.

### How and when to harvest spring onions

Spring onions are ready to harvest around eight weeks after sowing, when the plants are around 15cm (6in) tall and the bulbs are still small, less than 2.5cm (1in) across. Pull the plants up by hand as you need them, using a hand fork or trowel to help.

### Storing spring onions

Spring onions are best used soon after harvesting, but they can be stored in sealed plastic bags in a fridge for up to two weeks.

Alternatively, place your harvested spring onions in a jar of water to keep them fresh until you are ready to use them. You can also use this method to grow shop-bought spring onions in water.

## Common spring onion diseases

### Onion white rot

**Onion white rot** is a soil-borne fungus that causes leaves to yellow and wilt, and bulbs to rot. Control methods:

- Avoid planting onions in soil where this has previously been a problem.
- No chemical controls are available.

### Onion downy mildew

**Downy mildew** is a fungal disease that can affect the leaves of spring onions, causing blotches on the leaf surface. In severe cases, leaves shrivel and fall off, and plant growth is stunted. It is more common in wet weather.

- Space plants when planting to ensure good air circulation.
- Remove any affected leaves.
- Water in the morning rather than the evening.

## How To Grow and Care For Chilli Plants At Home In 7 Easy Steps

**It seems that most people now have at a few chilli pepper plants at home - it's become trendy, partly due to how easy they are to grow. Find out how to grow the freshest, tastiest chillies at home and save yourself time and money!**

### Growing chillies at home

To ensure a reliable crop, chilli peppers need a warm, sunny position outside or they can be grown in a greenhouse, grow frame or covered structure. **Very hot chilli varieties** are definitely better under cover, as this helps develop the intense heat, taste and flavour.

Although they can be grown in well-prepared, moisture-retentive soil, they usually crop better and more reliably if grown in containers.

### Varieties of chilli pepper to grow

The following are all good reliable varieties of chilli:

- Apache
- Cayenne
- Demon Red
- Etna
- Fuego
- Habanero
- Hungarian Hot Wax
- Jalapeño
- Joe's Long Cayenne
- Prairie Fire
- Super Chili
  
- Thai Hot Dragon

One of the hottest chillies you can grow at home is Dorset Naga, which is extremely hot.

The hotter the variety the longer the whole growing process will take (from germination through to ripening) so bear this in mind when selecting your preferred type.



## Sowing chilli pepper seeds

You can sow seeds from February to April. It is usually better to sow as early as possible, even January if you're growing very hot chillies, as they need a long summer to crop well.

Sow seeds at 18-21°C (65-70°F) in pots of good **seed sowing compost**. Transplant the seedlings individually into 9-10cm (3-4in) pots when two true leaves have formed, and grow them on at around 16-18°C (60-65°F).

Gradually harden off the plants for 10-14 days before planting outside.

1. Soak chilli seeds overnight in warm water before planting OR gently sandwich between damp kitchen roll, place in a plastic bag and leave in the airing cupboard for a couple of days to improve germination.

2. Chilli seeds love hot weather so, grow in a greenhouse or even in a pot on the kitchen window sill for a bit of extra heat to your chilli plants.

3. Sow chilli seeds as early as possible (January or February for the hot varieties).

4. Ideally sow chilli seeds at a temperature of between 18-21°C (65-70°F).

5. Sow seeds in small pots and very shallow (about 5mm deep). Transfer to a larger pot when two leaves have developed, try not to touch the forming roots when re-potting to prevent accidental damage.
6. Water regularly but don't allow the soil to become waterlogged. Cover the seed tray with Vermiculite, it helps with water and heat retention, both of which the chilli seeds love.
7. If planting seedlings outside gradually harden the seedlings off for 10-14 days (leave outside during the day and bring in over night).
8. Feed with a chilli feed or seaweed extract.

### How to care for your chilli plants

Plants are ready to put into their permanent cropping position once the roots fill the 9-10cm pots. Pot them up into 20-23cm (8-9in) pots of good compost in late April (if growing in a heated greenhouse), mid-May (unheated greenhouse) or late May/early June if growing outside. They can also be grown in growing-bags, but will need very careful watering.

Pinch out the growing tip when plants reach about 15-20cm (6-8in) high to encourage bushy growth and better cropping. You can also pinch back the sideshoots if lots of smaller chillies are needed.

Water regularly and feed with a balanced general feed, switching to a **high potassium feed** when the first chillies have set.

Mist the foliage regularly, especially under cover, with tepid water to discourage **red spider mite** and to improve cropping.

### Looking after a chilli plant

1. Chilli plants like growing in containers where the temperature can be easily regulated.
2. If growing outside select a sunny, sheltered, well drained position. If growing inside a sunny window sill or conservatory is perfect, just remember - don't let the soil dry out.
3. Pinch out the growing tip when the chilli plant gets to about 20cm high - this encourages bushy growth and better crops.
4. Feed with **Tomorite** every other week as soon as flowers start to appear.
5. Pollination does need to occur to get fruits. Rub the bristles of a small paint brush, or your little finger, gently over the flower heads to ensure that pollination occurs. If growing outside the chances for natural pollination are higher so this is not necessary.
6. Give at least 2 inches of water per week once the fruits have appeared, spray rather than water at the base to prevent over watering.
7. Chilli plants grown indoors can be treated as perennial houseplants and will need a good prune in the winter months.

### How to harvest your chillies

Pick the fruit as needed when it has reached a good size. You can either pick them when they're green (when the flavour is quite mild) or leave

them on the plants until they have turned red, which develops a stronger, hotter flavour.

Harvest your chillies by snipping the top of the stalk with sharp secateurs. Frequent harvesting of the fruits allows the chilli plant to devote its energies to developing more fruit.

Chillies can be dried or frozen for later use. Dried chillies make an interesting alternative for festive decorations.



### Common chilli pests

Chilli plants can be susceptible to the following plant pests: **Aphids**, **Whitefly** and **Red spider mite**.

### Key features of chilli plants

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 60cm (2ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 45cm (18in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

## How To Plant and Grow Potatoes: The Ultimate Guide

Potatoes (*Solanum tuberosum*) are tubers that grow and form at the plant's roots. The plant also produces flowering shoots that appear above ground. These edible tubers that we know and love are an important carbohydrate and rich in potassium. They make a versatile ingredient, eaten both hot and cold and prepared in a variety of ways, from chips to crisps and much more. Luckily, it's easy to grow potatoes at home, both in containers and the ground, and just a few plants has the potential to provide large harvests.

### Varieties of potato

The texture of cooked potatoes varies between waxy and floury, and some are best for boiling, others for roasting and even more for chips. For example 'Red Duke of York' isn't great boiled, as it falls apart, but for roast potatoes or mashed there it's absolutely delicious. For examples of the varieties available check out the table below:

<b>First Earlies</b>	<b>Second Earlies</b>	<b>Maincrop</b>	<b>Salad</b>
Rocket	Estima	Desiree	Lady Christl
Foremost	Wilja	Romano	Pink Fir Apple
Epicure	Kestrel	Maris Piper	Ratte

## When to plant potatoes

When you buy your seed potatoes, take some time to research the variety name and what kind of potato they are, as different varieties are suitable for different cooking methods. Generally, young potatoes are better for boiling and salads, as they contain less starch and so don't break down as quickly, while larger potatoes are best suited to mashing and baking.

In the UK, potatoes are categorised into three groups: first-earlies, second-earlies and maincrop. These groups indicate when to plant potatoes and when to harvest potatoes, although these times can differ depending on your last local frost dates.

- First-earlies are quick to crop, usually planted in late March and harvested in June to July. These small potatoes are often referred to as new potatoes. With a thin skin and sweeter taste, they are best eaten fresh and are not suitable for storing.
- Second earlies are usually planted in the first half of April and harvested July to August. These will be larger than first-earlies, but smaller than maincrop.
- Finally, maincrop potatoes are planted in the second half of April and harvested from August to October. These are invariably larger and can be stored and eaten throughout the winter.

## Potato growing equipment list

Here's what you'll need to get started growing potatoes:

- Seed potatoes
- Potato **fertiliser**
- Deep container or **grow bag**

- Trowel
- Garden fork and spade
- Watering can
- Storage crates, bags, or sacks

### How to plant potatoes

Rather than use old sprouting potatoes from the back of your cupboard, it is recommended to buy certified seed potatoes, as they will be disease-free. Seed potatoes are available from late winter to spring. If you purchase them prior to planting, you can give them a head start by allowing them to chit.

The process of chitting involves leaving seed potatoes in a cool, light, and frost-free place to sprout. Take care when handling sprouting potatoes, as the sprouts are fragile and can break off. If you don't have time to chit the potatoes before planting, they should still sprout underground but it may take a bit longer for the shoots to appear.

### Planting potatoes in the ground

- 1.Potatoes grow in most soil types, but crop best in loose, fertile soil in full sun.
- 2.You can prepare your soil by adding well-rotted manure the autumn before planting, or potato fertilisers prior to planting.
- 3.Dig shallow trenches 7.5-15cm (3-6in) deep and plant the potatoes with the sprouts, or eyes, facing upwards. If you are planting first-earlies, you can plant them closer to each other.

4. Backfill and cover the seed potatoes with soil before watering. Try not to water too frequently before you see shoots, as seed potatoes can rot in waterlogged soil.

### Planting potatoes in containers

If your soil is a heavy clay, or you are short of space, you might have more success growing potatoes in raised beds, or containers. While you can grow maincrop potatoes in containers, the restricted room for tubers to form may mean it is preferable to select first- or second-early varieties, as they have smaller tubers.

1. Allow about 10 litres of compost per seed potato, so for a 40-litre container, plant up to four seed potatoes.

2. When planting potatoes in containers, use a good quality compost and potato feed, and make sure the container, or sack has adequate drainage holes.

3. Fill the container a quarter full with compost and place the seed potatoes on the compost surface, again with their shoots or eyes facing up.

4. Continue to cover the seed potatoes with more compost to about an inch below the top of the container. Give it a water and wait for the shoots to appear.

### How to grow potatoes

While in active growth, keep the plants well-watered, especially during dry spells, and continue to feed for higher yields. Flowers are a sign that potato tubers are forming in the soil.

You will also need to 'earth up' or mound the soil around the base of the plants as they continue to grow. This helps to keep the plant roots cool

and protects tubers forming near the soil surface from exposure to the sun, where they run the risk of turning green and poisonous.

Potato shoots are tender, so if shoots appear during forecasted frosts, you can protect them with cloches or horticultural fleecing. This is another benefit to growing potatoes in containers, as you can easily move the containers undercover if there is a risk of frost.

### How to grow potatoes in your garden

Potatoes will grow in almost any soil, however, they cultivate much better if the soil is enriched with heaps of organic matter. Potatoes grow best in an acid soil so **add well-rotted manure** and garden compost. It is also important that you do not lime soil at any time.

### How to grow potatoes in grow bags

After chitting your potatoes, take five or so tubers and plant into your bag specifically designed for growing potatoes, around 10-12 centimetres deep, with the shoots facing upwards. Add more compost into the bag until each tuber is covered with a gap of around 5 centimetres to the top of the bag.

An application of **a high potash fertiliser** at the rate suggested on the pack will increase yields. Avoid fertilisers high in nitrogen as these will delay maturity of the crop.

Water the compost as to make sure to keep it moist, especially around flowering time. **Do not saturate the compost** as this will cause severe rot!

First early potatoes arrive around June/July time, when the leaves have fully matured and opened. Second earlies and salad can be harvested and eaten at the same time of year.

For main-crop potatoes, **look to store your potatoes in a hessian bag** in a cool, dry environment. The potatoes will be ready to harvest once there is a yellow colouring on the stems and leaves. Then remove the stems and harvest 7 days later in full.

For plenty of small 'new' potatoes ready to eat in July, plant a variety known as 'early'. For a large crop of big tubers that will be ready in September and can be stored for months, go for a 'maincrop'.

### Growing seed potatoes

By buying seed potatoes, you are able to begin growing them before planting them in January/February time. Seed potatoes are actually small tubers specifically grown for the purpose. Remember, always **buy certified seed potatoes** - this way you will then know they are free from virus infections.

Seed potatoes are normally available in the first few months of the year, well before they can be planted outside.

### Chitting potatoes



To get them growing when you buy them, place them in egg boxes or a seed tray, with the end with most eyes or buds facing upwards. Stand them somewhere that is cool, but frost-free, and in good light. The aim is to produce small, sturdy, green shoots. To get the biggest crops it's important to 'chit' your seed before planting. Chitting is said to improve yields, but probably is used only to gain a few weeks in the time needed for growing earlies in the ground and to provide the right conditions for storage.

There are a number of methods for growing potatoes – for example, under black polythene or in large containers. To plant using black polythene, plant the tubers through the black polythene. An advantage of this method is that there is no longer a need to earth up the new potatoes so there is no digging involved to harvest them. If you choose to use containers, line the bottom of the container (15cm/6in) with **potting compost** and then plant the tuber below.

Keep adding the compost until the container is full, as the stems begin to grow. Remember, newly emerging foliage is susceptible to damaging frost – avoid this by earthing up with the surrounding soil or by covering the shoots with a fleece.

### Planting seed potatoes

The tubers are ready to plant when the shoots are about 2.5cm (1 in) long. In late March or April dig a trench 15cm (6in) deep and plant the potatoes. Carefully push your seed potato (with the shoots facing upwards) into the loosened compost leaving a gap of 30cm (12in) between each one. Take care not to damage the shoots as you plant the seeds and ensure the potatoes are evenly spaced and not touching each other. Leave a space of 60cm (2ft) between rows. Fill the trench with soil mixed with **garden compost**, or other organic matter, for harvesting from the end of June.

## Caring for potatoes

When the green shoots have grown to 20-30cm (8in-1ft) tall pull some extra soil around the stems to make a ridge. This soil is to exclude light from the potatoes that are forming on the surface. **Water in dry weather.** A **liquid feed** every fortnight of a general fertiliser can help grow yield.

## How to harvest potatoes

Dig up the whole plant with a fork or spade, taking care not to spear any potatoes in the process. Some potatoes will fall away easily, while others can be gently detached from the plants' roots.

After harvest, you can leave the potatoes somewhere dry to cure, giving soil left on the potatoes a chance to dry up, which makes cleaning easier. When selecting which potatoes to eat and which to store, test the skin with a finger. Those with skin which tears easily when pressed should be used quickly, while those with a firmer skin can be stored. Store somewhere dark, cool, and well ventilated, such as a paper bag or burlap sack.

There's nothing quite like growing, cooking, and eating your own potatoes. Just think of the culinary possibilities.

## Common potato pests and diseases

### Potato blight

This is a common disease that occurs in damp, warm summers. Initially, a brown watery rot will rapidly spread affecting both the stem and the leaves. In terms of tubers, they turn a reddish-brown colour when infected. They appear firm to begin with, but then develop into a soft rot below the skin. **Potato blight** is a difficult one to remedy, as unfortunately once it has struck, it is not easy to stop.

- There is currently no chemical product that can be used to fight blight, however you can apply a protectant in June if you predict the summer to be a wet one.

### Potato blackleg

A common disease, blackleg is a bacterial disease which causes blackened rotting at the base of the stem. Infection can cause stunted growth and yellow-coloured stems. Tubers may turn grey/brown and rotten if they continue to form.

- Destroy all infected potatoes and rotate crops.
- It is advisable to purchase resilient potatoes varieties to avoid this problem – varieties such as ‘Charlotte’ and ‘Pixie’ are best.

### Potato scab

Causing scab-like lesions on the surface of the potato, this disease is easily removed from the outer skin by peeling and does not affect the taste of the potato itself.

- There is no remedy for potato scab as such as you most likely will not recognise the issue until harvest time.
- The best advice is to **keep your potatoes well watered** as scab worsens in dry weather.

### Potato rot

Potato rot is a significant problem that follows a wet growing season, especially if the tubers are lifted from wet soil. The best way to remedy potato rot, is:

- Use good quality seed tubers that are resistant certified
- Harvest at a time when the soil is not wet nor dry.

- Store your potatoes in cool and dry conditions.

## Slugs

A huge nuisance where potatoes are concerned, **slugs** will eat holes in the potato leaves, and will burrow into the tubers themselves. The tell-tale sign of a slug problem is the slime trail visible on the soil near your crop, and also on the leaves themselves.

- Check plants (at night) and remove slugs by hand.
- Covering the soil around plants with crushed eggshells or grit may have some effect.
- Scatter environmentally-friendly **slug pellets** if other methods are insufficient.

## Key features of potatoes

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 90cm (3ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 60cm (2ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	4 months

## How to grow tomato plants at home

Nothing beats the taste of your own home-grown tomatoes, freshly-picked and warm from the summer sun. Slice into a summer salad, use

as pizza toppings, or add some depth to a curry, chili or spaghetti Bolognese. Whether you're growing them in greenhouses, pots or hanging baskets, our guide tells you all you need to know about growing tomatoes.

### Tomato varieties

If you're new to growing tomatoes, it's worth getting familiar with some of the terminology. For a start, there are several different types of tomato: salad tomatoes (the round, red, average-sized tomato you'll see in supermarkets), small, tangy and sweet cherry tomatoes, oval plum tomatoes with few seeds (ideal for cooking), and large, juicy, flavoursome beefsteak tomatoes.

Tomato plants are divided into cordon and bush types, dependent on how they grow. Cordon tomatoes (also sometimes called 'indeterminate' tomatoes) grow tall, producing one main stem that needs to be trained up a cane or other support. Bush tomatoes, as the name suggests, grow into short, bushy plants. They don't need training, but may need some additional support when laden with fruit. Bush tomatoes are sometimes also called 'determinate' tomatoes. Here are a few tomato varieties to look out for:

- Tomato 'Alicante': a high-yielding cordon tomato
- Tomato 'Big Boy': a full-flavoured beefsteak cordon tomato
- Tomato 'Shirley': a popular high-yielding cordon tomato
- Tomato 'Gardener's Delight': a cordon type bearing tangy cherry tomatoes
- Tomato 'Tumbling Tom': a bush type with masses of tasty cherry tomatoes

## Where to grow tomatoes



Growing tomatoes in greenhouses gives you a longer growing season, and also reduces the risk of diseases such as blight, but tomatoes can also be grown outside in a sheltered, sunny spot.

They can be planted directly in the ground in rich, fertile, well-drained soil, or grown in pots filled with good multipurpose compost.

### Equipment list for growing tomatoes

To grow tomatoes at home in your garden, you will need:

- 9cm pots for sowing seeds
- 25-30cm diameter pots (if growing tomatoes as container plants)
- General-purpose balanced liquid feed such as **Miracle-Gro Performance Organics All-Purpose Plant Food**
- Tomato feed such as **Tomorite Liquid Tomato Food**
- Multipurpose compost such as **Miracle-Gro Premium All Purpose Compost**
- Canes
- String

- Dibber
- Spade

### How to grow tomatoes from seed

If you have a heated greenhouse, you can start sowing tomatoes in late winter. Otherwise sow indoors in early spring.

- 1.Fill 9cm pots with multipurpose compost.
- 2.Sow a seed on top of the compost in each pot, then cover it lightly with a thin layer of compost.
- 3.Water the pots, cover with clingfilm and place in a greenhouse or on a sunny windowsill.
- 4.Once the seeds have germinated, remove the clingfilm. Water the pots regularly to keep the compost moist.
- 5.When the seedlings are about 15cm tall, plant them in their final locations.

### How to plant tomatoes outdoors

- 1.Check the weather report before deciding when to plant tomatoes outdoors and wait until all danger of late frosts is past, usually around late May or early June.
- 2.Before planting, prepare the ground by digging in lots of compost or well-rotted farmyard manure.
- 3.Harden seedlings off for a week before planting outside, by putting the seedlings outside in their pots during the day and bringing them back inside at night.

### How to grow tomatoes in planters

1. Check the weather report before deciding when to plant tomatoes outdoors and wait until all danger of late frosts is past, usually around late May or early June.

2. Harden seedlings off for a week before moving to outdoor planters, by putting the seedlings outside in their pots during the day and bringing them back inside at night.

3. Transfer tomato plants to a **large gro-bag** and water them in.

### Caring for tomato plants

The secret to caring for tomato plants is regular watering and feeding, especially once fruits start to develop. Aim for a consistent moisture level in the soil – if the plants dry out and then get soaked to compensate, the fruits will take up too much water and split. In wet weather, lay a thick layer of compost around outdoor tomatoes to help keep soil moisture levels constant.

Feed plants fortnightly, starting with a balanced liquid feed. Once fruits start to appear, switch to a tomato feed.

For cordon tomatoes, tie the main stems back to support canes as they grow, and remove the small side shoots that appear in the angles between side stems and the main stem. Once five trusses (side stems bearing leaves, flowers and fruit) have developed, pinch off the growing tip of the main stem. This will focus the plant's energy on producing more fruit.

For bush types, there's no need to remove side shoots or pinch out growing tips. However, you may need to support heavily-laden branches with canes.

### When to harvest tomatoes

Greenhouse-grown tomatoes should be ripe by mid-summer. Tomatoes grown outdoors will ripen later in mid- to late summer, depending where you are in the UK.

Ripe tomatoes are the same colour all over. They can be left on the plant for up to two weeks once ripe, so pick them as you need them.

As temperatures drop in autumn, tomatoes will eventually stop ripening on the plants. However, you can still ripen them indoors. In October, cut off all remaining tomatoes and place them indoors in a paper bag together with a banana or an apple. These fruits give off a gas called ethylene which encourages the tomatoes to ripen. The process takes about two weeks. Check the bag periodically and remove tomatoes as they ripen.

## Common tomato plant problems, pests and diseases

### Tomato blight

Blight is the biggest problem for tomato growers. This is an air-borne fungal disease most likely to occur in warm, humid conditions. Brown patches on leaves are the first indication of blight, and should be removed and disposed of immediately.

Unfortunately, there's no treatment for tomato blight but there are precautions you can take to reduce the risk:

- Choose disease resistant cultivars. Several varieties have been bred to have increased resistance to blight, although none are guaranteed disease-resistant.
- When watering plants, water the soil, not the leaves

Greenhouse-grown plants are less at risk of blight, but can be attacked by red spider mite and aphids. To discourage red spider mite, mist plants regularly, and wipe aphids off with a damp cloth.

### Whitefly

Whitefly live on the underside of the tomato leaves and weaken the plant by sucking the sap of plants.

- An **insecticide spray** will control whitefly

## Tomato leaf mould

**Tomato leaf mould** is a common fungal disease of tomato plants growing in greenhouses. Brown leaves and fruit as well as bleached spots on the flower petals are typical symptoms of this disease. It is rarely seen on outdoor plants.

- Remove and destroy all affected plant parts.
- For plants growing under cover, increase ventilation and, if possible, the space between plants.
- Try to avoid wetting the leaves when watering plants, especially when watering in the evening,
- Copper-based fungicides can be used to control diseases on tomatoes.

## Blossom end rot

Blossom end rot is caused by lack of calcium in the fruit. A circular patch varying in size and colour (from brown to black) at the bottom of tomato fruits is the classic symptom of blossom end rot.

- Keep soil and compost consistently moist
- Apply a liquid **tomato fertiliser**

## Key features of tomatoes

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 1.8m (6ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 60cm (2ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	5 months

## FAQs

### Can I grow tomatoes at home?

Yes, you can grow tomatoes at home in the UK, either in containers, greenhouses, or outdoors. Choose varieties suited to UK climates, like cherry or outdoor beefsteak tomatoes.

### Do tomatoes grow indoors?

Yes, tomatoes can grow indoors in the UK. Use grow lights, warm conditions, and a sunny spot to encourage healthy growth. Consider dwarf or cherry tomato varieties ideal for indoor cultivation.

## How to grow chard

Chard, or Swiss Chard, is a delicious and beautiful plant which will bring harvests to the kitchen and colour to the garden all year round. *Beta vulgaris* subsp. *vulgaris* is a deep green leafy vegetable with brightly coloured stems, quick to grow from seed and needing little aftercare.

It's an easy plant for new gardeners to begin growing, and will quickly become an essential part of any keen home grower's vegetable patch.

### Types of chard to grow

There are many varieties of chard, all of them having the characteristic large fleshy leaves and thick crispy stalks. The plant is also known as 'silver beet' and 'leaf beet'.

Chard can have red, burgundy, yellow, bright pink, white or orange stems. They look stunning all year around, but particularly against a frosty or snow-white ground. The names of different chard varieties often give a clue to the stem colour:

- 'Bright Lights' - a mixture of varieties with differently coloured stems
- 'Bright Yellow' - golden coloured stems and slow to set seed
- 'Fantasy' - red stemmed and resistant to downy mildew
- 'Fireworks' - a mixture of varieties with different coloured stems
- 'Rainbow' - multicoloured stems
- 'Green Wave' - green stems and leaves, looking rather like perpetual spinach
- 'Peppermint' - pink and white striped stems
- 'Ruby Red' - bright red stems
- 'White Silver' - white stems

The leaves can be picked young and eaten in salads or, as they mature, cooked like spinach, whilst the stems can be chopped and cooked in stir-fries or pasta sauces. All varieties of chard are high in vitamins A, C and K, iron and fibre, making them a great addition to any dish.



### **What you'll need to grow chard**

It's simple to grow chard from seeds. You can sow chard seeds direct in the ground from March through to September. You will need:

- A trowel or hoe
  - Watering can with fine rose
  - Water
  - Chard seeds
1. Create a shallow drill in the soil, no more than 1.5cm (1/2") deep, using the trowel or hoe.
  2. Water the drill, and then place a seed every 10cm (4") apart along the length of it.
  3. Cover the seeds with soil, and water again using the fine rose on your watering can.
  4. Water every day until the seedlings germinate. Thin to 40cm (16") apart as plants grow larger.

The seeds can also be sown in modules, with young plants then transplanted to their final location.

You can also grow chard in pots or containers. Simply, follow our guidance above, filling the container with a peat-free multi-purpose compost. Be extra vigilant in watering them, as pots tend to dry out more quickly.

Young chard leaves can be harvested after just two months, and fully grown leaves after three months. Cut them from the outside of the plant, close to the soil. New leaves will shoot from the centre of the plant as the season progresses.

### **Where to plant and place your chard**

Chard is a hardy and robust plant and will grow well in most soil types. Ideally, plant them in an open sunny position although they will tolerate partial shade.

Chard looks great planted informally amongst other plants in the border or vegetable patch. It is also stunning when planted in a more formal pattern, with careful thought given to how the plants are arranged to show off their colourful stems. Chard will grow to 50cm (20") in height, and as the stems are the eye-catching feature, position them so that they can be seen towards the front of a bed.

### **Caring and nurturing your chard**

Water regularly during hot spells, so that the plants do not flower and set seed. At some point, regardless of your efforts, chard will do this - you can leave the seedheads to spread and germinate at random for next year, or collect them for drying and sowing in another location.

Harvest throughout the year, although growth will slow in very hot and very cold weather, so quantities will fluctuate. When harvesting, always leave some greenery on the plant so that it can continue to absorb sunlight and convert this into energy for new growth.

Mulch around mature plants in the summer and autumn with farmyard manure help retain moisture around the plants. Water regularly in dry spells. Feed fortnightly with **Miracle-Gro® Performance Organics Fruit & Veg Concentrated Liquid Plant Food** to encourage continuous leafy green growth.

## **Frequently asked questions about chard**

### **Can I eat all of the Chard plant?**

You can eat the leaves when young, raw, in salads, or cook the stems and leaves as they mature. Larger stems and leaves are very versatile, and go particularly well in pasta dishes, pizza, omelettes and curries.

### **Can I grow chard in containers?**

Yes! Chard looks great in containers as a central, feature plant, with low-growing bedding plants around the edges. Sow in modules first then transplant when they have a few true leaves. Choose a large container filled with a good peat-free compost, such as [\*\*Miracle-Gro® Peat Free Premium All Purpose Compost\*\*](#). Water regularly as containers can easily dry out.

### **Can chard grow in shade?**

Chard will grow in shade, but much more slowly than plants receiving sunlight.

### **Does chard come back each year?**

Chard is not a perennial plant, but their lifespan does cover two growing seasons. Plants will freely seed themselves, meaning that you can plant them once and have many years of self-grown plants appearing in your garden.

## **Common pests and diseases with Chard**

### **Why do the leaves of my chard plant have white-grey patches on them?**

Downy mildew thrives among crowded plants, so thin as needed to ensure good air circulation.

### **Why does my chard plant have furry grey patches on it?**

Grey Mould can affect any part of chard, spreading to and damaging other plants too. Ensure good air circulation by thinning plants as needed.

## Why are the leaves of my chard plant shredded around the edges?

Birds can tear the edges of chard leaves in search of moisture. Cover plants with netting if this has become a problem.

## Why do the leaves of my chard have white or brown blisters and blotches?

Beet leaf miner maggots can tunnel into the leaves, making them look unattractive. Add fine mesh to deter beet leaf miner flies from laying their eggs on leaves, and squash maggots on sight.

## Key features of chard

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<i>Beta vulgaris</i>
<b>Plant Type</b>	Biennial
<b>Family</b>	Amaranthaceae
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Sun to partial shade
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral to slightly acidic

Growing aubergines (or 'eggplants') is now more popular than ever, thanks mainly to better varieties more suited to the British climate. They are an essential ingredient in moussaka, aubergine parmigiana and other Mediterranean dishes.

## How to grow aubergines

### Cultivation

Aubergines have to have a warm, sunny, sheltered position to produce a good, reliable crop. They will crop more reliably if grown under cover, in a greenhouse or growing frame, especially in cooler climates.

Outside, they need a rich soil improved with lots of organic matter and good dressing of **a general granular plant food**. Or, better still, you can grow aubergines individually in 23-25cm (9-10in) pot filled with **a good potting compost**.

### **Aubergine varieties**

Although deep purple is the standard colour, there are white and green varieties, and both long or round in shape.

Good varieties include Black Beauty, Long Purple, Mohican and Moneymaker.

Grafted plants are available from mail order suppliers and garden centres. The variety is grafted onto a rootstock, which provides much more reliable, bigger, better and earlier crops.



### **Sowing aubergines**

Sow seeds at 18-25°C (64-77°F) in individual cells or pots of a good seed sowing compost in March and April. Pot up the seedlings when 2 true leaves have formed, one plant to a 7.5-10cm (3-4in) pot of **a good potting compost**. Grow on in warmth and good light.

Alternatively, wait until May and buy ready grown young plants from your local garden centre.

Plant outside in early June, or the end of May if night temperatures are warm, in pots, planters or in the ground, spacing them 60cm (2ft) apart.

### How to care for aubergines

Stake plants with sturdy bamboo canes and tie them in as they grow.

Remove the main tip/growing point when plants are 30cm (12in) high to produce bushier plants that will produce more fruit.

Water regularly, especially plants in containers, and feed with **a high potash liquid plant food** once the first fruit has set and repeat at 14 day intervals.

Under cover, mist the foliage regularly with tepid water to discourage **red spider mite** and to help flower set.

### Harvesting

Cut the fruit when they've reached a good size for the variety being grown, and the skin surface has developed a good colour and is still shiny.

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 90cm (3ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 60cm (2ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	5 months

Asparagus is a long-term crop, usually providing up to 20 years of delicious spears if you plant well and care for the plants while they're growing. Asparagus is a great vegetable plot luxury - just steam and serve with melting butter.

## How to grow asparagus

### Cultivation

Asparagus grows best in a warm, sunny position. although it will tolerate light, dappled shade. It needs a well-drained soil improved with lots of bulky organic matter, such as compost or well-rotted manure.

### Asparagus varieties

The best asparagus varieties are all-male F1 varieties. They are more vigorous than the older, open-pollinated varieties.

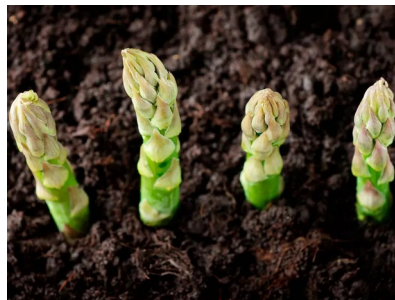
- Backlim (F1)
- Connover's Colossal
- Gijnlim (F1)
- Jersey Knight (F1)
- Lucullus (F1)
- Pacific Purple (F1)

### Planting asparagus

**As this is a long-term crop, prepare the soil well before planting in March or April. Dig and fork over the soil, removing stones and all perennial weed roots, and add lots of organic matter - such as well-rotted manure or**

**compost for example. For best results, and especially on heavy soils,**

**dig a trench 30cm (12in) wide and 20cm (8in) deep. Work in some well-rotted manure into the soil at the bottom of the trench, then add some of the excavated soil to make a 7.5-10cm (3-4in) high ridge down the centre of the trench.**



Place the crowns on top, carefully spreading out the roots, spacing them 30-45cm (12-18in) apart. Carefully cover the crowns with 5-7.5cm (2-3in) of soil, leaving the tips of the stems just visible. Gradually fill in the rest of the trench as the plants grow through the soil.

If planting container-grown plants, plant with the top of the rootball 7.5cm (3in) below soil level.

If you are going to grow lots, leave 45-60cm (18-24in) between rows and stagger the placement of the plants within the rows.

Water in well and mulch the soil with 5cm (2in) of well-rotted manure.

### How to care for asparagus

It is important to keep asparagus beds weed free. This is best done by hand as the shallow roots can be damaged when hoeing.

Add a 5-7.5cm (2-3in) thick mulch annually in spring to reduce weed growth, keep the plants and soil fed and help retain soil moisture. Apply a general granular feed in early spring and repeat once harvesting has finished.

Allow the foliage to turn yellow in autumn before cutting it down to 2.5cm (1in) above the soil surface.

## Harvesting

It's important to allow the plants to build up their strength, so it is best not to harvest any spears for the first 2 years. In the third year, stop cutting after 6. From then on, you can crop normally as and when the spears are produced.

The best way to harvest is to cut each spear with a sharp knife 2.5cm (1in) below the soil surface when they are 15-20cm (6-8in) long.

## Pests

Asparagus may be susceptible to asparagus beetle.

<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Eventually up to 1.2m (4ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	9 months

Cabbages are an important vegetable to grow at home, especially for winter and spring when few other fresh greens are available. By choosing different varieties you can be cutting cabbages all year round.

Lightly steamed they are delicious and can even be eaten raw in coleslaw and salads.

## How to grow cabbages

### Cultivation

Cabbages prefer to be grown in an open, sunny position, but they will also crop well in a semi-shaded position. They need a fertile, deep soil, that is preferably alkaline, with lots of added bulky organic matter. If

your soil is acidic, add **garden lime** before sowing or planting out. Savoys are a type of winter cabbage.

### Cabbage varieties

Although the majority of cabbages are green, there are also red/purple varieties, such as Kalibos, Red Drumhead and Ruby perfection. They also come in shapes other than round – pointed and open and flat.

Cabbages are divided into when they are ready for cropping. The following are all good varieties:

- **Spring:** Duncan, Offenham 1 – Myatt's Offenham Compacta, Pixie
- **Summer/Autumn:** Derby Day, Greyhound, Hispi, Spitfire
- **Autumn/Winter:** Celtic, Huzaro, January King 3, Kilaton
- **Savoy:** Endeavour, Tundra, Wintessa



## Sowing cabbages

For best results, sow seeds very thinly in a separate seed bed in a shallow drill about 13mm (½in) deep. Cover with soil and water in well. Actual sowing times depend on which types you are growing:

- Spring cabbage:** Sow in July/August. Transplant into cropping positions from September to November.
- Summer cabbage:** Sow from late February/early March (under cloches or similar covers, or indoors with gentle heat) until early May. Transplant in May/June. The later sowings will crop into autumn.
- Winter cabbages:** Sow from April to early June. Transplant in late June/July. The earliest sowings will start cropping in autumn.

## How to care for cabbages

When the young plants have 5 or 6 leaves, carefully lift and transplant them to their final growing position. Improve the soil first with **a general granular plant feed**. Firm the soil around each plant afterwards and water in well.

Space compact varieties 30cm (1ft) apart, larger varieties up to 45cm (18in) apart. Plant spring cabbages just 10cm (4in) apart in rows 30cm (1ft) apart, then thin out to 30cm (1ft) apart in late February/March and use the thinnings as delicious, tasty spring greens.

Water plants well in dry weather and cover the soil with a mulch to conserve soil moisture. Occasional feeds with [a liquid feed](#) through summer will improve the crop.

### Harvesting

Cabbages are harvested by cutting through the stem with a sharp knife just above ground level once they've developed a good sized head as and when they're needed.

For an extra bonus crop of spring and summer cabbages, don't dig up the roots after harvesting, but cut a 13mm (½in) deep cross in the stump. Feed with [a liquid plant food](#) and you'll be rewarded with several small cabbages in about 5 weeks.

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Alkaline
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 30cm (12in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (12in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	4 months

Carrots are relatively easy to grow and can be sown regularly throughout the season for an abundance of carrot crops. They now come in a variety of colours, from white to purple (and, of course, orange).

## How to grow carrots

### Cultivation

For the best results, carrots need a sunny position and fine, crumbly soil that has not been freshly manured, without too many stones.

### Carrot varieties

For early crops, choose 'Early Nantes', 'Amsterdam Forcing' or 'Mignon'.

For the main sowing season, sow 'Autumn King', 'Red Intermediate' or 'Chantenay Red Cored'.

For stoney soil, try the shorter or stump-rooted varieties, such as 'Rondo' or 'Parmex'.

And to tempt kids, you could try 'Sugarsnax', 'Parmex' or 'Bolero'.



### Sowing carrots

The seeds need to be sown where they are going to mature. Follow our [how to grow carrots](#) guide for full details.

## How to care for carrots

If you have sown too thickly they will need thinning out. Don't compost the larger thinnings as they make a delicious addition to salads. It is better to sow thinly, rather than having to thin out seedlings, as handling and bruising the plants can attract carrot fly.

## Harvesting

Carefully lift carrots as soon as they are large enough to use. Don't leave them to get very large or you'll sacrifice flavour.

Read our [how to grow carrots](#) guide for further advice and information.

## Pests

Carrots may be susceptible to the following problems: Forking, Cracking, Carrot Fly.

<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 15cm (6in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	5cm (2in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	3 months

Sweet peppers (or capsicum) come in a good range of fruit colours when mature - red, orange, yellow and even purple. This makes them an excellent ornamental vegetable to grow - even in mixed flower borders or in pots on the patio. Although they tend to crop better when grown under cover - such as in a greenhouse or grow frame - sweet peppers are reliable croppers outside in warm, sunny summers.

## How to grow peppers

### Cultivating sweet bell peppers

To ensure a good, reliable crop, peppers need a warm, sunny position outside, or they can be grown in a greenhouse, grow frame or similar covered structure. Although they can be grown in well-prepared, rich, moisture-retentive soil, they usually crop better and more reliably if grown in containers.

### Pepper varieties

The following are all good, reliable varieties: Ace, Bell Boy, California Wonder, Gypsy, Mohawk, Redskin.



### Sowing peppers

For greenhouse growing, you can sow from mid-February to early April. For growing outdoors, sow in mid- to late March.

Sow seeds at 18-21°C (65-70°F) in pots of **good seed sowing compost**. Transplant the seedlings individually into 9-10cm (3-4in) pots when two true leaves have formed, and grow them on at around 16-18°C (60-65°F). Gradually harden off the sweet pepper plants for 10-14 days before planting outside.

## **How to care for peppers**

Plants are ready to put into their permanent cropping position once the roots fill the 9-10cm pots.

Pot them up into 23-25cm (9-10in) pots of good compost in late April (if growing in a heated greenhouse), mid-May (unheated greenhouse) or late May/early June if growing outside. They can also be grown in growing-bags, but will need very careful watering. Support them with bamboo canes or similar and tie them in as they grow.

**Pinch out the growing tip when plants reach about 20cm (8in) high to encourage bushy growth and better cropping.**

Water regularly and feed with **a balanced general feed**, switching to **a high potash feed** when the first fruit has set.

**Mist the foliage regularly, especially under cover, with tepid water to discourage red spider mite and to improve flower set and cropping.**

## **Harvesting peppers**

**Pick the fruit as needed when it has reached a good size, is green, swollen and glossy. Or you can keep the fruit on the plant to change colour, but this may reduce the overall crop.**

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 90cm (3ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 60cm (2ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

If the weather's still on the chilly side, don't rush in – it's better to wait until the soil warms. Holding off for a week or two won't set you back. In fact, seeds sown into warm soil usually catch up fast and are far less likely to rot in cold, soggy ground.

### Vegetable plant maintenance in March

Once you've planted this month's veggies and collected the harvest, it's time to turn your attention to some essential maintenance for any remaining vegetables. Start by hoeing around all plants to ensure there's minimal competition for water and nutrients. Do this several times throughout the spring, and you will find that very few weeds pop up later in the year.

If you have any of the following vegetables, then they will have some specific needs during March, so make sure you don't neglect them.

Aubergines, peppers and other plants sown under glass earlier in the year can be moved to larger pots. At this point, it may also be worth preparing a warm, sunny spot to move your peppers to (both chilli and sweet) in early summer.

Peas need support, as they like something to wrap their tendrils around in order to grow upwards. Twigs with a knobbly surface or netting attached to supports at either end of a row of peas will do the job nicely.

Tall varieties of **broad beans** should be staked in case of early spring winds and, later in the month,

you can pinch out the top 7.5cm (3 inches) of each plant to deter blackfly. It's the season for pests, so you may also want to consider using a fine mesh of 1mm to cover your carrots to prevent carrot root fly. This pest can go largely unnoticed until you dig the crop up, only to find small brown tunnels have spoiled the root.

Birds sometimes like to pull sets of onions from the ground, so check them regularly and poke them back in if necessary. You can weed around them with your hands.

**Carrot root fly is probably the most serious pest of carrot crops. Although affected roots can still be eaten, it does reduce the amount of usable root and it can take ages in the kitchen cutting out the affected parts.**

### **Description**

Carrot root fly adults are small and you'd be hard-pressed to recognise them or see them flying around. They lay their eggs at the base of the developing carrot plant.

The larvae bury into the roots of carrots, parsnips, celery and celeriac causing disfiguring black 'mines'. This then leads to the roots rotting.

### **Symptoms**

The foliage usually turns yellow, orange or red in colour and may wilt. The roots are tunnelled by maggots.

## Treatment and control

No chemical treatment is available, but the following cultural advice is helpful.

Sow seed sparsely and do not thin seedlings – the smell of the foliage attracts the female fly.

After sowing seeds, cover the crop with very fine mesh or, better still, horticultural fleece to deny the female fly access to lay her eggs.

Some varieties, such as Fly Away, Maestro, Resistafly and Sytan, are said to be more resistant than standard varieties.

## What vegetables to harvest in March

If you planted vegetables in summer and autumn last year, then you can expect to start harvesting them from March. In particular, look out for:

- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Celeriac
- Chard
- Kale
- Leeks
- Lettuce

- Purple-sprouting broccoli
- Spring cabbage

Once you've collected in your harvest, consider mulching the soil with composted or chipped bark. This will improve the soil health and help to suppress weeds.

## Fruit

If you're wondering what fruit to plant in March, then it might be your last chance to get some varieties of currants and berries in the ground. On the whole though, March is a quiet month for planting and harvesting fruit, so take the opportunity to get some of that garden maintenance done that you've been putting off!

### What fruit to plant in March

With the winter months receding and the temperatures finally starting to rise, there's just enough time left to plant fruit bushes and trees. Some good options for March include:

- Apricots
- Blackberries
- Blackcurrants
- Cherries
- Figs
- Gooseberries
- Grapes
- Mulberries

- Peaches
- Plums
- Quince
- Raspberries
- Redcurrants

Under glass you could also sow the following seeds:

- Melons
- Physalis (cape gooseberries)

These fruit trees and bushes can all be planted in March:

### **How to grow raspberries**

What could be better than a bowl of sweet, freshly-picked raspberries in summer? These delicious fruits are easy to grow in a sunny garden, and if you're short on space you can even grow raspberries in a pot. Enjoy them fresh in summer and autumn, and freeze them for use in winter pies and tarts.

### **Varieties of raspberry**

Raspberries (*Rubus idaeus*) are divided into summer-fruiting and autumn-fruiting types. Autumn-fruiting varieties are a good choice for novice gardeners, as they are less prone to raspberry beetle (a pest that eats the fruit) and are also easier to prune than summer-fruiting types. Here are some of the most popular varieties:

## Summer-fruiting raspberries

- ‘Malling Promise’ – vigorous plant with abundant big sweet berries
- ‘Glen Moy’ – heavy crops on almost spine-free canes
- ‘Glen Ample’ – lots of big, succulent raspberries
- ‘Glen Fyne’ – one of the best varieties for flavour

## Autumn-fruiting raspberries

- ‘Autumn Bliss’ – compact, ideal for containers
- ‘Autumn Treasure’ – large sweet fruit on spine-free canes
- ‘Fall Gold’ – Large yellow fruits with exceptional flavour

## What you’ll need to grow raspberries

- Secateurs
- Gloves
- Raspberry plants

### **For planting raspberries in the ground:**

- Garden fork
- Garden spade
- Soil conditioner or well-rotted **farmyard manure**
- Slow-release fertilizer e.g. **fish blood and bone**

### **For summer-fruiting raspberries:**

- Wooden posts 2.4m (8ft) long
- Wire

### **For growing raspberries in containers:**

- 60cm (2ft) diameter container
- Soil-based compost
- High-potash feed

### How to grow raspberries

Raspberries do best in a soil that is moist but well-drained and slightly acidic. If your soil is alkaline, you will have more success growing raspberries in pots rather than in the ground.



Plant raspberry canes in autumn or winter in a sunny, sheltered spot, about 50cm (20in) apart, in rows spaced 1.5-2m (5-6ft) apart.

1. Before planting, dig the soil over to clear it of weeds and stones, and dig in plenty of soil conditioner or well-rotted farmyard manure to improve the soil structure.

2. Provide a support framework for summer-fruiting raspberries (autumn-fruiting raspberries are generally self-supporting), To make the support framework, knock sturdy 2.4m (8in) high posts into the ground at the end of each row and stretch 3 rows of heavy-gauge wires between the posts, spaced about 60cm (2ft) apart.

3. Dig a trench 45cm (18in) wide and 20-25cm (8-10in) deep and cover the base with a good layer of organic matter, such as compost or well-rotted farmyard manure.

4. Plant the canes, allowing 45cm (18in) between each cane. Add a handful of slow-release fertilizer such as fish, blood and bone when planting each cane.

5. Backfill the trench with soil mixed with organic matter. Gently firm in around the roots and water in well.

6. Cut the canes down to 25cm (10in) above ground level, to encourage them to produce plenty of fruit-bearing shoots.

### Growing raspberries in pots

1. Choose a large container, at least 60cm (2ft) in diameter.

2. Fill the container with a soil-based compost such as John Innes no 3.

3. Plant up to six raspberry canes per pot, spaced equally around the edge of the pot.

### How to care for raspberries

Tie the canes of summer-fruiting raspberries to the wires with soft twine as they grow.

Water plants in dry periods, and water container-grown plants regularly to prevent the compost from drying out. Feed container-grown plants fortnightly with a high potash feed like Tomorite once the fruits start to develop.

Keep the plants clear of weeds. If using a hoe, take care not to damage the roots just below the surface of the soil.

## How to prune raspberries

Prune summer-fruiting raspberries after the last fruit has been picked. Cut down all the dark brown canes that produced fruit to ground level. New canes that grew in the current year will fruit in the following year; retain the strongest 6-7 new canes for next year's crop.

To prune autumn-fruiting raspberries, cut all canes back to ground level in February.

## Common raspberry pests and diseases

### Raspberry cane blight

Raspberry cane blight is one of the most serious raspberry diseases. It is a fungal disease that causes canes to die back, turning dark brown and breaking easily.

- Remove and destroy any affected stems, cutting back below soil level.
- Water plants regularly and mulch to reduce drought stress, which can make plants more prone to infection.

### Raspberry beetle

Raspberry beetle affects mainly summer-fruiting raspberries as well as some early-flowering autumn varieties. Adult beetles lay eggs on the flowers and the larvae burrow into the developing fruits and eat them. Affected fruits develop dry patches around their stalk, and white maggots will be found inside the fruit.

- Plant autumn-fruiting varieties, which are less affected.
- Encourage natural predators like birds, hedgehogs and ground beetles.
- Pyrethrin sprays should not be used when plants are in flower to avoid harming pollinators, so are not practical against raspberry beetle.

## Key features of raspberries

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 1.8m (6ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	1 year

## How to grow peach trees

What better way to round off a summer meal than with a luscious peach? Even better, a peach you've grown yourself? But can you grow peaches in the UK? With a sheltered sunny location and careful nurturing, you can grow peaches in the UK. *Prunus persica* originates from China and in the age of the grand country house was extensively grown in specially designed glasshouses. Follow this guide to learn how to grow peaches in your garden at home.

### Types of peach trees to grow

Here is a selection of widely available peach trees to grow in your garden, including some smaller trees suitable for growing in containers. Most of the peach plant varieties listed have pretty pink blossom in spring. We've highlighted where the flowers are a slightly different shade.

- 'Peregrine': has red tinted skin and white flesh. It is said to be one of the most reliable varieties for a generous crop of fruit ready to harvest in August.

- ‘Avalon Pride’: is said to be strongly resistant to the most common problem when growing peaches, leaf curl disease. It ripens from early August with yellow flesh that parts from the stone relatively easily.
- ‘Duke of York’: an early variety ready to harvest from early summer, the fruits have red skins and sweet white flesh.
- ‘Saturne’: grow this ‘doughnut’ peach for something a little different. Children love the flat fruits with extremely sweet white flesh.



These compact and slow growing varieties have been bred to grow in containers:

- ‘Bonanza’: crops in late summer with large red and yellow skinned fruits with yellow flesh.
- Sibley’s Patio Peach ‘Melred’: the sweet yellow flesh parts easily from the stone. Magenta red flowers.
- ‘Garden Lady’: a later fruiting variety with yellow and red skins and yellow flesh.

## What you'll need to grow peach trees

Peaches do best grown in well-drained, fertile soil. If you have heavy clay, you may find they grow best in a large container, such as the variety 'Bonanza' - but you can improve drainage by adding mulch every year. You can enrich all soils by adding **well-rotted manure**.

To grow peaches in a container you will need:

- a container with a diameter of at least 30cm.
- pea gravel at the base of the pot for drainage and stability.
- **soil-based compost**.

Where a peach tree is planted against a wall or fence, provide support with horizontal strands of strainer wire at 15cm intervals, attached to the vertical support with metal vine-eyes. Train the branches of the peach onto bamboo canes arranged on the wires in a fan shape. Training peach trees this way encourages more fruit for minimum space and allows more sun and heat to get to the fruits.

To take care of a peach tree, ideally you need to provide protection at several stages of growth with:

- Polythene sheeting shelter: in winter this protects the tree from peach leaf curl.
- Horticultural fleece: in early spring this protects the delicate blossom from frost. Remove it during the day for any early pollinating insects to reach the flowers.
- Strong netting: from April through to harvesting because birds love to eat the peaches off the tree.

Peaches often flower before many pollinating insects emerge. A small paint brush can be used to pollinate the peach flowers by hand. Just dab each flower with the brush at around midday every day during the flowering season.

## Where to plant and place your peach trees

Peaches grow best fan-trained (see above) against a sunny, sheltered south or south-west facing wall or fence. Peach trees are often sold bare-rooted and should be planted between November and March about 15-20cm from the wall, at a slight angle towards the wall. If planting more than one peach, space them at least 3.5m to 4m apart.

In a sheltered location, peaches can also be grown as a free-standing shrub.

## Caring and nurturing your peach trees

Follow these care tips for growing successful crops of peaches:

- Peaches prefer warm conditions in a sunny spot and protection from frost: see above.
- In late winter feed peach trees with a **continuous release feed** followed by a mulch of **well-rotted manure**. For peaches grown in containers, apply a liquid feed high in potassium such as **tomato food** every two weeks during the growing season.
- Keep the ground moist throughout the growing season and water peach trees generously during hot sunny weather as the soil near a wall can quickly dry out. Make sure peach trees in containers don't dry out.
- Thin out any badly placed or misshapen fruits from the growing clusters to allow the remaining fruits space to develop. This should
- be done when the fruits are about 1cm wide. Aim to leave about 15cm between each peach.
- The fruits are ready to harvest when their skins have coloured up and the flesh around the stalk yields slightly. Cup your hand around

the peach and remove it from the tree by giving a slight twist. Peaches do not store well and are best eaten when freshly picked.

- Prune peach trees immediately after harvesting. Because peaches flower on one year-old growth, remove as much old growth as possible. Cut back stems which have fruited to a new shoot, and tie in the new growth to the support to replace the old growth.
- Re-pot container grown peach trees approximately every three years.
- After the first year, never prune peach trees in the winter, as this can lead to disease.
- Peaches tend to be self-fertile, so you should harvest enough fruit even with one plant.

## Common pests and diseases with peach trees

### What is peach leaf curl?

Peach leaf curl happens in spring when new leaves blister and turn bright red or purple followed by a white layer of spore. The leaves then drop. The disease is caused by a fungus carried by wind and rain which overwinters in the bark and bud scales.

To control it, remove infected leaves before the spore layer forms. Encourage the growth of replacement leaves by feeding and watering the tree. Fan trained trees can be protected from mid-winter to late spring with a temporary open-sided shelter made from polythene sheeting.

### Can aphids attack my peach trees?

Aphids can attack peach trees, with the leaves becoming wrinkled and turning a yellowish-green in late spring/early summer. It's caused by a

couple of species of aphid (both green and black). You can control it by spraying from mid-spring with a **plant oil pesticide**.

### Frequently asked questions about peach trees

#### Do you need two peach trees to produce fruit?

No, Peach trees are self-fertile. But you may need to hand pollinate your fruit tree (see above) as the tree can come into blossom before the emergence of pollinating insects.

#### How big do peach trees get?

The average height of a mature peach tree is between 2.5m and 4 metres.

#### What is the lifespan of a peach tree?

Peach trees live for an average of 12 years.

#### Where do peach trees grow best?

Peach trees grow best in full sun, fan-trained against a south or south-west facing wall or fence.

### Key features of peach trees

<b>Botanical Name</b>	Prunus persica
<b>Plant Type</b>	Deciduous fruit tree
<b>Family</b>	Rosaceae
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil pH</b>	All soil types: acid, neutral, alkaline
<b>Flowering Time</b>	March
<b>Flower Colour</b>	Pink
<b>Native Area</b>	China

## How to grow cherry trees

Cherry trees are usually grouped into being either an ornamental type grown for their flowers, or a type grown for producing cherries for eating. The ornamental type is well-celebrated in Japan, where the annual cherry blossom festivals attract thousands of visitors from across the world. Cherry trees are truly beautiful, with different species of *Prunus spp.* offering gorgeous flowers, bark, leaves, and fruit. You can bring a bit of this to your garden with our easy to grow guide.

### Types of cherry trees to grow

Ornamental cherry trees are usually labelled as such. These varieties do produce fruit, but they are not always edible – blossoms are the reason to grow them rather than for their flavour. These stunning cherry blossom trees are also known as sakura, and there are several hundred cultivars of tree to consider. We recommend:

- Prunus 'Accolade' gives interest throughout the year, with large pink flowers in the spring, and bright orange-red leaves in the autumn.
- Prunus apetala. A small tree growing to 5.5m (17') with white to light pink flowers, and very dark fruit.
- Prunus 'Kanzan'. A pink flowering variety which has a large spread of up to 8 metres (25') wide.
- Prunus nipponica, or Japanese alpine cherry. This Japanese cherry blossom tree is very tolerant of cold conditions, this variety usually has light pink flowers with attractive yellow-orange leaves in the autumn.
- Prunus pendula 'Pendula Rubra'. A weeping cherry tree cultivar, with an arching habit offering dark pink flowers.

- Prunus 'Royal Burgundy'. Grown for its stunning foliage, the leaves of this variety emerge as a copper colour, turning to bright red and eventually purple.
- Prunus sargentii. A pink flowering cherry tree with bronze to orange leaves.
- Prunus serrula. Also known as the birchbark cherry, paperbark cherry, and Tibetan cherry tree. Grown for its shiny copper coloured bark, a medium sized tree reaching 6-9m (18-27' high).
- Prunus 'Shogetsu'. Large flowers which turn from pink to white.
- Prunus × subhirtella 'Autumnalis Rosea'. Unusual insofar that this cultivar will flower in a mild winter, as well as in the spring.
- Prunus 'The Bride'. A small tree with bright white flowers.



Other cherry trees, not carrying the label 'ornamental' are usually grown for their fruit. The delicious fruit can be sweet or acidic. Sweet cherries are great for eating fresh, whilst acidic cherries are better for cooking.

We like:

- Prunus 'Sweetheart'. A sweet cherry which will continue cropping into early autumn.
- Prunus 'Morello'. A dark-red fruited acidic variety, great for making into jams and tarts.

- Prunus 'Merchant'. A heavy cropping sweet cultivar with dark fruits, this one needs a pollination partner.
- Prunus 'Lapins'. Another heavy cropping sweet variety, this one does not need another cherry tree nearby as it is self-fertile.

Both types of cherry tree are truly beautiful, so whichever you choose, just be sure to give it a good start by following our top tips for growing cherry trees, below.

### What you'll need to grow cherry trees

A wide range of cultivars of cherry tree are available to buy online. You'll also find cherry trees for sale at most garden centres. Choose one with an appropriate rootstock for the space you have available - rootstocks limit the size of the mature plant.

'Gisele 5' rootstock (dwarf cherry tree) is perfect for small gardens and pots, growing to just 1.5 metres (5') tall, making the cherry tree a dwarf size. The rootstock 'Colt' is better for a larger garden, limiting the height of a sweet cherry tree to 8 metres (24'), and acidic cherry trees to 4 metres (12').

Some cultivars need a pollination partner to produce fruit, so check this when purchasing. If necessary, buy a second plant to be grown nearby.

To plant the cherry tree:

- 1.Dig a hole slightly bigger than the rootball, or if growing in a pot, add plenty of **compost** to a large container which is at least 50 cm (18") across.
- 2.Add plenty of water to the hole or pot, and allow to drain away.
- 3.Place the plant in the hole to the same depth it was planted when grown in the nursery - look for a change in the appearance of the bark, slightly above the roots.

4. Add a stake to the ground, and use string tied in an '8' shape to secure the tree to it.
5. Backfill soil in the ground, or add more compost to the pot, gently firming in to ensure good contact between the roots and the soil.
6. For cherry trees planted in the ground, add a mulch of **Levington® Composted Bark**.

Plant outside from mid-autumn through to the end of the winter, when the plant is dormant and the ground isn't frozen.

### Where to plant and place your cherry trees

Cherry trees grow well in pots, as well as fanned against a wall or in the ground as a free-standing tree. They can be relatively small, so are suitable for most gardens no matter the size. Choose an appropriate rootstock so that the tree will only grow to the size you want it to.

They don't cast much shade, so are perfect for underplanting with flowers that like dappled shade. Cherry trees like sun and to be protected from wind.

Cherry trees need a period of cold weather, so don't be tempted to grow them indoors in a heated environment.

### Caring and nurturing your cherry trees

Cherry trees flower in mid-late spring, and fruiting varieties are ready to harvest throughout the summer. Protect from birds who will enjoy the fruits, by securing netting over the plant. Make sure there are no gaps as birds will get in and may get trapped.

They like lots of sunlight, and prefer well-drained soil which can retain some moisture. Mulch annually in late winter and early spring with **Levington® Peat Free Organic Blend Farmyard Manure**.

Prune young trees from March to April, and mature trees in the summer only if needed. This should focus on maintaining the shape desired, and to ensure good airflow around the plant. Prioritise removing dead and diseased growth.

Protect from frost when flowers are forming, using horticultural fleece. Remove this each day once the weather warms to allow pollinators to reach the flowers, replacing at night before frosts return.

Water container-grown and young plants to ensure consistent moisture. Mature specimens should not need watering except in the very driest of summers.



### Common pests and diseases with cherry trees

Why are the cherry tree leaves on the tips of the branches curling up?

Black cherry aphid suck sap from the leaves, causing them to curl up and become distorted. It doesn't look very nice but is largely harmless - encourage birds outside of the fruiting season, as they will enjoy eating the aphids.

Why do my cherries have small holes in them?

Cherry fruit fly can lay eggs in young fruit, and when these hatch the worm-like larvae eat the flesh and then exit the fruit, leaving a small hole. You can prevent this by encouraging birds into the garden (protect with

netting when fruits are forming). Squish small populations by hand, and spray with **BugClear™ Ultra Gun!** If the problem persists.

### Why does the bark of my tree have a split which is weeping?

Canker is a serious disease which can kill a cherry tree and can spread to other trees. Remove infected sections of the plant using secateurs or a pruning saw, cleaning the tool carefully before using again. Destroy the affected material.

### Frequently asked questions about cherry trees

#### Do cherry trees have thorns?

No, cherry trees are thornless.

#### Can you grow a cherry tree from a cherry pip?

Cherry trees can be grown from seed, but the size of the mature tree is then not controlled by a rootstock, so they can become rather too large for most gardens.

#### Are cherry trees poisonous to horses?

Yes, the leaves of a cherry tree contain cyanide, and are toxic to horses if eaten.

### Key features of cherry trees

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<i>Prunus spp.</i>
<b>Plant Type</b>	Woody perennial
<b>Family</b>	Rosaceae
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Full to partial sun
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral to slightly acidic
<b>Flowering Time</b>	April-May

<b>Flower Colour</b>	White, light and dark pink
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## How to grow and care for fig trees

Fig trees (*Ficus carica*) are Mediterranean natives that thrive in climates with hot, dry summers and cool winters, making them well-suited to many areas in the UK. These versatile trees can be grown in gardens or large containers, offering delicious fruit and lush, green foliage.

Figs grow into medium to large trees, but they can be pruned to a manageable size or trained in pots.

### Top six fig tree care tips

1. Choose a position in full sun, sheltered from strong winds. For the best results, train your fig tree against a sunny south- or south-west facing wall.
2. Prepare the soil by enriching it with compost or a [soil improver](#) before planting.
3. Feed fig trees grown in the ground with a [high potash feed](#) in spring, and feed container-grown fig trees every 2-3 weeks during the growing season with a [high potash liquid feed](#).
4. Prune fig trees twice a year, first in spring after the last hard frost and again in early summer.
5. Propagate fig trees using cuttings taken in autumn.
6. In long hot summers, some fig trees may produce two harvests; the first in early summer from fruit set the previous autumn, and the second in late summer from fruit produced on the current year's growth. Fig trees grown indoors in greenhouses are more likely to produce two crops in a year as they get enough reliable warmth.

### Essential shopping list

- A potted fig tree

- **Compost** or soil improver for planting
- **Fertiliser**
- **Mulch** to retain moisture and suppress weeds
- A sturdy stake for support
- Wildlife-safe crop protection netting
- Secateurs for pruning

## How to plant fig trees

Site selection: Choose a sunny spot protected from strong winds. Figs thrive in free-draining soil with a neutral pH, so avoid planting in waterlogged areas.

- 1. Soil preparation: Dig a square hole wider than the rootball and around 60cm deep. Fig trees fruit best with their roots restricted, so line the sides of the hole with paving slabs and place a 10-20cm layer of rocks and crushed rubble at the bottom to stop the roots growing through.**
2. Planting: Place the fig tree at the same depth as it was in the pot. Add a mound of compost under the root ball if necessary to position it correctly. Add **Levington® Fish, Blood & Bone Multi Purpose Plant Food**, backfill the hole with soil, firm the soil gently around the roots and water thoroughly.
3. Mulching: Spread **mulch** around the base, avoiding direct contact with the trunk, to retain soil moisture and prevent weeds.

## Growing fig trees in containers

1. Fig trees grow well in containers, which restrict their roots and promote good fruit production. Growing figs in containers in cold

areas allows the trees to be moved indoors in winter to protect the developing fruits from frost.

2.Choosing the right container: Select a pot or container with good drainage, slightly larger than your plant's rootball.

3.Compost: Use a free-draining, peat-free soil-based compost like [John Innes No. 3](#).

4.Planting: Fill the container halfway with potting mix, place the fig tree centrally, and backfill until the root ball is covered. Firm the soil gently and water thoroughly to settle the roots.

Container-grown figs require consistent watering, especially during warmer months, as pots dry out quickly. Keep the soil moist but not waterlogged, and ensure excess water drains freely. Feed every 2-3 weeks during the growing season with a [liquid high-potash feed](#).

Container-grown fig trees will need to be repotted every 2-3 years

### Growing fig trees indoors

Although several species of fig, such as the weeping fig (*Ficus benjamina*) and fiddle-leaf fig (*Ficus lyrata*) make very attractive houseplants, fruiting fig trees (*Ficus carica*) will not grow well indoors, as they can't get enough direct sunlight. However, container-grown fig trees can be grown indoors in greenhouses all year round, and the additional warmth can encourage a second crop of fruit to ripen in late summer.

### Caring for fig trees



Fig trees are relatively low maintenance but benefit from regular care to stay healthy and productive.

### Pruning fan-trained fig trees:

Fig trees are often trained against a wall to take up less space and make harvesting easy. To prune a fan-trained fig:

1. In spring, cut back one-third of the new shoots produced the previous year (particularly any weak or spindly shoots) to stubs 2.5cm long.
2. On mature plants, cut back one or two old branches to 5cm.
3. Remove any shoots growing the wrong way, i.e. towards the wall or outwards away from it.
4. Tie in new shoots.
5. In summer, shorten all side shoots to 5 leaves.

### Pruning free-standing fig trees:

1. In spring, remove any dead, damaged or crossing branches
2. On mature plants, cut one or two old branches back to 5cm stubs
3. In summer, shorten all side shoots to 5 leaves.

Safety tip: Fig sap is an irritant, so wear long sleeves and gloves when pruning, and wash any sap off your skin immediately. To avoid drips, start pruning from the bottom of the tree and work upwards.

### Feeding fig trees:

- Garden trees: Feed in early spring with a high-potash fertiliser such as **Levington Fish, Blood & Bone Multi Purpose Plant Food**.

- Container trees: Feed every 2-3 weeks during the growing season with a high-potash liquid feed like a **tomato feed**.

### Fig tree problems:

- Birds and wildlife: Protect ripening fruit with tightly secured wildlife-safe netting.
- General pests: While uncommon, occasional issues like aphids or scale can be treated with **organic sprays** if needed.

### Harvesting figs



Figs are best picked fresh from the tree when they are perfectly ripe.

1. Signs of ripeness: Figs are ready to harvest when they hang down on the branch, feel soft to the touch, and emit a sweet fragrance. Ripe figs will come away from the branch easily. They do not ripen after being picked, so wait until they are ready before harvesting.
2. Protecting your crop: Birds and other wildlife are attracted to ripe figs. Use a wildlife-safe crop protection net with holes no larger than 4mm to protect the fruit. Ensure the net is pulled tightly over the tree or use a frame to create a cover.

Some fig varieties produce two crops a year: the breba crop happens in early summer on old wood and a larger main crop happens in late summer on new growth. In the UK, the second crop is only likely to ripen in long hot summers.

## Propagating fig trees

It's easy to grow a fig tree from a cutting. Here's how it's done:

1. **Take hardwood cuttings** from healthy branches in autumn. Cut off side stems around 20-30cm long, cutting just below a node (nodes are the bumps on the stems).
2. Remove the leaves.
3. Plant the cuttings into pots filled with **multipurpose compost** mixed with perlite for good drainage, and keep them moist.
4. Position in a sheltered, bright location and wait for roots to establish. When new leaves start to appear, the plants can be potted on.

Growing a fig tree from a fig seed is possible but can be tricky as the **germination** success rate is low. To find out whether your fig seeds are viable (i.e. likely to germinate), cut the fig in half, scoop out the flesh containing the seeds and place them in a jar of water for a couple of days. Viable seeds will sink to the bottom of the jar, while non-viable seeds will float.

Fill a seed tray with well-draining **seed compost** and sow the viable seeds on the surface. Place in a sunny spot and water regularly to keep the compost moist. Seeds should germinate within 2 weeks. Once the seedlings are large enough to handle, prick them out and pot them on into individual pots filled with multipurpose compost. It takes several years for seed-grown fig trees to produce fruit.

## FAQS

### When do fig trees produce fruit?

Fig trees produce two crops of fruit in a year, one on the previous year's wood and the second on the current year's growth. In the UK only the first crop is likely to ripen, in early summer. In very long hot summers or on greenhouse-grown figs, the second crop may ripen in late summer.

How long does a fig tree take to grow?

Fig trees grow quickly in the right conditions and may produce fruit within a couple of years of planting. To help your fig tree grow faster and

produce heavy crops of fruit, ensure it has fertile soil, water and plenty of sunlight.

Can I grow a fig tree indoors?

Fig trees do not grow well indoors, as they can't get enough direct sunlight. However, container-grown fig trees can be grown indoors in greenhouses all year round.

Can fig trees grow in shade?

Although fig trees can tolerate a little light shade, they need around 6-8 hours of direct sunlight to grow well and produce good crops of fruit.

**All about growing currants**

**Bursting with vitamin C, blackcurrants are an easily grown soft fruit.**

**They make a great jam, health-promoting drinks and are a vital ingredient of summer pudding. Redcurrants are tart, but make great jams and jellies, while whitecurrants are sweet enough to be eaten fresh from the plant.**

## How to grow currants

### Cultivation

All currants appreciate a sunny position, although light, dappled shade is acceptable. They need a moist, but free-draining soil that doesn't become waterlogged in winter.

It will pay dividends to improve the structure of all soils by adding lots of organic matter, such as compost or soil improver. This is particularly the

case with clay soils, where it will improve drainage, and on light sandy soils, where it will increase its moisture-holding capacity.

### Currant varieties

- Blackcurrant:** Ben Lomond and Ben Sarek are traditional heavy yielding varieties. Ebony and Wellington produce much sweeter fruit. Jostaberry is a cross between blackcurrant and gooseberry and produces huge fruit
- Redcurrant:** Red Lake has very large fruit. Laxton's No.1 is a heavy cropper. Rovada produces huge strings of large fruit
- Whitecurrant:** White Grape has the best taste, but White Versailles carries a heavier crop



## Planting currants

Plant bare-root plants in late autumn (October to November) or in February. Leave 1.8m (5ft) between currant bushes.

Plant bare-root currants in winter. November or December are best, although it can be done right up to the end of February, whenever the soil isn't frozen solid or waterlogged. Container-grown currants can be planted at just about any time of year.

Dig a hole 60x60cm (2x2ft) and 30cm (1ft) deep. Add a layer of organic matter into the base of the hole and dig in. Place the roots of redcurrants and whitecurrants in the planting hole at the same depth as they were originally growing, so that the old soil mark is at soil level. Place the roots of blackcurrants in the planting hole so that the old soil mark is now at least 8cm (3in) below the new soil level. This will encourage a continuous production of new stems from below ground level.

Now mix in more soil improver to the soil and fill in the planting hole. Add **a general granular plant food** and water in well. Finally, add a 5cm (2in) deep mulch of well rotted garden compost, bark or other bulky organic material around the root area.

## How to care for currants

Plants will need watering during dry weather, especially as the fruit is swelling.

Feed the plants every spring with **a high potash plant food** and replenish the mulch layer of organic matter. Avoid using a hoe to control weeds as this tool could easily damage the shallow rooting system. Instead, hand weed or use a weedkiller.

As soon as the fruit start to turn colour, birds will be attracted to the plants. Drape nets over the bushes in June to keep them away.

## Pruning and training

Although they come from the same plant family, redcurrants and whitecurrants are pruned totally differently to blackcurrants.

All three currants can be grown as bushes, that usually reach about 1.5m (5ft) tall and the same wide, although redcurrants and whitecurrants can also be grown as vertical cordons.

## Redcurrants and whitecurrants

Fruit forms on fruiting spurs (stubby sideshoots), so pruning is designed to encourage more of these. During winter, cut back the new leader growth put on in the previous summer by half. Then reduce sideshoots growing from these main branches to about 5cm (2in) in length. During summer (June) cut back all new sideshoots so they carry just 4 or 5 leaves.

## Blackcurrants

The main annual pruning should be carried out in winter when plants are dormant. Start 2 years after planting by cutting out weak branches and twiggy stems. Cut out completely about one-third of all old stems to encourage new growth from below ground level. During subsequent winters, do the same pruning so that no wood on the bush is more than 4 years old.

## Harvesting currants



Most currant varieties will ripen during July and into August. Pick fully ripened fruit in stages. The fruit at the top of the truss will be the largest and will ripen first. Pick every week during dry weather – if the fruit is wet they will not store well, but turn mouldy. All currants freeze well.

Mature plants will produce 3-4kg (6-9lb) of fruit each year.

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 1.5m (5ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 1.5m (5ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	5-7 years

Forget the hard, green bullets you often buy in shops for cooking with, dessert gooseberries have rich, sweet, and juicy flavours. Gooseberries are easy to grow and can often be pretty much left to their own devices.

But a little care and attention and some annual pruning will produce bumper crops of tasty fruit.

## How to grow gooseberries

### Cultivation

Gooseberries aren't too fussy about situation. They love a sunny position, but will also grow and fruit very well in shade and other awkward positions in the garden. They will also tolerate a more exposed position than most other soft fruit.

They need a moist, but free-draining soil that doesn't become waterlogged in winter. It will pay dividends to improve the structure of all soils by adding lots of organic matter, such

as **compost** or **soil improver**. This is particularly the case with clay soils, where it will improve drainage, and on light sandy soils, where it will increase its moisture-holding capacity.

### Gooseberry varieties

Gooseberries are divided into cooking and dessert varieties, although most are dual purpose and all taste sweeter when left to fully ripen on the plant. The fruit is also available in four different colours – green, red, white and yellow. The following are all good dessert varieties, except Careless, which needs cooking.

<b>Fruit colour</b>	<b>Good varieties</b>
<b>Green</b>	Careless, Invicta
<b>Red</b>	Pax, Rokula, Whinham's Industry
<b>White</b>	Langley Gage
<b>Yellow</b>	Bedford Yellow, Golden Drop, Leveller

Invicta and Rokula have some resistance to American gooseberry mildew disease.



## Planting gooseberries

Plant bare-root gooseberry bushes in winter. November or December are best, although it can be done right up to the end of February, whenever the soil isn't frozen solid or waterlogged. Container-grown bushes can be planted at just about any time of year.

**Gooseberry bushes should be planted around 1.5m apart (5ft). They fruit on older wood and on the base of young wood, and can even be trained into cordons and fans against walls or fences if space is tight.**

Dig a hole 60x60cm (2x2ft) and 30cm (1ft) deep. Add a layer of organic matter into the base of the hole and dig in. Place the roots of the gooseberry bush in the planting hole at the same depth as they were originally growing, so that the old soil mark is at soil level.

Now mix in more soil improver to the soil and fill in the planting hole. Add **a general granular plant food** and water in well. Finally, add a 5cm (2in) deep mulch of well rotted garden compost, bark or other bulky organic material around the root area.

### Container growing

Gooseberries grow and crop perfectly well in a large pot or other container. You will need a pot of at least 30-38cm (12-15in) in diameter, filled with **a good quality potting compost**. Obviously, plants in containers will need regular watering and feeding throughout the growing season to ensure good results and a large crop.

## How to care for gooseberries

Water the newly planted bushes during the first year if the weather is dry. In subsequent years, watering when the fruit is swelling may be needed if the soil is not already moist.

For maximum crops, feed each year in March with [a suitable granular plant food](#), and top up the mulch to retain soil moisture at the roots.

Prune your gooseberry bush annually between late autumn and late winter, cutting back new growth to two buds and main shoots (leaders) by one-third. Pruning new growth to 5 leaves in summer will also encourage a bigger crop the following year.

**Covering plants with netting will protect the fruit from birds and may also help prevent damage from gooseberry sawfly caterpillars.**

## Harvesting

**A few weeks before they are ripe, remove alternate fruit and use them for cooking. Leave the remaining fruit to ripen on the plant, but don't leave them until they become too soft. The fruit tastes delicious straight from the bush, but it can also be frozen. You can expect a yield of about 5kg (11lb) from each gooseberry bush.**

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 1.8m (6ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 1.5m (5ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	5-10 years

Blackberries are sometimes overlooked for growing at home – but they shouldn't be, as they are easy to grow and produce lots of luscious, tasty and juicy fruit with very little work and care.

Of course, if you don't want to grow them yourself, you can always go pick them blackberries the wild - but there are lots of great varieties for home growing, which produce good yields of tasty, sweet fruit usually much bigger and sweeter than those of the wild ones found growing in hedgerows and other places.

If you don't like the thought of having to deal with the sharp thorns, there are thornless varieties, such as Oregon Thornless. This is also very decorative, with deeply cut leaves that turn a rich red colour in autumn.

As well as blackberries, there are also several hybrid and related berries, including loganberries, tayberries, boysenberries and Japanese wineberry.

## **How to grow blackberries**

### **Cultivation**

Blackberries will grow in partial shade as well as full sun. Because they flower late in spring, they can be grown in frosty areas, where other fruit won't grow particularly well. They need a good, moisture-retentive but well-drained soil with lots of added well-rotted organic matter, such as well-rotted manure, compost or soil conditioner, to hold moisture and nutrients.

Blackberries and hybrid berries are all self-fertile, so you only need to grow one plant and don't need to worry about cross-pollination. They are

## **Blackberry varieties**

There are several great varieties to grow, which produce large yields of excellent fruit:

- Fantasia Produces large blackberries with an excellent flavour, similar to the subtle flavour of the wild blackberry.
- Loch Ness Thornless and produce lots of large, well-flavoured berries from late summer until the first autumn frosts.
- Oregon Thornless Thornless stems and attractive foliage as well as good taste.
- Reuben Produces lots of very large, very sweet fruit.
- Silvan Prolific crops of large fruit.

## **Planting blackberries**

Container-grown blackberries can be planted at any time of year, but autumn to spring are the best times.

Dig a hole 60x60cm (2x2ft) and 30cm (12in) deep. Add a layer of organic matter – such as compost or well-rotted manure – to the base of the hole and fork it in.

Place the roots in the planting hole and adjust the planting depth so that it is planted at the same depth as it was originally growing and the top of the roots are level with the soil surface.

Mix in more organic matter with the excavated soil and fill in the planting hole.

Water in well, apply **a granular general feed** over the soil around the tree and add a 5-7.5cm (2-3in) deep mulch of well-rotted garden compost or bark chippings around the root area.

vigorous plants, so need to be given plenty of room. Allow around 3m (10ft) between plants.



### How to care for blackberries

Water well during the first year whenever the weather is dry. In subsequent years, watering when the fruit is swelling may be needed if there are prolonged periods of dry weather.

Mulching around the plants in late spring will help to conserve soil moisture and keep down weeds.

For maximum crops, feed in early March with **a general controlled-release feed**.

### Support and training

Blackberries need a good support system for the stems. Knock in sturdy 7.5cm (3in) 2.4m (8ft) high posts into the ground and stretch heavy-gauge wires horizontally between the posts at around 75cm (30in) 1.2m (4ft) and 1.5m (5ft) above ground level. Tie the stems to the wires as they grow with soft twine.

Alternatively, they can be trained along wires attached to a fence or even a shed. There are several ways of training the stems. As they fruit on stems produced the previous year, the easiest method is the one-way rope system. The new, current year's stems are trained out and tied in on one side of the plant, while the stems produced the previous year, and which will carry the fruit, trained out on the other side.

Plums, and their closely related damsons and gages, are all easy fruits to grow at home. They produce large (often too large!) reliable crops of fruit, which is available in a range of coloured skins and flesh. Dessert plums and gages produce sweet flesh and can be eaten fresh straight from the tree. The more tart culinary plums and gages, and damsons make delicious jams, preserves, pies and crumbles.

More compact modern varieties and semi-dwarfing rootstocks ensure that even small gardens can have their own tree – and make them perfect for growing in large containers.

Plums, gages and damsons are also highly ornamental, producing lots of gorgeous blossom in spring.

## Pruning

As soon as you finish harvesting, simply cut back the fruited stems down to ground level. Make sure you don't cut out the new/current year's stems as these will produce next year's fruit.

## Harvesting

The fruit is ready for picking from mid-summer onwards. Pick it when it has developed a good colour and before it becomes too soft. With thorny varieties, it pays to wear gloves when picking!

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 2.4m (8ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 2.4m (8ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	1-2 years

## How to grow plums, damsons and gages

### Cultivating plums, damsons and gages

**Plums, damsons and particularly gages need a warm, sunny site, which isn't exposed – strong winds can reduce pollination by bees, leading to a poor crop. As a result, they are often grown as a fan, trained up against a south-facing wall or fence.**

Always plant out of frost pockets, which again can affect the flowers and reduce pollination and fruit set.

**They prefer a fertile soil enriched with lots of organic matter, which holds plenty of moisture in spring and especially in summer when the fruit is ripening, doesn't dry out or become waterlogged.**

## Plum, damson and gage varieties

Plums are large, usually soft-fleshed – perfect for eating or cooking, depending on the variety. Gages are small, round

and generally very sweet. Damsons are hardy and have a tart flavour, which is excellent when cooked.

If you only want to grow one tree, make sure you choose a variety that is self-fertile. The following are all self-fertile varieties.

### Plums varieties

- **Dessert:** Blue Tit (compact growth), Early Laxton, Opal, Victoria (dual purpose)
- **Culinary:** Czar, Marjorie's Seedling (dual purpose), Pershore





## Plum, damson and gage pollination

Many plum, damson and gage varieties are self-fertile, meaning you only need to grow one tree, rather than having to worry about pollination from another variety that flowers at the same time. So it is a better and easier choice to stick to self-fertile varieties.

## Rootstocks for plums, damsons and gages

Plum, damson and gage trees are available grafted onto different rootstocks, which control the overall size the tree will grow to as well as how early in their life they start fruiting. The eventual size will vary,

depending on your soil; on heavy clay and fertile soils the trees will grow slightly bigger.

- **Pixy:** Semi-dwarfing rootstock, perfect for bush trees growing in good light or loamy soils and produces a tree reaching 3-4m (10-13ft) high

- **Saint Julian A:** Semi-vigorous and suitable for bush, half standard and fan-trained trees up to 4.5-5m (14-16ft) high
- **Torinel:** Also semi-vigorous, suitable for all uses, including pyramids, and produces trees similar to Saint Julian A

### **Planting plums, damsons and gages**

Plant bare-root trees between November and March, and container-grown ones preferably in autumn or spring. Bare-root trees often establish better than container-grown ones.

To start planting plum trees, dig a hole 60x60cm (2x2ft) and 30cm (12in) deep. Add a layer of organic matter - such as compost or well-rotted manure - to the base of the hole and dig in. Place the roots of the tree in the planting hole and adjust the planting depth so that the old soil mark on the trunk is level with the soil surface.

Now mix in more organic matter to the soil and fill in the planting hole. Stake the tree with a rigid tree stake and two tree ties so that it is fully supported against the prevailing winds. Water in well, apply **a granular general feed** over the soil around the tree and add a 5cm (2in) deep mulch of well-rotted garden compost or bark chippings around the root area. You can also grow trees in large patio pots (minimum of 40-50cm/16-20in in diameter). Use John Innes No 3 Compost, as its weight will help with stability of the container.

### **How to care for plums, damsons and gages**

Once established, plum, damson and gage trees are unlikely to need regular watering, except in very dry conditions, but may need watering when the fruit is developing to help ensure a bumper crop.

Trees growing in containers, however, will need regular watering in spring and summer to prevent the compost drying out.

Add **a controlled-release granular plant food** to the soil surface each spring to ensure the tree is fed throughout the growing season. Because plums and gages produce such heavy crops, they respond well to feeding.

Trees that produce poor crops of fruit will benefit from feeding with **sulphate of potash**.

Their flowers can be very susceptible to frost damage, so wherever practical cover with horticultural fleece when severe frost is predicted.

Birds will often damage the fruit, so net small trees and fans as the fruit ripens.

### **Plums, damsons and gages**

If you buy a fully trained tree it will need little in the **way of pruning** for the first few years at least.

Pruning must always be carried out when the tree is in full growth – usually any time from May to the end of August. Pruning at other times of year risks infections from disease – particularly **bacterial canker**, which can kill even fully grown trees.

It pays to know what, how and why you're pruning, as wrong or excessive pruning can lead to crop reduction. Most times all you need to do is remove dead, diseased, dying or damaged branches, branches that rub against each other and those that cross from one side of the tree to another.

If you constantly have to prune the top of the tree to reduce its height, then you've probably bought the wrong variety growing on the wrong rootstock!

What and how you prune depends on the way the tree is being grown and trained; the 3 commonest are bush, pyramid and fan.

### **Bush**

Pruning is mainly limited to removing crossing, weak, vertical and diseased growth. If the tree is still overcrowded, then further pruning and thinning can be done in July.

### **Pyramid**

Shorten the central main stem by around two-thirds early in the tree's life. Repeat every year until the tree has reached 1.8m (6ft) high on Pixy

rootstock and 2.4m (8ft) on St Julien A. After that, shorten it to 2.5cm (1in) or less each May to keep the tree at the same height. Vertical shoots at the top of the tree competing with the central main stem should be removed.

### **Fans**

Prune back branches growing away from the support to 3 to 4 leaves. Prune back fruited shoots to a suitable sideshoot to replace the removed shoot.

### **Thinning fruit**

Once fruit has set, it may need thinning to ease congestion, which can lead to a lot of smaller fruits. Wherever possible, thin to 5-7.5cm (2-3in) apart.

Overly heavy crops one year can lead to small, insignificant crops the next. Also, very heavy crops can weigh down the branches and even snap them. So it pays to support heavily-laden branches with a Y-shaped prop, put in place in early summer.

### How to harvest plums, damsons and gages

Pick the fruit once it has developed a good colour, but before it turns too soft, holding it by the stalk if possible, not the fruit itself.

The fruit of dessert varieties is best eaten fresh, but can be stored in the fridge in a plastic bag for up to 7-10 days.

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Spring
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 8m (26ft) depending on rootstock
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 5m (16ft) depending on rootstock
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	10-15 years

**Melons** and cape gooseberries (physalis ) will need to be potted on several times before they can be planted out in the garden in late spring. They will thrive in a long, warm summer, and are a great talking point for visitors to your garden.

Make sure to plant new **blueberry** bushes near to each other to encourage cross-pollination between them. Use a large pot which is at

least 45cm (18 inches) in both diameter and depth and fill it with ericaceous, peat-free compost. Now all you have to do is await the delicious and plentiful crops of blueberries in the summer.

When planting your fruit bushes, dig a hole and backfill it with a mixture of soil and a peat-free compost. This will control water availability, and keep your plants fed for up to six weeks, allowing them to put down strong roots. Compost can also be used in pots indoors.

### Growing fruit in March

The time you'll save in harvesting this month will easily be made up for in maintenance, as there's a lot to do to give your fruit trees a good start to the springtime and to optimise the amount of fruit you will be able to harvest later in the year. It's going to be a month of weeding, feeding, pruning and holding those garden pests at bay.

When it comes to weeding in March, you'll notice that this is the time of year when perennial weeds such as bindweed and dandelions start to appear. Remove them as soon as you see them, and either drown or dry them out to stop them returning. Many varieties of soft fruit have shallow roots, so weed around these in particular and consider using a naturally derived weed control if the weeds are getting too invasive. Finally, you may find that your raspberries have been too successful and have started to pop up all around your garden - dig these up to prevent them from spreading to unwanted areas.

There's not too much pruning to do this month. Just remember to prune any container-grown figs or new plum trees if they are being trained to a particular shape.

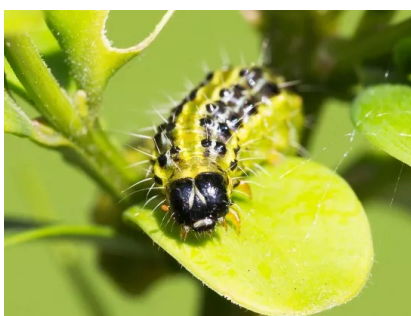
Remember to feed and/or mulch apricots, currants, gooseberries, nectarines, peaches and raspberries with a peat-free compost. Carpet strawberry beds with straw so that the berries won't touch the soil.

Finally, be on the lookout for pests and diseases, as this is the time of year they start to appear. Currant bushes, blueberries, gooseberries and raspberries should be netted to prevent birds from getting to the fruit before you do. Prop the netting up on canes with upturned pots on top of each one. Remember to remove the netting from time to time to allow pollinators to get to the flowers.

You should also check for **woolly aphids** on apple trees. These are small, pale fluffy aphids which can cause damage to plants which then allows infection in. Squash them or spray them with water and repeat if needed. If you have cherry trees, peaches, apricots or nectarines, drape fleece or hessian over them to protect them from any lingering frosts.

### Pests can cause chaos in your garden

**Bugs and bacteria affecting your plants? Here are the common ones to watch out for...**



### Find out how to control box tree moth caterpillars

A relatively new insect pest to Britain is attacking box (*Buxus sempervirens*) plants. From intricate topiary shapes, formal hedges to

wild shrubs, Box tree moth caterpillars, feed on them all, and can often completely defoliate box plants within a matter of a few days.

Coming from Asia, most likely as eggs on imported box plants, Box tree caterpillars were first found in UK gardens in 2011, although the adult moth was first seen in Britain in 2008. By the beginning of 2015, box tree moth had become established in London and the South East but is now spreading further afield. Many large, historic gardens have had years of formal box hedges and topiary wiped out by this pest and it is now becoming a real concern.

### Description

The striking adult moth has semi-translucent white wings with a brown border, although they can sometimes be clear or completely brown. Although the female moth does no harm herself, she lays her eggs, between 5-30, in a sheet on the underside of the leaves. The eggs are small and pale yellow so not always easy to spot.



After 3 days, the eggs hatch into caterpillars that have greenish-yellow bodies and black heads. As the caterpillars grow, they develop thick black and thin white stripes along their body and can reach up to 4cm (1½in) in length after 2 weeks. They then spin their characteristic webbing among the leaves and branches from where they feed.

The caterpillars are most active in temperatures above 15c with the ideal temperature 18-22°C, so tend to be active between late March and early October. They can hibernate during the winter down to temperatures of -30c waiting for the weather to warm up in the spring when they start feeding again.

The caterpillars eventually develop into pupae, which are concealed in a cocoon within the webbing before emerging as adult moths who have a lifecycle of about 45 days (female).

Box tree caterpillars only feed on box (Buxus) plants and shouldn't be confused with other [caterpillars](#).

### Symptoms

The caterpillars eat the leaves of the box plant and can defoliate a small specimen overnight leaving the telltale sign of skeleton leaves and the webbing over their feeding area. The webbing is quite thick and obvious, sticking the leaves together. This is where you will often find the caterpillars and the pupae. Don't confuse the webbing with the webs of spiders. Once they have eaten the leaves, the caterpillars will then remove the bark and start eating the green cambium layer underneath which is most damaging to the plant.



## Treatment and control

Within Northern Europe there are no natural predators of the Box Moth or the caterpillars. The first recommendation is to be vigilant if you have any type of box planting and keep a close eye on them as soon as the weather starts to warm up in the spring.

Keep your plants healthy. The healthier a plant is, the better equipped it is to bounce back after an attack. Always feed and mulch your plants in the spring using a feed such as [Miracle-Gro Premium Rose & Shrub Continuous Release Plant Food](#) and if you are growing in pots then be sure they are not allowed to dry out.

Remove the caterpillars by hand, or lightly prune out stems covered in the webbing and caterpillars and destroy them.

Where possible, place a white sheet under your plants and give the leaves a good shake as this will help you see the caterpillars, as they can be extremely well camouflaged within the plant. Collect them up and remove them.

For a bad infestation, spraying with an insecticide such as [BugClear Ultra Gun!](#) may prove useful in their control - a thorough spraying is needed to penetrate the webbing and always spray on a calm dry day in the early evening when there are no pollinators around.

If box moth caterpillar has become a persistent pest in your garden, then it might be wise to seek an alternative plant. Euonymus may make a suitable alternative and for something slightly less formal, the Dwarf Pittosporum is a popular replacement.



**Capsid bugs can easily spoil the appearance and displays of many different plants. They give the leaves a tattered and distorted appearance and can even cause flower buds to abort.**

### **Description**

Capsid bugs are nasty little green insects about 6mm long with six long legs and antennae. They love the tips of young shoots and have wide tastes, attacking a wide range of plants, including roses, fuchsias, hydrangeas, forsythia, chrysanthemums and even currant bushes.

**Some species have a more specific host range, such as the apple capsid.**

### **Symptoms**

Look out for them any time from late spring onwards. Capsids suck the sap from the shoot tips of leaves and buds. As if that weren't bad enough they also leave behind their poisonous saliva, which kills the young plant cells.

Young leaves become distorted and develop small holes, which become bigger and more tattered as the leaf expands and grows. Young buds are misshapen and, especially in the case of fuchsias, are killed off.

### **Treatment and control**

Unlike most other sap-sucking insects, which are sedentary, capsid bugs can move around much more freely. This makes their control quite difficult.

Treat affected plants with a suitable and **approved insecticide**.



**More disconcerting than damaging, silverfish are quite common in houses. They tend to congregate in moist conditions – and you'll often see them in the bath or in sinks.**

### **Description**

Silvery in colour, silverfish are about 13mm (0.5in) long, thin and with fine antennae at the front and three tail-like appendages at the back.

**Silverfish appreciate damp, humid conditions and so are often found in kitchens, larders, bathrooms and behind loose wallpaper, as they readily eat gums and glues.**



## Treatment and control

Try to reduce condensation and the damp conditions in which silverfish thrive.

**Several insecticides are approved for use in the home to control silverfish.**



## Whiteflies On Plants - Tips To Prevent and Kill A Whitefly Infestation

Whitefly are small winged insects, which fly up in clouds of little white flies from affected plants when disturbed. Whitefly set up home and live out their lives on the underside of leaves. Three generations of whitefly live under the same leaf and feed by sucking up sap which weakens the plant.

### How to identify whiteflies

Adult whiteflies are about 2mm long with white wings. Whitefly eggs hatch into flat, oval, scale-like nymphs. Before reaching adulthood they are called pupae and can have hairs or a white, waxy secretion on their upper surface.

### Whitefly infestation damage

Outdoors in the garden, whiteflies are fond of a wide range of plants, including azaleas, rhododendrons, honeysuckle and vegetables such as cabbages. Indoors, in the conservatory or in the greenhouse, they're less picky and will feed on many houseplants, ornamentals and vegetables.

Whitefly damage on plants is usually scarcely visible, but brush past an infested plant or close the greenhouse door sharply and you'll see a white cloud rise from the underside of the leaves.

Whitefly feed on sap and excrete a sugary substance called honeydew. When it drops on to the leaves it makes them sticky and a black sooty mould can develop. This looks unsightly and because it gradually deprives the leaves of light it might eventually kill the plant.

Whiteflies on plants can also spread plant viruses.

## Whitefly control

### How to get rid of whiteflies outdoors

- Fruit and vegetables: spray with a systemic insecticide. For best results as a whitefly control, spray thoroughly – to be effective the insecticide has to touch the pest.
- Ornamental plants such as azaleas, rhododendrons, honeysuckle or Viburnum tinus: Spray the underside of the leaves thoroughly with a systemic insecticide.

### How to kill whiteflies indoors in the greenhouse or conservatory

- Yellow 'sticky' traps help control whitefly. The insects are attracted to the yellow colour of the traps and become caught in the non-drying glue.
- Use a whitefly biological control: this form of whitefly treatment introduces a tiny wasp into the greenhouse (*Encarsia Formosa*) that lays its eggs in the scale stage of the whitefly.
- Tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and aubergines: spray underneath the leaves with a contact insecticide.

**Before you use a whitefly spray on fruit and vegetables, always check that the insecticide is approved for use on edible crops. To protect bees and pollinating insects do not apply to plants when in flower. Do not use where bees are actively foraging. Do not apply when flowering weeds are present.**

### How to prevent whiteflies

The stronger the plant, the less likely it is to be infested with a pest like whitefly so it is a good idea to feed your plants in the spring with a **general fertiliser**.

If you grow cabbages or sprouts, plant strong smelling alliums like onions, garlic or chives nearby to confuse cabbage whitefly.



## Scale insects

**Scale insects are sap-sucking insects that gradually weaken plants. They are so called because the actual insect is covered by a hard, protective shell or scale.**

They don't lead the most exciting of lives, but therein lies their strength. A newly born scale will make a small effort to crawl a few millimetres to find somewhere to feed and will then stay put for the rest of its life laying the eggs for the next generation under its scale. But this immobility and the thickness of their scales makes them difficult to control and resistant to contact insecticides.

### How to identify scale insects?

Scale bugs on plants are like little flat or domed shells attached to plant stems or the underside of leaves, usually around the main veins of the leaf. Scale bugs come in different colours, usually brown but some are greyish-white. They vary in size, anything from 1mm to 6mm, depending on the species. Scale insect identification can be tricky because some plants attract their own species of scale insect.

## Scale Insect symptoms and damage

Scale insects on plants are easy to see as the colonies cluster openly on stems, but a little less so if they are feeding on the underside of leaves. Infected leaves may turn yellow or become otherwise discoloured. Heavily infected plants will gradually lose their vigour.

Scale insects, like most other sap feeders, excrete a sugary honeydew that drops onto the leaves below the scale infestation. Such foliage develops a sticky sheen which can rapidly become home to black **Sooty mould**.

## Scale Insect control and treatment

Not all scale insects affect the growth of plants and so you might prefer to put up with them. But if you do decide to treat them, here are some suggestions.

### How to get rid of scale insects outside

- Small colonies and individual scale insects can be controlled by simply wiping them off the plant with a damp cloth or sponge.
- Where this isn't feasible, or practical, you can control them by spraying affected plants with an insecticide. Contact insecticides tend to bounce off the hard shell, so the best one to use is a **systemic insecticide**. These are absorbed inside the plant, and move all around the plant, killing the scale insects as they suck the sap and providing protection against further attacks for up to three or more weeks. Spraying is often more effective against the newly hatched nymphs in summer, rather than the shell-covered adults.
- Evergreen plants such as **hollies**, camellias, **rhododendrons**, **star jasmine**, evergreen azaleas and euonymus can be affected by cushion scale insects. In early summer females lay eggs under

white, waxy bands. In mid-summer spray the newly-hatched scale nymphs with a **systemic insecticide**.

### How to get rid of scale insects in the greenhouse or conservatory

In a controlled environment like the greenhouse or conservatory, or on indoor plants, scale insects can breed all year round and so you can treat scale insects at any time of year.

1. Remove adult scales and egg masses when you see them with your fingers or a damp cloth.
2. Lemon and other citrus trees sometimes develop populations of soft scale bugs. Apply a biological control with the
3. nematode *Steinernema feltiae* which you water onto affected plants and soil.
4. Orchids can be affected by a scale insect for which the biological control treatment is a 2mm long black ladybird, *Chilocorus nigritus*.
5. Spray the affected parts of the plant with a **systemic insecticide**.

**Before you use a systemic insecticide for scale insects on fruit and vegetables, always check that the insecticide is approved for use on edible crops. To protect bees and pollinating insects do not apply to plants when in flower. Do not use where bees are actively foraging. Do not apply when flowering weeds are present.**

### How to prevent scale insects?

Encourage the creatures that prey on scale insects:

- **Blue tits:** you often see blue tits flitting through shrubs feeding on scale insects. You can attract blue tits into your garden by installing

a nestbox and putting sunflower seeds and chopped peanuts in your bird feeder.

•**Ladybirds:** both adult [ladybirds](#) and their larvae feed on scale insects. You can build a simple ladybird lodge using pinecones fastened together in a pyramid and protect it from the rain with a couple of tiles.



**As its name suggests, the larvae of these insect pests eat away at the inside of leaves, causing tell-tale trails – or mines.**

### **Description**

Female insects lay small eggs on leaves of apple, holly, chrysanthemum and numerous other plants. On hatching, the insect larvae tunnel into the leaves and feed between the two leaf surfaces. This creates clear trails or 'mines' in the leaf.

### **Symptoms**

Leaf miners leave pale twisting tunnels under the surface of affected leaves. They are decoratively unsightly, but normally do little or no major harm to plants. However, the horse

chestnut leaf miner has become a problem in recent years and causes significant damage.

## **Treatment and control**

### **General Tips**

If feasible, squash the tunnel to kill the burrowing larvae or pick off affected leaves and burn them. Regular cultivation of the soil below the affected plant will allow feeding birds to reduce the population as they feed on the pupae.

### **Chemical Control**

It is very difficult to achieve good control of leaf miners with insecticides, as they are protected within the leaf. If plants become extensively attacked, depending on the plant, a systemic insecticide may help control them.



**Leafhoppers are sap-sucking insects that attack a wide range of plants. One or two won't cause significant damage, but lots of them can cause leaf yellowing and the overall weakening of the plant.**

## Description

Leafhoppers are yellowish in colour and around 2-3mm long. As their name suggests, they (the adults) will jump off if their plant home is disturbed. The immature nymphs are creamy-white and crawl. Both nymphs and adults feed on the sap of plants.

## Symptoms

Colonies on the underside of leaves will have up to 3 generations present at any 1 time. Leaves will become gradually paler with white surface mottling.

The rhododendron leafhopper is responsible for spreading the fungal disease bud blast, which kills the flower buds.

## Treatment and control

Spray with a natural-based insecticide. Pyrethrin (a natural plant extract) based insecticides will control leafhoppers and other plant pests. Spray with a general insecticide. Most broad-spectrum insecticides will control leafhoppers. They kill very quickly on contact and also have a residual effect which lasts for a few weeks.



**Despite their small size, flea beetles can cause a lot of damage – especially as they like eating the leaves of young plants and seedlings – often leading to them becoming stunted or even dying.**

### **Description**

Flea beetles are very small beetles (not surprising, given their name!). They are mostly about 2mm (about 1/10in) long, but big bugs can be 3-4mm. Commonly shiny black, but some have a yellow stripe down each wing case, some even come in a dark metallic blue. Athletic little pests, they will jump off the leaves if they are disturbed, so go gently if you wish to make sure of catching them. They often appear in quite large numbers and do a lot of damage.

### **Symptoms**

Certain species of the adult flea beetle are fond of **cabbages**, **Brussels sprouts**, swede and other brassicas; some like potatoes; others are equally fond of **wallflowers**, alyssum, aubrieta and **nasturtiums**. Whatever the species, they all eat little round holes in the leaves, peppering the whole leaf surfaces. Either that or they leave the holes part-finished and the remaining tissue turns brownish white. It's not just the adults, as the larvae can also cause problems. They feed on the root systems of the plants concerned, so if the plant is wilting as well as suffering from holed leaves look underground.

Watch out for **fuchsias**. The blue metallic flea beetle loves these plants and both the adult beetle and the larvae can be found feeding on leaves at the shoot tips.

## Treatment and control

### General tips

Beetles don't like it wet, so frequent watering or misting of the foliage will help keep them away.

Keep young plants and seedlings growing strongly, so they can get through this susceptible phase of their growth cycle.

Covering plants with horticultural fleece or small mesh netting will help reduce damage by excluding the adult beetles.

### Chemical control

Spray affected plants with a suitable and approved insecticide.



**The larvae (maggots) of the cabbage root fly eat the roots of all brassicas – not just cabbages. This reduces the strength of the plant, causes them to wilt and, in the case of small plants, usually eventually die.**

### Description

Adult cabbage root flies look like house flies. Cabbage root flies affect the brassica family of cabbages, Brussels sprouts,

cauliflower and broccoli. They can also tunnel into the roots of swedes, turnips and radish.

### **Symptoms**

The leaves of affected plants are edged blue and often wilt. The white maggots can be very damaging as they eat the roots and stem base. This then leads to wilting and the plants won't recover when watered.

### **Treatment and control**

There are no chemical controls for cabbage root fly.

Place brassica discs or collars around stems when transplanting seedlings to prevent the adult female fly laying her eggs at the base of the stem.

Plants can be protected from attack by covering plants with horticultural fleece, or an insect-proof mesh.



**Codling moth can be a serious problem of apples, eating out the centre of the fruit, ruining it. As the old saying goes: What's worse**

**than finding a codling moth grub in your apple? Half a codling moth grub!**

### **Description**

The larvae, maggots, of the moth attack the fruit of apples and pears. The eggs are laid on the developing fruitlets just before, during or just after petal fall.

### **Symptoms**

The codling moth larvae are pale pink and bury into apples and pears. They start to eat the middle of the fruit, then make an exit hole, drop onto the ground and pupate.

### **Treatment and control**

Spray apples and pears with a suitable and approved insecticide spray in early to mid-June and repeat 14 days later.



### **Vine Weevils Control**

**Vine weevils (*Otiorhynchus sulcatus*) are a devastating plant pest. Suddenly otherwise healthy-looking plants wilt and collapse and no**

**amount of watering will help them recover. The reason? Vine weevil grubs have eaten all the roots.**

Vine weevil grubs are particularly rampant in pots or other containers but they also attack plants in borders and beds, where dealing with them is far more difficult. The real danger is the underground grub. You can't see what they're doing until it's too late.

### **How to identify vine weevils**

Vine weevil eggs are laid in the plant's roots - which are very difficult to see, allowing baby vine weevils to grow. They hatch into 10mm long 'C' shaped grubs with cream coloured bodies and brown heads. These unseen little vandals simply munch away at the root system until either they are caught or the plant first yellows then wilts and collapses through lack of sustenance.

What does a vine weevil look like? Adult vine weevils are dusty grey/black flightless beetles. They are all female and each can lay up to 1,000 eggs in a season. Eggs are laid during the summer and early autumn ready to become grubs in spring the following year.



### **Vine weevil damage and symptoms**

Adult vine weevils damage plants by eating irregular notches from the edges of leaves. Vine weevil larvae or grubs munch away at the root system which slows the growth of the plant, then the leaves wilt and the

plant collapses through lack of nutrients. This damage is most evident from autumn to spring.

## Vine weevil control and treatment

### How to get rid of adult vine weevils

- It is best to physically remove them. Collect them at night by torchlight, whilst they are feeding. Place a newspaper, a tray or an upturned umbrella underneath the plant and shake the plant to dislodge the flightless beetles. Pick up the vine weevils, squash and bin them.
- Use a specially formulated vine weevil chemical control on ornamental plants in pots or containers. Spray the plants with a **systemic and contact insecticide\*** at dusk on mild evenings.

### How to get rid of vine weevil grubs

- Introduce pathogenic vine weevil nematodes as a biological control. *Steinernema kraussei* are little parasitic worms which will do no harm to the plant but which will kill the vine weevil larvae. As with most biological controls the conditions need to be absolutely right for the treatment to work. They are best watered into lighter, moist soil at temperatures above 5°C in late summer, before the grubs have grown large enough to cause serious damage.
- To get rid of vine weevil grubs in pots or containers, drench the compost with a **systemic and contact insecticide\*** which will kill off the grubs and interrupt the life cycle of the pest.

**\*Vine weevil chemical control cannot be used to treat edible plants.**

### How to prevent vine weevils

- Before bringing any tender plants in containers into the greenhouse or a conservatory check the compost carefully and if you find white grubs in the pots dispose of the compost (do not use it again), wash the pot and rinse the roots of the plant thoroughly before replanting.
- Encourage the natural predators of the adult vine weevil into your garden. These include birds, frogs, toads, shrews and hedgehogs.
- Create a barrier around your pots such as parcel tape smeared with non-drying insect glue. Because the adult Vine Weevil cannot fly this should trap the adult females before they lay their eggs. The

best time to do this is in August and September outdoors or all year round in the greenhouse.

- Keep checking your plants for any sign of vine weevils so you can take action before a damaging population develops. The plants that vine weevils seem to favour include Begonias, Bergénias, Cyclamen, **Fuchsias**, Heuchera, Polyanthus, Primulas, Sedums, **Strawberries**, Succulents and Saxifrages. It is worth taking the plants out of the pot and checking the rootball thoroughly.

### What fruit to harvest in March

Unfortunately, there are very few fruits that are in season in March. In fact, rhubarb is the only 'fruit' that can be picked at this time of the year, and it's technically not even a fruit! The last of the apples and pears kept from last year may still be available if you were lucky enough to have sufficient quantities to store, but other than that you can put your feet up on the harvesting front.

### Herbs and spices

If you're considering what herbs to plant in March then you may have more luck leaning into indoor planting at this time of year, although there are a few that can be planted outside. It is, however, the ideal time of year to harvest many herbs and spices, so get brushing up on your favourite recipes so you can use your crop to great effect!

### What herbs to plant in March

Seeds of the following herbs can be sown indoors in March, on a windowsill or in a greenhouse:

- Basil

- Chives
- Coriander
- Dill
- Lemon balm
- Marjoram
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Sage

Once they've germinated, they can be pricked out into bigger pots to grow on further. They can then be moved outside to containers, or to the edge of a flower bed where they can easily be reached for harvesting once the threat of frost has passed. If you're repotting plants, take the opportunity to enrich your soil with a peat-free compost to help control water availability and encourage strong root growth.

Plant seedlings of the following

### **How to grow basil**

**No kitchen should be without a basil plant. Cultivated in herb gardens for centuries, it's one of the easiest herbs to grow from seed and it makes a delicious addition to so many dishes. Grow sweet**

**basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) for tasty Italian cooking, or Thai and lemon basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*, *Ocimum x citriodorum*) for exciting Asian dishes.**

## Types of basil to grow

As well as the popular sweet basil, there's a whole range of other basil varieties available. Here are a few of the most popular:

- Basil 'Sweet Green' – traditional sweet basil, ideal for Italian dishes.
- Basil 'Genovese' – stronger flavour and aroma than sweet basil.
- Basil 'Christmas' – a cross between Genovese and Thai basil. The leaves have a fruity, mulled-wine scent. Also good as an ornamental plant, with purple flowers.
- Basil 'Crimson King' – a very ornamental purple-leaved basil. The leaves have a clove flavour.
- Basil 'Siam Queen' – a Thai basil with liquorice-flavoured leaves, purple-red stems and violet flowers
- Basil 'Mrs Burn's Lemon' – delicious lemon-flavoured leaves.
- Basil 'Lettuce Leaf' – crinkled leaves with a mild flavour, good in salads

## Essential equipment to grow basil

You will need the following equipment to grow basil at home:

- 1.Basil seeds
- 2.Pots
- 3.**Multipurpose compost**
- 4.Propagator or clear plastic bags

## Where to grow basil

When growing basil, choose a sunny, sheltered spot with well-drained soil. Planting basil in raised beds improves drainage and gives some

protection against slugs and snails. You'll also find that basil is ideal for pots, even growing happily indoors on a sunny windowsill.

### How to sow basil

You can sow basil indoors from late February onwards.

- 1.Fill pots with multipurpose compost and firm down.
- 2.Sprinkle seed thinly over the top of the compost. Basil seeds germinate easily, so don't sow many more than you need.
- 3.Cover the seeds with a light layer of compost.
- 4.To avoid disturbing the seeds, stand the pots in a tray filled with water so that the compost can soak up water from below.
- 5.Place the pots in a propagator at a temperature of 15-25°C (59-77°F). Alternatively, place a clear plastic bag over each pot and place the pots somewhere warm with bright indirect light until the seeds germinate.
- 6.Water regularly but lightly.
- 7.Once the seeds have germinated, take them out of the propagator, or remove the plastic bags and let the seedlings grow on until they have developed at least two true leaves (these are the second pair of leaves to appear).
- 8.Hold each seedling by a leaf (never hold the stems, as these are easily damaged) and ease it out of the compost, using a pencil or something similar to help. Repot each seedling into its own individual pot.
- 9.Wait until all danger of frost is past before moving basil outside. Harden plants off for two weeks first by placing the pots outside during the day and moving them back inside at night.

## Caring for basil

Basil hates sitting with its roots in cold, wet soil. Water in the morning so that the soil can dry out during the day. Avoid splashing the leaves when watering, to reduce the risk of powdery mildew, a fungal disease.

If you are growing basil primarily for use in the kitchen, pinch off any flowers that appear, as the leaves will develop a bitter taste once the plant has flowered.

Aphids can be a problem, especially on indoor plants. Wipe them off by hand before infestations get too big. Leaving the plants outside for a few days to allow natural predators like ladybirds to eat the aphids can reduce the problem.

Slugs and snails love basil and can devour entire plants, There are various ways to protect plants, including copper tape around pots, crushed egg shells, beer traps and sawdust, but physically checking the plants with a torch last thing at night is often the most effective solution.

## Harvesting basil

You can harvest basil throughout summer, and regular harvesting will encourage the plant to produce more leaves.

If you just need a few leaves, pick individual leaves that join the stem just below a new pair of leaves. This means that for every leaf you pick, the plant produces two more. When harvesting basil in quantities, always leave two or three sideshoots below the point where you cut, to encourage the plant to grow bushy.

In mid- to late summer, cut the whole plant back by a third to encourage a final flush of leaves.

Basil won't survive outside once the temperature drops below 5°C (41°F). For a supply of basil leaves into late autumn, move container-grown plants to a sunny indoor spot.

### Storing basil leaves

It can be difficult to keep basil plants growing indoors in low winter light levels, but you can freeze or dry basil leaves to give you a supply of basil through winter.

- To freeze basil leaves, remove all leaf stalks and wash the leaves. Blanch the leaves in boiling water for a couple of seconds, then drain and rinse in iced water. Pat the leaves dry and place in an airtight container in a freezer.
- To dry basil leaves in an oven, turn it on to its lowest heat, then place the basil leaves on a baking tray and leave them in the oven for two to four hours until they crumble when bent.
- To air-dry basil, cut leafy shoots with long stems, tie them in bunches and hang the bunches somewhere cool and well ventilated, in bright but indirect light. Air-drying basil takes about a month.

### Common pest or disease problems of basil plants

#### Black spots on basil leaves

Black spots on basil leaves can be caused by bacteria from the soil being splashed onto the leaves of the plant.

- Avoid splashing the leaves when watering.

#### Powdery mildew

**Powdery mildew** is a fungal disease that appears as a white powdery deposit or white spots on basil leaves, stunting growth and causing leaves to shrivel. Drought-stressed plants are more susceptible to this disease.

- Dig organic material into the soil before planting to improve soil water retention.
- Space plants when planting to ensure good air circulation.
- Remove any affected leaves promptly.
- Water regularly in dry periods.

### Fusarium wilt

Fusarium wilt is a soil-borne fungal disease that causes basil leaves to turn yellow and wilt. The plant becomes unable to take up water and dies.

- There are no chemical controls available.
- Avoid planting basil in soil where basil plants have been previously affected by fusarium wilt.

### Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** love basil and will strip plants bare. They can be identified by the slime trails that they leave, as well as the damage they do.

- Check plants at night and remove slugs and snails by hand.
- Covering the soil around plants with crushed eggshells or grit may have some effect.
- Scatter environmentally friendly **slug pellets** if other methods are not sufficient.

### Glasshouse whitefly

Glasshouse **whitefly** suck plant sap and excrete a sticky substance called 'honeydew' which covers leaves and encourages the growth of sooty mould, stunting plant growth. They can also transmit viruses.

- A parasitoid wasp can be used as a biological control.

- Keep gardens clear of weeds which can harbour whitefly.
- Use **pesticide sprays** suitable for use on edible plants.

### Glasshouse red spider mite

Glasshouse red spider mite is a sap-sucking mite. Severe infestations cause plants to drop leaves and eventually die. Symptoms include a fine webbing covering leaves and stems, and mottled leaves with tiny mites and eggs on their undersides.

- Ensure good ventilation in greenhouses.
- Mist plants to raise the humidity levels, or damp down greenhouse floors.
- A predatory mite can be used as a biological control.
- Use **pesticide sprays** suitable for use on edible plants.

### Key features of basil

<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 50cm (20in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

### How to grow and care for coriander

Coriander has recently become a very popular herb to grow at home. Grown mainly for its green leaves which are sometimes known as Cilantro and also its spicy seeds, this herb is a must in salads and as

**a fragrant green addition to Indian, Thai and Chinese curries. The seeds are a vital ingredient of curry powder.**

### Coriander varieties

Coriander is usually available as the species (*Coriandrum sativum*), although the variety Calypso has good bolting resistance and can be cut back and allowed to regrow several times. The variety Confetti has fern-like foliage.



### What you'll need to start growing coriander

Growing coriander requires very little equipment. Here's what you'll need:

- Coriander seeds
- A suitable pot with drainage holes
- Multipurpose **compost**
- Balanced **liquid feed**

### Cultivating coriander

Outdoors, coriander prefers a cool position and light shade and very well-drained soil.

Coriander is most commonly grown in a pot - either in a little shade on the patio or on a windowsill that doesn't receive direct, burning sunlight in summer and which doesn't get too hot.

### Sowing coriander

Sow coriander seeds directly in well-prepared moist soil outside at monthly intervals from March to August for a continuous supply of leaves.

You can also grow it in 15-30cm (6-12in) pots, sowing a few seeds in each and germinating indoors with gentle warmth. Sow every 6-8 weeks to have a constant supply of fresh leaves throughout the year.

Young plants are usually available from garden centres in summer. Plant these out or pot them up into slightly larger pots.

### How to care for coriander

When sowing outdoors, thin seedlings or young plants to 5-7.5cm (2-3in) apart. If you specifically want to grow it for its seeds, grow at 20-25cm (8-10in) apart.

Keep the soil or compost moist as it tends to run to seed if allowed to dry out, but take care not to overwater as too much water can lead to rotting - especially in autumn and winter.

Give plants a light liquid feed of **a general feed** every couple of weeks during late spring and summer. This will help ensure plants go on producing a constant supply of leaves. Don't use high potassium feeds as these will encourage premature flowering.

If plants become stressed they will run to seed quickly and leaves start to lose their flavour once flowering begins. This is fine if you want to harvest seeds; otherwise discard the plants.

## Harvesting coriander

Start harvesting the leaves when they are bright green and young and the plants are 10-15cm (4-6in) tall.

You can treat coriander plants as a cut-and-come-again crop. Otherwise, allow them to run to seed and allow the seeds to develop on the plant and harvest them before they are shed.

## Common problems, pests and diseases in coriander

### Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** will feed on young coriander seedlings. They can be identified by the slime trails that they leave, as well as the damage they do.

- Check plants at night and remove slugs and snails by hand.
- Strulch is a good deterrent to snails.
- Covering the soil around plants with crushed eggshells or grit may have some effect.
- Scatter environmentally-friendly **slug pellets** if other methods are insufficient.

### Aphids

**Aphids** are sap-sucking insects which can quickly infest young plants, stunting growth.

- Wipe off small colonies of aphids on coriander with a damp cloth.
- Encourage natural predators like ladybirds and hoverflies.
- **Pesticide sprays** are available for aphids.

## Bolting

Bolting occurs when coriander plants produce flowers and set seed early. As they are annuals, the plants will die once they have set seed. Bolting can be triggered by stress, such as sudden dry periods.

- Plant bolt-resistant cultivars.
- Water regularly.
- Sow new seeds every few weeks to ensure a constant supply of leaves.

## Key features of coriander

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 50cm (20in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

**Chives are a low maintenance, easy to grow perennial herb, grown for their onion-scented tasting leaves. These are a delicious addition to salads, and can be added to many other savoury dishes.**

Their taste is milder than onions, so they are the perfect choice for soups and savoury dishes – where their more subtle flavour is needed. Although mainly grown for their leaves, chive plants also produce highly attractive pinky-purple flowers. These are also edible and are an attractive salad garnish. They also attract bees and butterflies.

**Because chives are compact, they are ideal for edging paths and borders, as well as growing in mixed borders, vegetable gardens, herb gardens and in containers.**

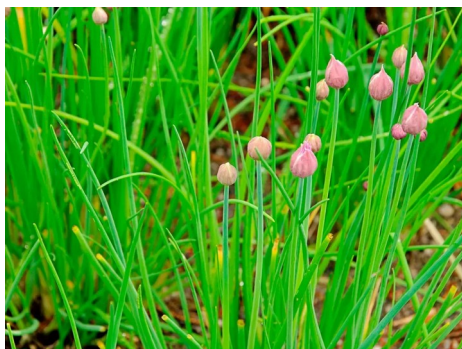
## **How to grow chives**

### **Cultivation**

Chives will grow perfectly well in a position in full sun or in partial shade. They grow best in a fertile, moist but well-drained soil. Dig in plenty of organic matter – such as [garden compost](#), [well-rotted manure](#) or other [soil improver](#) – especially in very well-drained sandy soils to hold moisture. Add grit or sharp sand to heavy clay soils to improve drainage if needed.

### **Chives varieties**

The usual chives grown as a herb, is the straight species, *Allium schoenoprasum*. You may also find Staro and Fine Leaved, which have a milder flavour, and Forescate, with a slight garlic flavour and pale pink flowers.



## **Sowing chives**

You can sow chives seeds thinly outdoors in spring where you want them to grow. Prepare the soil well with added compost or other soil improver and rake to a fine tilth before sowing. Thin out the young plants to 23-30cm (9-12in) apart when large enough to handle.

**Chives can be sown indoors from March to June in pots or cell or plug trays filled with seed sowing compost at a temperature of 18-21C (65-70F). Lightly cover the seed with more compost and keep moist. When seedlings are large enough to handle, transplant into 7.5-10cm (3-4in) pots in bunches of 4-6 seedlings per pot. Grow on the seedlings in cooler conditions of around 10C (50F) and plant outside when the last frosts are over, after hardening off – gradually acclimatising them to outdoor conditions – for 10-14 days.**

## **Planting chives**

You can buy young chive plants from garden centres, which can be planted outside any time of year.

Dig over the planting area, incorporating some organic matter – such as compost or leafmould if the soil is heavy clay. Dig a good sized hole big enough to easily accommodate the rootball.

Place the rootball in the planting hole and adjust the planting depth so that the crown of leaves is at soil level.

Mix in more organic matter with the excavated soil and fill in the planting hole. Apply **a general granular plant food** over the soil around the plants and water in well.

**Or grow them indoors on a brightly lit windowsill to have fresh leaves readily to hand.**

### **How to care for chives**

Chives are very easy to look after and need minimal maintenance.

Keep the soil moist by watering regularly during prolonged dry periods in summer.

Feed with **a general granular plant food** each spring.

Plants may become congested over time and need rejuvenating every 3 to 5 years. Carefully lift, divide the plant into smaller portions and replant in well-prepared soil in spring.

To keep the plants productive and with the best-flavoured leaves, remove flowers as they form or cut them when young for brightening up salads.

**When chives die back in late autumn, clear away all dead leaves and any other debris.**

### **Harvesting chives**

**Harvest leaves as needed with scissors, cutting them back close to the base of the plant. The more regularly they're cut, the more new leaves they will produce.**

Chives are best used fresh, as soon as they are cut. They can be frozen by cutting them up and packing into ice cube trays with water.

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	40cm (16in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	30cm (12in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6-9 months

**Dill is a useful and attractive annual or biennial herb, which is quite similar to [fennel](#), although its aniseed/liquorice flavour is more subtle/delicate compared to fennel.**

The ornamental, feathery dill leaves can be chopped into soups and salads, used to flavour rice and is the perfect accompanying flavour for fish dishes – particularly salmon and gravlax – and, of course, pickling with gherkins to make dill pickles.

The plants produce sprays of yellow flower in summer and the seeds can also be used in cooking. Grow dill in large containers or the middle of beds and borders where its feathery foliage forms an attractive foil for other plants.

## How to grow dill

### Cultivating dill

Dill needs a position in full sun. It grows best in a fertile, moist but well-drained soil. Dig in plenty of organic matter – such

as [garden compost](#), [well-rotted manure](#) or other [soil improver](#) – especially in very well-drained sandy soils to hold moisture.

### **Dill varieties**

Although there are several different varieties, such as 'Bouquet' and 'Dukat', most suppliers simply sell "dill seeds".



### **Sowing dill**

Dill seeds can be sown indoors from early April individually in cell trays or small pots at a temperature of 20°C (68°F), or outside where you want them to grow from May to July. Make regular sowings for a successional harvest and a long picking period.

Dill does not grow well when transplanted, so don't try to prick out young seedlings.

Gradually acclimatise indoor sown plants to outdoor conditions for 7 to 10 days before planting outdoors when all risk of frost has passed.

Thin seedlings to or plant out at 30cm (12in) apart.

### **How to care for dill**

It may be necessary to keep the soil moist by watering regularly, especially during prolonged dry periods in summer, but don't overwater and allow plants to sit in very wet soil or compost.

Feed by applying **a general granular plant food** to the soil when sowing or planting out. Liquid feeds throughout the summer will help increase the amount of leaves produced and help keep the soil moist.

Plants may need support with bamboo canes or twiggy sticks in windy areas and gardens.

Removing developing flower heads will prolong the supply and flavour of the leaves. But the seeds themselves are also useful and can be used in cooking – especially as an ingredient in curry powder.

Being a biennial, plants will die back to ground level in winter. When this happens, tidy up the plants by cutting back flower stems and removing dead and dying foliage. Depending on the severity of the winter, and how well the soil is drained, they should come back for a second year. If not, just sow some more!

## Harvesting dill

Dill leaves can be harvested at any time they are available, as soon as the plants have a minimum of 4 to 5 leaves. Pinch off the leaves or cut them off with scissors.

Picking the leaves regularly will help keep plants producing lots of fresh leaves and delay flowering. They can be used fresh or frozen or dried for use over winter.

For dill seeds, allow the flowers to fade and harvest once the seed heads have fully ripened and the seeds have turned brown. Seeds can be used fresh or dried for winter use.

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	90cm (3ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	30cm (12in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	3-4 months

**Both marjoram and oregano are versatile and essential herbs that good cooks will always have to hand. They are perennial herbs and a plant of each will provide lots of tasty leaves - and even their colourful flowers - for cooking.**

## **Marjoram or oregano?**

Marjoram and oregano are both very attractive garden plants, especially when flowering, and there are also varieties with golden coloured leaves.

The commonly grown marjorams are sweet marjoram (*Origanum majorana*) and pot marjoram (*Origanum onites*); oregano is *Origanum vulgare*. Both are popular in Italian, Greek and Mexican dishes, soups, stuffings, pasta and tomato sauces and to flavour oils and vinegars.

As for tastes, most marjorams have a more delicate, sweeter flavour than the stronger tasting and pungent leaves of oregano, which have a definite spicy taste. Oregano is typically used to flavour foods that already have strong flavours. Marjorams provide background flavours rather than dominant ones, and most people say that sweet marjoram is the best marjoram for cooking purposes. Because of its strong taste, many dried oreganos bought in shops also contains some marjoram.

## **Cultivating marjoram and oregano**

As marjoram and oregano are natives of the Mediterranean, they need a warm, sunny position. They are fairly drought tolerant and need a well-drained, humus-rich, preferably alkaline or neutral, soil.

As plants can be killed by overly wet soils, and if your soil is heavy, poorly draining clay, marjoram and oregano are perfect for growing in containers of **John Innes No.2 compost** or **multi-purpose compost with added John Innes.**

## Marjoram and oregano varieties

- **Origanum 'Kent Beauty'**: very ornamental, but not strong flavour, with grey-green leaves and very showy pinky-purple bracts surrounding the flowers.
- **Origanum majorana**: sweet marjoram - pinky-purple flowers.
- **Origanum onites**: pot marjoram - dark green leaves and pink flowers.
- **Origanum vulgare**: oregano - dark green leaves and pink flowers.
- **Origanum vulgare Aureum**: golden oregano - bright yellow leaves and pink flowers.
- **Origanum vulgare Aureum Crispum**: crinkly golden leaves and pink flowers.
- **Origanum vulgare Compactum**: compact oregano with pink flowers.
- **Origanum vulgare Nanum**: dwarf oregano - compact growth, small leaves and whitish flowers.
- **Origanum vulgare subsp. hirtum**: Greek oregano - bright green leaves and white flowers.



## **Sowing marjoram and oregano seeds**

You can grow both marjoram and oregano from seed. Sow seeds indoors from February to May with warmth – preferably in a heated propagator – in small pots. When seedlings are large enough to handle, prick out 3 into an 7.5-9cm (3-3.5in) pot of **multi-purpose compost with added John Innes**.

Grow indoors until early summer or until all danger of frost has passed, then plant outdoors.

## **Planting marjoram and oregano**

Plant small plants in very well-drained soil, with added compost and/or grit to improve drainage. Although plants are fairly drought tolerant when established, they need watering in until well established.

**Add a mulch of horticultural grit or gravel around plants to prevent moisture sitting at the base of the plant.**

## **Suggested planting locations and garden types**

**Flower borders and beds, patios, containers, city and courtyard gardens, cottage and informal gardens, herb gardens.**

## **How to care for marjoram and oregano**

Once established, plants in the ground will rarely need watering, apart from when growing in very light soils or during very prolonged periods of dry or drought conditions in summer.

Water plants growing in pots regularly, but avoid overwatering or the roots may die. Raise pots off the ground

in winter to aid drainage. Give plants **a liquid feed** during summer to improve growth and flavour.

Keep the plants compact and bushy by trimming them back after the flowers fade. Also cut back any dead stems to their base.

To ensure winter harvests of leaves, place potted plants in a well-lit position under cover. You can divide older plants in spring or after flowering in late summer.

### Harvesting

Marjoram and oregano can be picked all year round, but the flavour is strongest during summer. Pick the leaves before the flower buds open.

Marjoram leaves are generally used fresh, whereas those of oregano can also be dried or frozen and stored.

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Alkaline or neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	30cm (12in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 50cm (20in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	2-3 years

**Parsley is a very commonly grown herb, used mainly as a garnish and to make delicious parsley sauce. But it is also an excellent ingredient for flavouring savoury dishes, making flavoured butter and stuffings and is very rich in vitamin C.**

The more usual curly-leaved parsley looks good when used as a garnish, but flat-leaved parsley (pictured above) has a better, stronger taste and is a better choice for cooking.

## How to grow parsley

### Cultivating parsley

For the main summer crop, you can grow parsley in either a partially shaded position or full sun. An overwintering crop will need a protected site in full sun.

Parsley needs a fertile, moist, but well-drained soil.

### Parsley varieties

Parsley is available as the common curly-leaved parsley, but don't forget flat-leaved, French parsley.

**Common parsley:** Bravour, Champion Moss Curled, Envy

**French parsley:** Festival 68, Italian

There is also Hamburg parsley, which is grown as a root vegetable.



## Sowing parsley

Parsley seeds are very slow to germinate, taking up to one month, especially in very wet, cold soils. So make sure the soil is warm and even pre-warmed by covering with cloches for very early sowings.

Sow seed thinly outdoors from March to July in well-prepared soil in drills 30cm (12in) apart and thin out the young plants to 10-15cm (4-6in) apart.

Seeds can also be sown indoors from August to March in cell or plug trays filled with **seed sowing compost** at a temperature of 18-21°C (65-70°F). Lightly cover the seed with more compost and keep moist. Grow on the seedlings in cooler conditions of around 10°C (50°F) and plant outside when the last frosts are over, after hardening off – gradually acclimatising them to outdoor conditions – for 10-14 days.

## Planting parsley

You can also buy young parsley plants from garden centres, which can be planted outside anytime from spring to late summer.

Dig over the planting area, incorporating some organic matter – such as compost or leaf mould – if the soil is heavy clay. Dig a good sized hole big enough to easily accommodate the root ball.

Place the root ball in the planting hole and adjust the planting depth so that the crown of leaves is at soil level.

Mix in more organic matter with the excavated soil and fill in the planting hole. Apply **a general granular plant food** over the soil around the plants and water in well.

Or grow plants indoors on a brightly lit windowsill to have fresh leaves readily to hand.

### **How to care for parsley**

Keep the soil moist by watering parsley regularly during prolonged dry periods; dry soils can cause the plants to 'bolt' (going to seed prematurely).

Parsley is a hungry plant, so use [a general granular plant feed](#) in the soil before sowing or planting out and feed with [a liquid plant food](#) throughout summer.

Should plants start to flower and go to seed, remove the flower heads immediately. This usually signifies the plant is getting past its best and you should grow some more to replace it.

Parsley is a hardy biennial and can carry on into autumn to provide small pickings over winter. Cover plants with a cloche to give protection from cold and so provide pickings for longer. Parsley is in the same family as carrots and is subject to carrot root fly attack, so cover early sowings with a cloche or horticultural fleece to protect plants against the female laying eggs in the soil.

### **Harvesting parsley**

Don't start harvesting the plants until there are at least 8 to 10 leaves. Then pick regularly to encourage a continual supply of leaves. Cut single leaves or bunches of leaves, starting low down on the stems.

Although fresh leaves have the best flavour, any excess can be frozen or dried in a microwave.

Dig up Hamburg parsley roots when they're large enough to use. They should be ready to harvest 3 to 4 months after sowing. The roots can be left in the ground in winter and dug up when needed. The leaves can also be used as any other type of parsley.

### Parsley growing conditions

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Clay, Loamy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 20cm (8in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 15cm (6in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	3-4 months

**Sage is a very popular shrub, mainly grown for its leaves, which are strongly scented. These are used as a herb in cooking to flavour many meat and vegetable dishes.**

**Where would sage and onion stuffing be without the sage? The leaves are also used to make teas and tisanes.**

Sage also produces masses of purple-blue flowers in summer that, along with the attractive grey-green foliage, make it a very ornamental evergreen/semi-evergreen shrub for beds, borders and pots.

## How to grow sage

### Cultivating sage

Sage prefers a warm, sheltered position in full sun, but will also grow well in light or dappled sage, although the flavour isn't as strong. It needs a relatively fertile, moist, well-drained soil.

### Sage varieties

The straight species, *Salvia officinalis*, is the one commonly grown as a herb. It is ornamental and attractive in its own right, thanks to its grey-green leaves and purple-blue flowers, but there are also some more ornamental varieties too. The foliage of these can be used in cooking, but it tends not to be as strong a flavour as the species.

Icterina Green and yellow variegated leaves.

Purpurascens Purple young foliage and stems, becoming grey-green as they age.

Tricolor Pink, white and green variegated leaves. Not as hardy as the common sage.

Broad-leaved sage Larger leaves and stronger flavour, making it an excellent culinary sage.



## Planting sage

Planting is best done in spring or summer.

Dig a good sized planting hole, big enough to easily accommodate the rootball. Add a layer of organic matter – such as **compost or planting compost** – to the base of the hole and fork it in.

Place the rootball in the planting hole and adjust the planting depth so that it is planted at the same depth as it was originally growing (except hardy fuchsias) and the top of the roots are level with the soil surface.

Mix in more organic matter with the excavated soil and fill in the planting hole. Water in well, apply **a granular general feed** over the soil around the tree and add a 5-7.5cm (2-3in) deep mulch of well-rotted garden compost or bark chippings around the root area.

## Where to plant sage

Plant sage in flower borders and beds, patios, **containers**, city and courtyard gardens, cottage and informal gardens.

## How to care for sage

Sage is easy to grow and look after. It is fairly drought tolerant, but like all other drought-resisting plants needs watering until well established.

Plants may also need watering during prolonged dry periods, but always avoid overwatering.

Avoid feeding with high-nitrogen feeds, which encourages soft growth, so **use high potash ones** instead, which encourage flowering, better flavours and strong, hardy growth.

You can care for sage plants by covering them with horticultural fleece in winter to protect the leaves from the worst of the weather and help keep them in good condition for picking. Protection with fleece may be a good idea in very cold and exposed areas.

### **Pruning sage**

Plants can tend to become leggy in time, so it is important to prune them annually to keep them bushy and full of flowers. Pruning after flowering helps to maintain a better, bushier shape and encourages plenty of new growth.

Sage does not shoot readily from old wood, so never prune old, brown, leafless stems – otherwise the plant will probably die. Old, neglected plants are best replaced. Annual pruning should help prevent this happening.

### **Harvesting sage**

Leaves can be picked at any time, generally the younger leaves have the best flavour. Excess harvests can be dried or frozen. Freezing is the best option using leaves picked in mid-summer.

Sage flower petals look and taste great in salads.

## Sage growing condition

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 1.2m (4ft) depending on variety
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 1.4m (4ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	5-7 years

Other herbs can be planted straight outside, either in borders or large pots. They will be ready to harvest later this same year, adding fragrance and flavour to dishes. These include:

- [Rosemary](#)
- [Sage](#)
- [Tarragon](#)
- [Thyme](#)

These are all perennials. They will provide you with a crop for many years with very little effort - just prune them to keep the plants at a size and shape that suits your garden.

Thyme is widely available as a common variety, but there are some unusual cultivars which will provide even more interest in the garden.

Look out for thyme plants that also carry the scent of caraway, lemon, lime and orange.

### Herb and spice plant maintenance in March

When it comes to herbs and spices, March is all about harvesting and enjoying your hard work, but there are a few bits of maintenance you may want to keep on top of.

Rosemary plants will likely be putting on a lot of growth at this time of year, so make sure you prune them if you want to keep them at an attractive size and shape. You should lift and divide chives into smaller portions if they are looking tired or congested, and thyme can also be divided. You can feed the latter with a seaweed or more general organic plant food.

### What herbs and spices to harvest in March

With the hours of daylight increasing by the day, many herbs will quickly put on a lot of growth in March. The following plants will produce leaves that can be harvested now:

- Chives
- Coriander
- Mint
- Parsley
- Rosemary
- Sage

- Thyme

### How to grow and care for coriander

Coriander has recently become a very popular herb to grow at home. Grown mainly for its green leaves which are sometimes known as Cilantro and also its spicy seeds, this herb is a must in salads and as a fragrant green addition to Indian, Thai and Chinese curries. The seeds are a vital ingredient of curry powder.

### Coriander varieties

Coriander is usually available as the species (*Coriandrum sativum*), although the variety Calypso has good bolting resistance and can be cut back and allowed to regrow several times. The variety Confetti has fern-like foliage.



### What you'll need to start growing coriander

Growing coriander requires very little equipment. Here's what you'll need:

- Coriander seeds
  
- A suitable pot with drainage holes

- Multipurpose **compost**
- Balanced **liquid feed**

### Cultivating coriander

Outdoors, coriander prefers a cool position and light shade and very well-drained soil.

Coriander is most commonly grown in a pot - either in a little shade on the patio or on a windowsill that doesn't receive direct, burning sunlight in summer and which doesn't get too hot.

### Sowing coriander

Sow coriander seeds directly in well-prepared moist soil outside at monthly intervals from March to August for a continuous supply of leaves.

You can also grow it in 15-30cm (6-12in) pots, sowing a few seeds in each and germinating indoors with gentle warmth. Sow every 6-8 weeks to have a constant supply of fresh leaves throughout the year.

Young plants are usually available from garden centres in summer. Plant these out or pot them up into slightly larger pots.

### How to care for coriander

When sowing outdoors, thin seedlings or young plants to 5-7.5cm (2-3in) apart. If you specifically want to grow it for its seeds, grow at 20-25cm (8-10in) apart.

Keep the soil or compost moist as it tends to run to seed if allowed to dry out, but take care not to overwater as too much water can lead to rotting - especially in autumn and winter.

Give plants a light liquid feed of **a general feed** every couple of weeks during late spring and summer. This will help ensure plants go on producing a constant supply of leaves. Don't use high potassium feeds as these will encourage premature flowering.

If plants become stressed they will run to seed quickly and leaves start to lose their flavour once flowering begins. This is fine if you want to harvest seeds; otherwise discard the plants.

### Harvesting coriander

Start harvesting the leaves when they are bright green and young and the plants are 10-15cm (4-6in) tall.

You can treat coriander plants as a cut-and-come-again crop. Otherwise, allow them to run to seed and allow the seeds to develop on the plant and harvest them before they are shed.

### Common problems, pests and diseases in coriander

#### Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** will feed on young coriander seedlings. They can be identified by the slime trails that they leave, as well as the damage they do.

- Check plants at night and remove slugs and snails by hand.
- Strulch is a good deterrent to snails.
- Covering the soil around plants with crushed eggshells or grit may have some effect.
- Scatter environmentally-friendly **slug pellets** if other methods are insufficient.

## Aphids

**Aphids** are sap-sucking insects which can quickly infest young plants, stunting growth.

- Wipe off small colonies of aphids on coriander with a damp cloth.
- Encourage natural predators like ladybirds and hoverflies.
- Pesticide sprays** are available for aphids.

## Bolting

Bolting occurs when coriander plants produce flowers and set seed early. As they are annuals, the plants will die once they have set seed. Bolting can be triggered by stress, such as sudden dry periods.

- Plant bolt-resistant cultivars.
- Water regularly.
- Sow new seeds every few weeks to ensure a constant supply of leaves.

## Key features of coriander

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer
<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	Partial shade, Full sun
<b>Soil type</b>	Chalky, Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral
<b>Soil moisture</b>	Moist but well-drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 50cm (20in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

## How to grow peppermint

**Peppermint, or *Mentha × piperita*, is super easy to grow. It's an incredibly useful plant in the kitchen, with the aromatic leaves giving a refreshing flavour to food and drinks. The flowers attract beneficial wildlife to the garden, and peppermint plants are rumoured to deter mice, rats and mosquitos! Follow our peppermint growing guide to find out how to grow peppermint in your garden.**

### Types of peppermint plant to grow

Peppermint is a cross between two other species of mint - spearmint and watermint. It's grown worldwide but originates from Europe and the Middle East.

It's also a perennial plant, growing to about 90cm (36") tall. Peppermint has distinctive smooth, square shaped stems, with dark green pointed leaves and dark leaf veins. The delicate lilac-purple coloured flowers will appear throughout the summer months, and will teem with bees, butterflies, overflies and lacewings in the sun.

There are some stunning cultivars of peppermint to try:

- *Mentha × piperita* 'Black peppermint' plant. Very dark leaves with a purple tinge and a strong flavour.
- *Mentha × piperita* 'Candy mint'. Slightly reddish stems.
- *Mentha × piperita* 'Chocolate Mint'. The leaves and stems when rubbed between the fingers smell like a popular chocolate mint sweet.
- *Mentha × piperita* 'Citrata'. Lots of different varieties, including basil, grapefruit, lemon and orange.
- *Mentha × piperita* 'Crispa'. Wrinkley leaves.
- *Mentha × piperita* 'Lavender Mint'. Lavender scented leaves.
- *Mentha × piperita* 'Lime Mint'. Lime aroma and flavour.

- *Mentha × piperita* 'Variegata'. Usual green leaves with a lighter pattern.

Peppermint will benefit from being cut frequently, so choose a cultivar which you think you will use a lot in the kitchen. Of course, you can just add prunings to the compost heap, but it's great to make use of the pungent foliage if you can! Don't be shy when harvesting - cut stems to within 3cm (1") of the ground, ideally just above a pair of leaves.

Add peppermint leaves to drinks, salads, peas and new potatoes. They can also be used to make flavoured ice cubes, by simply removing a few leaves from the stem, and immersing them in water in an ice cube tray – allow to freeze and then pop a cube or two into a glass of freshly poured lemonade. Peppermint leaves also make a wonderful tea, great for digestion.

### What you'll need to grow peppermint plants

Peppermint has a much stronger flavour than spearmint. So, what's the difference between spearmint and peppermint plants? Spearmint, also known as common mint and garden mint, is related to peppermint. However, peppermint is distinguished by its typically purple-brown stems, and leaves which are much thinner than those of spearmint.

And can you grow peppermint outdoors? Yes, of course. Peppermint can be quickly and easily propagated from a piece of another plant. Simply remove the plant from the container, or dig up a clump from the border, and use a sharp spade to divide the clump into smaller sections.

Part-fill a freestanding container with **Levington® Multi Purpose Compost**. Alternatively, cut away the bottom of a container, and place it into the soil, deep enough to keep the rim of the container above soil level, and part-fill with **compost**. This will stop the roots from spreading, which they will do very quickly if allowed, crowding out other plants.

Replant the clumps in the container, backfill with soil, and water well until established.

Peppermint plants are best planted out in the spring, ready to put on new growth which can be harvested throughout the summer and autumn. They can also be grown on a windowsill in a small pot, all year round.

### Where to plant and place your peppermint plants

Because peppermint grows from rampant roots, give careful thought to how you will restrict its growth. The fleshy roots can grow very thickly and re-grow from short pieces, so don't allow it to get out of control. It's not difficult to dig out if it does spread, but better to prevent the problem, as by the time it has taken over, other plants may have suffered.

As with other herbs grown for culinary use, keep them within easy reach of the kitchen door. Make sure that the soil is moisture retentive, enriching with **Levington® Multi Purpose Compost** if needed.

Peppermint is hardy and can withstand repeated frosts, so don't worry about providing winter protection. It also isn't fussy when it comes to sunlight, so is a good plant for a tricky location where there's a lot of shade or poorly drained soil.

### Caring and nurturing your peppermint plants

Peppermint is fine in full shade, or with full sun, or anywhere in-between. It's a very versatile plant and should be planted out into soil which has been enriched with a **general multipurpose compost**. This will help the plant to retain moisture. Make sure you water peppermint plants well in hot weather, as they do prefer damp conditions.

Cut back the entire plant to ground level in the autumn, and then mulch the surface to provide protection and food to the plant. Choose a mulch that will provide the peppermint with nitrogen, such as

**Levington® Composted Bark**, which will encourage strong green growth.

Prune during the growing season if needed to maintain shape and dig out any roots which have spread.

### Common pests and diseases with peppermint plants

Peppermint is a resilient plant, and it will withstand attacks from a lot of pests and diseases. There are just a few worrying problems to look out for.

#### Why is my peppermint plant wilting?

Verticillium wilt can cause a peppermint plant to suddenly collapse, especially in hot weather. This is a fungal disease characterised by dark markings on (and in) the stem, as well as yellowing lower leaves. Remove and destroy any affected material, and ensure the peppermint plant receives adequate watering and a feed in the autumn.

#### What are the pretty metallic green insects on my peppermint plant?

Unfortunately, these beautiful bugs are the destructive Mint leaf beetle. This pest will create holes in the leaves as they chew on the foliage. The leaves then don't look attractive. However, peppermint is so vigorous that it will usually survive a nibble. If you're worried, remove by hand and destroy.

#### What are the orangey-yellow patches on my peppermint?

Rust can cause patches of orangey-yellow to appear on the plant. Dig up and destroy affected plants, and don't propagate a new plant from another which has signs of rust.

### Frequently asked questions about peppermint plants

#### Are peppermint plants perennials?

Yes, peppermint plants will come back year after year.

## Can you eat peppermint leaves?

Absolutely, yes! They are reputed to aid digestion and are great paired with potatoes and peas. They add a different flavour dimension to salads and drinks and can be made into a refreshing tea by just adding a few leaves to a cup of boiling water.

## Key features of peppermint plants

<b>Botanical Name</b>	Mentha × piperita
<b>Plant Type</b>	Herbaceous perennial
<b>Native Location</b>	Middle East and Europe
<b>Family</b>	<i>Lamiaceae</i>
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Full sun to shade
<b>Soil pH</b>	Acid, Neutral, Alkaline.
<b>Flower Time</b>	June to September
<b>Flower Colour</b>	Lilac

**Nothing beats a summer BBQ and there's nothing more rewarding than using your own homegrown ingredients. Marinades are a great all rounder that's easy to make, perfect for various dishes from your salads to roast dinners and can be made from some of the easiest things to grow at home - herbs.**

The best thing about marinades is that you can use as much or as little of each ingredient, it's all up to you. Each recipe will also go with practically any vegetable you have to hand. We've put a recommendation for the ingredients below but as long as you ensure you keep to the rule of 3-1: 3 Parts Oil, 1 Part Acid (Vinegar or citrus juice) for the base it's hard to go wrong.

A Sprig is approximately 4 inches of fresh herb, you can always substitute ½ a teaspoon of dried herbs for 1 sprig.

### **Marinade Base**

Each recipe will include this base. It's the liquid that binds all the ingredients together.

#### **For 4 servings you'll need:**

- 120ml or 8 tbsp of your chosen oil
- 40ml or 8 tsp of your vinegar or citrus Juice

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## Classic Italian Inspired

Perfect for Root Vegetables

You will need:

- 2 **Garlic** Cloves
- 2 sprigs Oregano
- 2 sprigs **Basil**
- 2 sprigs Thyme
- Marinade Base (40ml Lemon preferred as the acidic liquid)

Method:

1. Grate the Garlic and finely chop the herbs (for finer consistency you can use a pestle and mortar or even a small blender)
2. Add to the oil and lemon, mix until combined, adding Salt & Pepper to Taste.
3. Coat your Veg, leaving some marinade to brush over during cooking and refrigerate for at least 1hr.
4. Remove from the fridge 15 minutes before cooking.
5. Place on the barbecue, regularly turning. Brush over some of the leftover marinade midway through. Cook until brown.

6. Transfer to a plate and drizzle with the remaining marinade.



### Ranch Inspired

Perfect for cauliflower, brussels sprouts, carrots, potatoes

#### You Will Need:

- 2 sprigs of Dill
- 2 sprigs of Parsley
- 2 tsp Onion Powder
- 2 Cloves of Garlic
- Salt and Pepper to Taste
- Marinade Base

#### Method:

1. Grate the Garlic and finely chop the herbs, adding the onion powder halfway.
2. Add to your chosen liquids, mix until combined.
3. Add Salt & Pepper to Taste
4. Coat your Veg, leaving some marinade to brush over during cooking and refrigerate for at least 1hr.
5. Remove from the fridge 15 minutes before cooking.

6. Place on the barbecue, regularly turning. Brush over some of the leftover marinade midway through. Cook until brown.

7. Transfer to a plate and drizzle with the remaining marinade.



### Caribbean Inspired

Perfect for Courgettes, Aubergines, Asparagus, Potatoes and Peppers

#### You Will Need:

- 2 Sprigs of Coriander
- 2 Sprigs of Parsley
- 1 stem Celery
- 1 Spring Onion
- 2 Garlic Cloves
  
- 1 tsp of Ginger
- 2 Sprigs of Thyme
- 1 Scotch Bonnet Pepper (Use milder Chillies for less spice)
- Salt and Pepper to taste

- Marinade Base
- Optional: **Basil**, Oregano, Rosemary

- Method:

- 1.Roughly chop all the ingredients and add to the blender. Process until all the ingredients are combined. Add some extra oil if needed.
- 2.Coat your chosen veg leaving some marinade to brush over during cooking and refrigerate for at least 1hr.
- 3.Remove from the fridge 15 minutes before cooking.
- 4.Place on the barbecue, regularly turning. Brush over some of the leftover marinade midway through.

Cook until brown.

- 5.Transfer to a plate and enjoy.



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