

## June

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



Dear Fellow Allotmenters,

Welcome to June's Guide. We look forward to the longer days of sunshine and lighter evenings as Summer is here. 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  
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## June Gardening: Your Monthly Garden Guide

June is the first proper month of summer and a great opportunity to get out into the garden and enjoy the results of all the hard work you put in earlier in the year. Of course, there are still some essential jobs to complete if the summer is going to be a blooming success. And yes, if that green thumb is getting itchy and you find yourself wondering what to grow in June, you'll be pleased to know that there are plenty of options.

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

June is a month of barbecues, socialising outside and enjoying your green space, but we understand that it's hard for a gardener to put down their tools completely! Whether you want to know what to plant in June, which fruit and vegetables to sow (or harvest), or the flowers to pot, choose your favourite category below and check out our essential June gardening tips.

### Grow your own

This month is ideal for planting a wide variety of fruit, vegetables, herbs and spices – or for moving them outside if you've already started growing them indoors. You'll have no shortage of choice for what to grow in June. Keep an eye on the weather, though. If we have a particularly hot, dry month, you'll need to water any newly planted seedlings regularly for the best chance of success. You'll find that a lot of your vegetables and herbs will be flourishing in the sunny weather, so when you're not planting new crops, you'll be thinning your plants and keeping an eye out for any pests that might be ravishing your fruit trees.

## Vegetables

June is an exceptionally busy time of year in the vegetable patch. Whether you're wondering what vegetables to plant in June, looking to harvest your flourishing crop, or just want to keep your vegetable garden ticking over, there's plenty to keep you busy and enjoying your garden throughout the month.

### What vegetables to plant in June

As the summer finally gets underway, the promise of long days and warm weather means this is one of the busiest times for planting vegetables. Put in the hard work now and you'll continue to see the benefits across the next year.

The following vegetables can all be sown outdoors directly into well-prepared soil (containers, beds and borders will all work, whether in a garden or on a balcony). If you've already sown these indoors and they've sprouted, now's the time to move them outside, provided the weather is good. If not, keep them inside until the next warm, sunny spell.

Plant seedlings of the following

### How to grow cucumbers

**Delicious in salads and sandwiches, the crisp, sweet crunch of a cucumber is one of the joys of summer. Growing cucumbers takes a little care and attention, but the results are well worth the effort. To learn how to grow cucumbers, follow our essential guide. Soon your summer salads will be sweet, delicious and super-satisfying.**

## Choosing the best cucumbers to grow

Cucumbers are divided into indoor- and outdoor-grown varieties, so growing cucumbers starts with choosing which type of cucumber you want.

Indoor-grown cucumbers are usually long, with smooth skins, and need to be grown in greenhouses to protect them from the changing weather. Outdoor-grown cucumbers are hardier and often shorter with ridged or bumpy skins. They need less care than indoor varieties, so they're a good choice for a first time grower.

Here are a few cucumber varieties to look out for..

### Indoor cucumbers

- Cucumber 'Emilie' AGM
- Cucumber 'Femdan' AGM
- Cucumber 'Carmen' AGM

### Outdoor cucumbers

- Cucumber 'Marketmore' AGM
- Cucumber 'Burpless Tasty Green'

## What you'll need to start growing cucumbers

To begin your cucumber-growing journey, you will need:

- 1.9cm pots for sowing seeds
- 2.Dibber
- 3.Multipurpose compost such as **Miracle-Gro Premium All Purpose Compost**
- 4.Long canes or other supports
- 5.Spade

6.25-30cm diameter pots for indoor-grown cucumbers

7. Compost or farmyard manure for outdoor cucumbers



### When to sow your cucumber seeds

- When to sow cucumbers depends on whether you are growing indoor or outdoor varieties, and also on where you plan to grow them.
- In heated greenhouses, sow indoor cucumbers from late winter to early spring.
- If your greenhouse is unheated, wait until mid-spring before sowing indoor cucumbers.
- Start outdoor cucumbers off indoors by sowing in pots in late spring.
- Outdoor cucumbers can be also sown outside directly into the soil in early summer. They need a sheltered, sunny spot in good soil.

### How to grow cucumbers from seed

1. Fill 9cm pots with multipurpose compost.

2. Using the dibber (or a pencil), make a hole 2.5cm (1in) deep in the centre of the compost.

3. Sow one seed per pot, placing it in the hole on edge rather than flat. This reduces the risk of the seeds rotting.

4. Cover with compost, and water well.

5. When sowing cucumber seeds directly outdoors, sow them 2.5cm (1in) deep, as for pots, and cover the young seedlings with cloches or horticultural fleece to give them protection in cool weather.

### How and when to plant your cucumbers?

Once the seedlings are big enough to handle (usually around 3-4 weeks after germination), transplant indoor cucumbers into individual 25-30cm diameter pots filled with multipurpose compost. Place a long cane in each pot to support the plant as it grows.

Outdoor cucumbers that have been sown indoors in spring can be planted outside in early summer. Harden the seedlings off for a week first by placing them outside in their pots during the day and bringing them back inside at night.

Before planting cucumbers outdoors, prepare the soil by digging in compost or well-rotted farmyard manure, then scatter a general-purpose fertiliser at 100g/m<sup>2</sup> over the soil and rake it in.

Plant outdoor cucumber seedlings 90cm (3ft) apart and water well. You don't need to provide supports for them unless you are trying to save space – they will grow happily sprawling across the ground.

### How to care for your cucumbers?

The key to growing cucumbers is not to stress the plants while they are growing, as this will make the fruits taste bitter. Follow these tips for the best harvest:

- Water regularly, keeping the soil or compost moist but not waterlogged.
- To reduce the risk of fungal disease, avoid watering the leaves of the plants.
- Once flowers appear, feed the plants fortnightly with a balanced liquid feed.
- Train greenhouse cucumbers up canes or other supports to increase yield.
- Pinch out plants (remove the new leaves at the tips of growing shoots), to encourage the plants to put all their energy into producing fruit rather than foliage. Pinch out the growing tips on the main stems of greenhouse cucumbers once they reach the greenhouse roof. Make sure that you pinch out the tips of outdoor plants earlier, once the main stem has produced seven leaves.
- Pinch out any flowerless side shoots once they reach 60cm (2ft) long (for indoor cucumbers) or have produced seven leaves (outdoor cucumbers).
- Remove male flowers from indoor cucumbers to prevent pollination (see below).

### How to pollinate cucumbers

When it comes to pollination, cucumbers have a few quirks. One of these quirks is that they produce separate male and female flowers.

It's easy to tell the male flowers from the females, as the male flowers are on thin stems, while the stems of female flowers look like tiny cucumbers (which is what they will develop into).

Some cucumber plants have been bred to produce only female flowers, and these are called all-female plants. Other cucumbers produce both male and female flowers on the same plant.

Most indoor cucumber varieties are all-female and can develop fruits without needing to be pollinated. In fact, if they are pollinated, the cucumbers will taste bitter, so if any male flowers do appear on greenhouse cucumbers, remove them immediately to prevent pollination.

Outdoor cucumbers produce both male and female flowers on the same plant. They need to be pollinated in order to produce fruit, so don't remove any flowers from outdoor plants, just let the pollinating insects do their thing.

### When to harvest your cucumbers

Harvest cucumbers any time between July and October once the fruits are between 15-20 cm (6-10in) long. Use a sharp knife to cut cucumbers off the plant. Pick frequently to encourage the plant to produce more cucumbers.

It's time to give cucumber-growing a go. Once you've tasted your own cucumbers fresh from the plant, you'll never look back.

### Common pest or disease problems with cucumbers

#### Powdery mildew

**Powdery mildew** is a common cucumber disease. This is a fungal disease that appears as a white powdery deposit on cucumber 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 growth promptly
- Water regularly in dry periods

### Cucumber mosaic virus

Cucumber mosaic virus can cause yellow leaves on cucumber plants, with a characteristic 'mosaic' patterning. Affected plants produce few or no flowers, and any cucumbers that develop are small and inedible.

- Remove and destroy affected plants promptly
- Wash hands and tools after handling affected plants
- Plant disease-resistant varieties
- No chemical controls are available

### Cucumber plants wilting

If cucumber plants start to wilt suddenly despite normal watering, this may be due to sudden changes in temperature, or draughts caused by opening greenhouse vents or doors.

- Don't water wilted plants unless the soil is dry as this could cause root rot
- Keep greenhouse temperature and humidity levels as constant as possible
- Plants may recover if quickly moved out of draughts

### Glasshouse red spider mite

Glasshouse **red spider mite** is a sap-sucking mite that can affect greenhouse-grown cucumbers. 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

### Glasshouse whitefly

Glasshouse **whitefly** suck plant sap and excrete a sticky substance called 'honeydew' which covers cucumber 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

### Key features of cucumbers

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

## 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 :** 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 un-rotted 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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For an earlier start, you can sow the seeds indoors in small pots or modules filled with potting compost.

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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

## The Ultimate Guide To Grow, Plant and Care for Strawberries

**Who doesn't love strawberries? If you're a strawberry fan, the many varieties of 'Fragaria × ananassa' are easy to grow at home, allowing you to enjoy the perks of harvesting ripe fruits in your own garden. What all strawberry growers will soon realise - you'll be having the juicy fruit with everything, as just one plant can be a prolific cropper.**

### Understanding the different types of strawberry

Strawberries are either summer-bearing or everbearing. Summer-bearing strawberries tend to grow bigger fruits and produce one larger harvest over a two-week period in the summer. The exact timing depends on the cultivar. These larger harvests are ideal if you plan to make jam with your strawberries, as you will require a glut of fruit in order to do this.

Everbearing plants, also called perpetual strawberries, produce fruit all season, but in smaller numbers and more sporadically. This type of

strawberry is ideal to snack on fairly regularly, or for small harvests to enjoy at breakfast for example.

It's also worth mentioning the alpine, or wild strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*. Technically an everbearing strawberry, it also does well in gardens. The fruits are small and a bit dry but with an intense flavour. They spread easily and make excellent groundcover, which is another perk as the dainty leaves are ornamental.

### Strawberry varieties

Strawberries come in a range of different shapes, sizes, flavours and cropping times. The main summer-fruiting varieties are divided into early, mid, and late-season types. There are also perpetual or everbearing varieties that can fruit more-or-less continuously from July to September.

Some of the best varieties include:

- Early summer fruiting Emily, Honeoye
- Midseason Cambridge Favourite, Hapil, Pegasus
- Late season Rhapsody, Symphony
- Perpetual fruiting Aromel, Bolero

Your local garden centre will probably have a selection of different varieties, so you can pick n' mix your plants for a long cropping period. Make sure you pick strawberry plants with plenty of healthy green leaves, that are fairly compact and not too leggy.



## **When to plant strawberries**

Strawberries are available as bare-root runners, that are best planted in the spring or as young plug and potted plants.

You can plant strawberries at any time of the year, as long as the soil is workable and not waterlogged or frozen. However, mid-spring or early autumn are the ideal times to plant strawberries for an effective and bountiful harvest.

## **How to plant strawberries**

So, you love the taste of strawberries. You're ready to have them with everything, but your big question is: how to grow them? The great news is that strawberries are simple and straightforward to grow. You do need to make sure you follow some basic guidelines, however. Here's how to do it.

## **Examine your strawberry plants**

The first step is to examine your strawberry plants prior to planting. Check them for signs of **pests and disease** and remove any damaged leaves with clean tools. If your new plants are on the small side, you may choose to remove any early flowers or immature fruits. This will encourage the plant to put its energy into producing fresh growth, giving it a better chance of producing higher yields in the summer.

## **Choosing where to grow strawberries**

When left to their own devices, strawberries may become very invasive, which is why many gardeners prefer to grow them in containers.

Traditional strawberry planters are specialised containers that allow multiple plants to be grown in a small amount of space. Strawberries grow well in most containers and hanging baskets, as long as drainage holes are present. Try a multipurpose compost as a growing medium and space the strawberries about 20cm (8in) apart.

When planting strawberries, try a sunny location as they fruit well in full sun. They will tolerate part-shade, although fruit yields may be smaller. Strawberries like fertile but well-drained soil. If you are planting them directly in the ground or a raised bed, it's worth incorporating some manure or general fertiliser into the soil before planting. Space the plants 30-45cm (12-18in) apart, in rows 60-90cm (24-36in) apart

### **Planting strawberries**

Using a trowel, dig a planting hole twice as large as the plant's root ball. Make sure the plant's crown, where the leaves meet the roots, is level or ever so slightly proud of the compost surface. Planting strawberries too deep can lead to rot, and planting too high will dry the roots out. Backfill around the plant's roots and firm down the soil with your hands.

The final stage is optional but certainly helpful. Add a thin layer of straw to the surface of the soil and around the strawberry plants. If straw isn't available, you can use horticultural grit. This acts as a barrier between the developing fruit and the soil. Fruits resting against the soil surface are vulnerable to rot if the soil is wet, as well as nibbles from hungry insects.

### **When to harvest strawberries**

You are likely to know when to harvest your strawberries as the fruits will have darkened in colour and look juicy. Try to harvest as soon as they are ripe, as this is when they taste their best. Remember to be as gentle as possible when harvesting as this prevents bruising the fruit. If you can, remove the stalk and stem from the plant too.

## How to care for strawberry plants

Caring for strawberry plants requires some light maintenance to keep them healthy and productive. The first tip is to water regularly, especially if the plants are growing in a container or raised bed. When watering, aim the flow near the base of the plant, rather than overhead, as the leaves of strawberries can be susceptible to mould when wet.

Regular feeding is also important when growing strawberries, as they are hungry plants. Most gardeners like to use a high-potassium liquid feed every two weeks, such as [Miracle-Gro Performance Organics Fruit & Veg feed](#). This kind of feed encourages flowering; and more flowers means more fruit. Tomato feed will also do the job well.

It's worth remembering that strawberry plants eventually lose their vigour and usually need replacing every three to four years. In the second or third year, you may decide to propagate baby plants from the runners your strawberries produce. These are the long creeping shoots that snake along the soil and produce daughter plantlets nearby.

However, in the first year, it's beneficial to remove runners as and when you see them. Cut them off where they meet the mother plant. This encourages your strawberry plants to put more energy into flowering and fruiting.

## Common strawberry plant pests and diseases

### Grey mould/botrytis mould

[Grey mould](#) is a fungal disease that appears as powdery grey mould at the strawberry stalk, gradually covering the whole fruit, which then rots. Strawberries affected by grey mould should not be eaten.

- Remove any dead leaves or flowers.
- Remove any affected fruit promptly.
- Space strawberry plants well when planting to allow good air circulation.

- There are no chemical controls available for grey mould.

### **Powdery mildew**

**Powdery mildew** is a fungal disease that appears as a white powdery deposit on strawberry 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 strawberry plants when planting to ensure good air circulation.
- Remove any affected growth promptly.
- Water regularly in dry periods.

### **Frost damage**

Late frosts can damage strawberry flowers, blackening the centres. Damaged flowers will not develop into fruits.

- Avoid planting strawberry plants in frost pockets.
- Protect plants from late frosts by covering them with horticultural fleece at night during cold snaps.

### **Verticillium wilt**

Verticillium wilt is a soil-borne fungus. It causes the leaves of strawberry plants to turn brown and wilt, and eventually the whole plant will die.

- Avoid planting strawberries in ground that has been used in the past three years for tomatoes, peppers or potatoes or other strawberries.
- There is no chemical control for verticillium wilt.

### **Slugs and snails**

Slugs and snails will eat ripe strawberries, and 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.

## 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 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 plant, grow and care for courgettes

**Courgettes are a common summer staple in the vegetable garden and are relatively easy to grow. They taste great in salads, lightly steamed, stuffed or roasted. Courgettes and marrows are the same thing - although courgettes plants are bred to be a much bushier and to produce lots of small, tasty fruit.**

### Courgette varieties

Courgettes come in many shapes and sizes, as well as the traditional long green one's, courgettes can be yellow, stripy, round and nearly black.

Different varieties to try include:

- Sunburst- (yellow)
- Eight ball (round)
- Tondo chiaro di Nizza (round and speckled)
- Green Tiger F1 (Striped)



## What you'll need to start growing courgettes

For indoor sowing:

- 9cm (3.5in) pots
- seed sowing compost**
- Propagator or warm windowsill
- Courgette seeds

For outdoor planting:

- Spade or trowel
- Farmyard manure**
- Watering can
- Fruit and vegetable plant food**

## Cultivating courgettes

Courgettes need a sheltered position in full sun and a fertile soil that holds plenty of moisture. They are reasonably large plants, so need plenty of room, spacing them up to 90cm (3ft) apart. Some more compact varieties are also available - and these are best suited for growing in containers.

Courgettes are hungry plants so when planting outside add some well rotted farmyard manure to the planting area about two weeks before planting. Leave a low mound of the soil and manure at the top and then in two weeks you can plant your courgette into this mound.

As courgettes need plenty of water, a top tip is to sink a 15cm (6in) pot alongside them when planting out. Watering into the pot ensures the water goes down to the roots and doesn't sit around the neck of the plant, which can lead to rotting. It also keeps it off the foliage, which helps reduce problems with powdery mildew.

## How to grow courgettes from seed

For the best results, sow the courgette seeds indoors from mid to late April 13mm (½in) deep individually in 7-9cm (3-3½in) pots filled with compost.

Sow the seed on its side as this helps prevent water pooling on the top. Place the pots in a propagator or other warm place at 18-21°C (65-70°F) and as soon as the seeds germinate, take any cover off. Harden off the young plants for 7-10 days before planting outside in late May/early June after the last frosts have passed.

Outside, sow 2 or 3 seeds 2.5cm (1in) deep in weed free, fertile soil, in late May or early June and cover with a cloche. Thin the young seedlings to leave just the strongest one.

## How to care for courgette plants

As the young courgette plants are susceptible to frost and cold weather, cover them with fleece or a cloche if the weather turns cold early in the growing season

Feed around the base of the plant with a **granular plant food** as they start to grow. And keep the plant well watered, making sure to water around the base not the leaves, water deeply every few days rather than little and often. Once the first fruit starts to swell, feed every 10-14 days with a **high potassium feed**, to encourage tasty fruits.

## Can you grow courgettes in pots?

Some courgettes grow well in containers, but they will be a bit higher maintenance. Choose the largest container you can and fill with a **good quality compost**. Don't allow the compost to dry out, **mulching** around the stem once it starts to grow will help retain moisture. Start feeding with **liquid plant food** about 3 weeks after planting and as soon as you

see flowers appearing.

Good varieties for containers include “Midnight” and ‘Sure Thing’.

### Harvesting courgettes

Courgettes are best Harvested when they are fairly small, about 10-12.5cm (4-5in) long. Regular picking when they are small not only ensures a longer cropping period over several months, but the fruits have much more flavour when picked early. Courgette fruits can seem to grow large overnight, so keep checking under leaves and behind the plant so you don’t miss any.

Some courgette leaves can be quite prickly so wear gloves and long sleeves when harvesting. If you want a few marrows then let them grow on, but they will be watery.

Courgettes produce large crops, so one or two plants is all that’s needed to feed a large family.

### Common pests, diseases and problems of courgette plants

#### Powdery mildew

**Powdery mildew** on courgettes can be a common problem. This is a fungal disease that appears as a white powdery deposit on the leaves, stunting growth and causing leaves to shrivel. Drought-stressed plants are more susceptible.

- 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 and try not to get the leaves wet.

## Yellow courgette leaves

Older courgette leaves often turn yellow and drop off the plant. This is not a cause for concern as they will be replaced by new growth, but also see Cucumber mosaic virus.

If younger leaves are turning yellow then this could be a sign that they need supplementary feeding with a balanced feed.

## Cucumber mosaic virus

Courgette leaves turning yellow can also be due to cucumber mosaic virus. This causes deformed, stunted leaves with a characteristic 'mosaic' yellow patterning. Affected plants produce few or no flowers, and any fruit that develop are small and inedible.

- Remove and destroy affected plants promptly.
- Wash hands and tools after handling affected plants.
- Plant disease-resistant varieties.
- No chemical controls are available.

## Grey mould/botrytis mould

**Grey mould** is a fungal disease that appears as powdery grey mould at the stalk of courgette, gradually covering the whole fruit, which then rots.

- Remove any dead leaves or flowers.
- Remove any affected fruit promptly.
- Space plants well when planting to allow good air circulation.
- There are no chemical controls available for grey mould.

## Courgettes rotting when small or not setting

Courgette fruits can appear to start swelling but then rot or drop off the plant while still small. This occurs when the flowers are not pollinated, and is usually more of a problem early in the season, especially if it has been cold and wet. If the problem persists, you can hand-pollinate flowers using a small paintbrush.

## Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** will eat the leaves of young courgette plants, and 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 **a grit barrier**.
- Scatter environmentally-friendly **slug pellets** if other methods are not sufficient.

## Key features of courgettes

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer, Autumn
<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, Poorly drained
<b>Ultimate height</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 3m (10ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	4 months
<b>When to plant</b>	May and June

## How to grow and care for runner beans

Runner beans (*Phaseolus coccineus*) are among the easiest and most rewarding vegetables to grow. And with their colourful flowers and heart-shaped leaves, they look as good as they taste. Follow our simple guide for a bountiful harvest of runner beans.

### Best runner beans to plant

Whether you're planting runner beans in rows on your allotment or just growing a few plants in a pot, there are plenty of varieties to choose from. Here are some of the most popular types of runner beans:

- Runner bean 'Red Rum' AGM – a heavy cropper that does well in all weather conditions.
- Runner bean 'Celebration' AGM – very attractive, with pink flowers and tender, tasty pods, almost stringless when young.
- Runner bean 'Tenderstar' – pretty pink and red bicour flowers and smooth, tender, stringless pods.
- Runner bean 'Scarlet Emperor' – bright red flowers and masses of smooth dark green pods that can reach up to 35cm (14in) in length.
- Runner bean 'Snowstorm' – white flowers and plenty of tasty pods.
- Runner bean 'Hestia' – a dwarf variety growing to 45cm (1.5ft) tall, ideal for containers.

### Essential equipment

To grow runner beans you will need:

- Bean seeds
- Small pots
- **Multipurpose compost**

- 2.4m long poles to create a support framework
- String
- Garden fork and spade
- Garden compost or well-rotted **farmyard manure**

### When and where to plant runner beans

Sow runner beans indoors in pots in mid-spring, or sow directly into the ground outdoors in late spring and early summer once all risk of frost is gone.

A rich, well-drained soil in full sun is ideal for planting runner beans. You can also **grow them in containers** filled with multipurpose compost.

### Sowing runner beans indoors

- 1.Fill small pots with multipurpose compost.
- 2.With a dibber or pencil, make a hole 5cm (2in) deep in the compost and drop in a bean seed. Plant one seed per pot and sow a few extra pots in case seeds fail to germinate or young plants are eaten by slugs and snails.
- 3.Cover over with compost and firm it down gently.
- 4.Water the pots and put them on a sunny windowsill or in a greenhouse to germinate. This should take about one week.
- 5.Let the seedlings grow on indoors until all risk of frost is past, then plant them out. Harden the seedlings off for a week before planting by placing the pots outside during the day and bringing them back in at night.

## Sowing runner beans directly outdoors

1. Dig the area over a few weeks before planting and clear the soil of all weeds and stones. Dig in well-rotted farmyard manure or compost to improve the soil structure and drainage.
2. Rake the soil to create a level surface with a light, crumbly texture.
3. Put in sturdy supports for the bean plants, such as two rows of poles sloping towards each other. Traditionally, the poles are tied together at the tops to create an A-frame but tying them in the middle to create an X-shape makes it easier to pick the beans, as they are not all clustered together at the top of the frame. Space the poles 45-60cm (1.5-2ft) apart. If you are only growing a few plants, a wigwam of poles makes a good support for them to climb up.
4. Sow the bean seeds 5cm (2in) deep, sowing two seeds at the base of each pole.
5. Water regularly.
6. Once the seedlings are around 10cm (4in) tall, pull out the weaker seedling from each pair.

## Tips on how to care for runner beans

- Beans will twine automatically around their supports, but you may need to tie the young seedlings into the poles at first.
- Once the plants reach the tops of the supports, pinch out the growing tips. This will encourage the plants to put out side shoots, producing more beans.
- Water regularly, especially during dry periods and when the flowers are setting (i.e. developing into beans).

- Protect young plants from slugs and snails, using crushed eggshells, sawdust, beer traps, copper tape on pots, or wildlife-friendly pellets.
- Colonies of aphids often appear on young shoots. In large quantities they can distort the plant's growth and reduce vigour. Check young plants and wipe off aphids as soon as you see them to stop them becoming a problem. Natural predators like ladybirds will help to control aphid infestations. If using pesticide sprays, always check that they are suitable for use on edible plants. To avoid harming pollinators, don't spray when the plants are in flower.
- In hot, dry weather, flowers sometimes drop off the plant without developing into beans. To ensure you are caring for runner beans, regular watering will help, and the problem usually resolves itself once cooler weather returns.

### Growing runner beans in containers

If you're short on space, dwarf runner beans are ideal for containers, growing into bushy plants around 45cm (1.5ft) tall.

- 1.Choose a container at least 30cm (1ft) in diameter, with good drainage holes. Fill with multipurpose compost.
- 2.Sow seeds 5cm (2in) deep directly into the compost in late spring or start seedlings indoors in mid-spring and transplant into the container once they are big enough (around 10cm/4in tall).
- 3.Water regularly and feed the plants with a high potassium feed (such as tomato feed) fortnightly once the flowers start setting.

## Harvesting runner beans

Harvest runner beans when the pods are between 15-20cm (6-8in) long, before the beans start to swell in the pods. Harvesting runner beans encourages the plant to produce more, so pick frequently.



## Common runner bean problems

### Pods failing to set

One of the most common runner beans problems is plants flowering but failing to develop pods. This can be caused by a range of environmental conditions, including very hot weather, lack of water, few pollinators, and birds damaging flowers. The problem often resolves itself as the season progresses.

- Water plants regularly in dry periods.
- Plant near other flowering plants to attract more pollinators.

### Blackfly

One common runner bean pest is the blackfly. Blackflies are a small black sap-sucking insect that infests the soft new shoots on bean plants, stunting and distorting them. The best way to get rid of blackfly on

runner beans is to check regularly and tackle the problem as soon as it appears.

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

## Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** will eat the leaves of young runner bean seedlings, and can be identified by the slime trails that they leave, as well as the damage they do. As the plants grow taller, they are less at risk of slug and snail damage.

- 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 insufficient.

## Key features of runner beans

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer, Autumn
<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 1.8m (6ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

## How to grow salad leaves

**Bags of salad leaves are quite expensive to buy and have a fairly short lifespan in the fridge. Grow your own and you can pick exactly how much you want and need. By growing a range of different types and sowing at different times of year, you can have fresh salad leaves available nearly all year round. Many salads leaves are grown as 'cut-and-come-again' crops, which you can harvest over a long time.**

### Salad leaf varieties

There are lots of different salad leaves available. Here are some of the best and most popular ones. Many seed suppliers sell them as salad leaf mixes, with different types, colours and flavours.

- **Chinese cabbage:** Often sold as Chinese leaves, it is fast growing and can be ready for cutting in as little as 6 weeks.
- **Corn salad or lamb's lettuce:** Hardy, making it the perfect choice for winter and early spring salads. It forms small rosettes of bright green, succulent leaves.
- **Endive:** Usually blanched to reduce its bitter content.
- **Land cress or American cress:** A tasty watercress substitute, ready to eat in 7 to 8 weeks.
- **Rocket:** An easy to grow, fast-maturing salad. Late summer sowings will continue cropping into the winter if the plants are protected by cloches.
- **Winter purslane:** An attractive winter salad also known as claytonia or miner's lettuce.

•**Oriental vegetables:** There are numerous ways of using these, from adding to salads, stews and soup, for stir-fries and as a lightly steamed vegetable. They include Chinese mustard greens, chopsuey greens, Japanese mustard spinach (komatsuna), mibuna and mizuna and texel greens.



### What you'll need to start growing salad leaves

Get your salad leaves off to a good start with these growing essentials:

- Garden fork and spade
- Trowel
- Well-rotted **farmyard manure**
- General purpose fertilizer
- Salad leaf seeds

For container sowing:

- A suitable container, such as a windowbox or pot
- Multipurpose compost**
- Balanced liquid plant food

## How to grow salad leaves

### Cultivation

Most salad leaves prefer an open, sunny position, although they will tolerate light shade. During hot, sunny summers, they may do better in light shade.

Before sowing, improve the soil with some organic matter to improve water holding and add a dressing of **a general granular plant food**.

Most salad leaves can also be grown in small pots, window boxes, growing bags or planters. Grow some in containers on the windowsill to have them ready at your finger tips - and at times when it may be too cold outside.

### Sowing salad leaves

Sow in short rows every fortnight or so, enough for your needs, to have a continuous crop. Sow seeds thinly 13mm (0.5in) deep, cover with soil and water in well.

### How to care for salad leaves

Keep the soil moist at all times, but without overwatering. If the soil dries out the plants may bolt (go to seed prematurely) and lose their strong flavours.

If necessary, thin out seedlings when they're about 2.5cm (1in) high. The thinnings can be used in the kitchen.

To encourage fast growth that is tender and full of flavour, feed plants every 3 weeks with **a balanced liquid feed**.

## Harvesting salad leaves

Harvest leaves as and when needed once the plants are about 7.5-10cm (3-4in) high. You can either pick individual leaves from the outside of the plants or harvest over the whole plant using scissors.

It is best to cut in the morning, when the plants will be at their freshest.

## Common salad pests and diseases

### Grey mould/botrytis mould

Grey mould is a fungal disease that appears as pale discoloured patches on salad leaves, turning to a grey fuzzy growth. It is more common in wet weather.

- Remove any affected plants promptly.
- Space plants well when planting to allow good air circulation.
- There are no chemical controls available for grey mould.

### Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** feed on young lettuce seedlings, and 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 insufficient.

### Lettuce root aphid

Lettuce root **aphids** feed on the roots of lettuce plants, causing plants to suddenly wilt and die. It is more common in dry conditions.

- Water regularly especially during dry periods.

- Grow lettuce under insect-proof mesh.
- Pull up and destroy affected plants.

### Key features of salad leaves

<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	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 (12in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 15cm (6in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	4-10 weeks

### How to grow sweetcorn

**Sweetcorn, or maize, is sweet, tender and delicious – especially when cooked as soon as it is picked. Plenty of sun and dry weather are needed for the plants to grow well and to set cobs full of well formed kernels.**

#### Sweetcorn varieties

Hybrid F1 varieties produce the sweetest kernels, and ‘Early Extra Sweet’ is the standard that all new varieties try to beat, although ‘Marika’, ‘Sweet Perfection’ and ‘Early Bird’ are good varieties.

The latest plant breeding has produced enhanced sweetness, with varieties such as ‘Butterscotch’ or ‘Swift’. But if you prefer a less chewy texture, then the tendersweet varieties ‘Lark’ and ‘Extra Tender and Sweet’ are the ones for you.



## What you'll need to start growing sweetcorn

Growing sweetcorn doesn't require complicated equipment. Here's what you need:

- Garden fork and spade
- Trowel
- Well-rotted farmyard manure
- General purpose fertiliser
- Liquid feed**
- Sweetcorn seeds
- Cloches or clear plastic covers (1 per plant)

For indoor sowing:

- 9cm (3.5in) pots
- Seed sowing compost**

## How to grow sweetcorn

### Cultivation

Choose a position that receives lots of sunshine and is sheltered from strong winds.

Sweetcorn will grow in most soils, providing it is well drained, but holds plenty of moisture. Before sowing or planting, improve the soil so that it is rich in nutrients and organic matter by digging in some well-rotted manure, garden compost or soil improver. Then add a good dressing of **a general plant food**.

### Sowing sweetcorn

Because sweetcorn is pollinated by wind transfer of pollen, the plants must be grown together in a square/rectangular block, rather than a single row or dotted around the garden.

If you wait until late May/early June, you can sow seeds directly in the ground where you want it to grow. You will get better results if the soil is pre-warmed for 2 weeks with cloches or clear plastic covers. Leave the covers in place after sowing until the plants have grown and touch the top.

To get an early start and produce an earlier crop, sow seeds in individual pots or cells filled with a good seed sowing compost in late April or early May and germinate in gentle warmth. Keep the plants indoors until early June, when they will be ready for planting out.

Sow seeds or plant out 45cm (18in) apart in the block.

### How to care for sweetcorn

Water the soil thoroughly during prolonged periods of dry weather; this is vital when the plants are establishing and when they are flowering and the cobs are swelling.

**Liquid feed** every fortnight when the plants start to flower and the cobs begin to swell.

If roots appear at the base of the stem, cover them with soil to improve wind stability.

You can tap the plants when the male flowers (tassels) open to help pollination, as poor pollination will result in poorly filled cobs.

### How to harvest sweetcorn

When the silks (female flowers) on top of the cobs have turned chocolate brown, test the kernels for ripeness. Pull back some of the the leaves that cover the cob and press one or two kernels with a thumbnail. If the content is creamy then it's ripe to eat. If the content is clear, the cob is unripe, so wait. If the content is solid then you've left it too long.

Cook as soon as possible after picking in plain water (no salt) and you will taste perfect sweetcorn! Avoid picking more than you need, since cobs that are left in the fridge for a day or two will gradually lose their sweetness.

### Common sweetcorn pests

#### Birds

Birds, especially pigeons, peck at the leaves of young sweetcorn seedlings, often destroying them.

- Grow plants under netting while young. Taller plants are less attractive to birds.

#### Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** will eat young sweetcorn seedlings, and can be identified by the slime trails that they leave, as well as the damage they do. As the seedlings grow taller they are less at risk from slugs and snails.

- 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 insufficient.

## Mice

**Mice** will dig up and eat sweetcorn seeds 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.

## Key features of sweetcorn

<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 1.8m (6ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 90cm (3ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	4 months

## How to grow pumpkins

**Delicious in pies, soups and stews, and full of vitamins and minerals, pumpkins are a tasty autumn and winter treat. Follow our simple guide to growing pumpkins for a bumper harvest.**

### Choosing the best pumpkins to grow

Pumpkins (botanical name *Cucurbita pepo*) belong to the same family as squash. There's a wide range of different pumpkins available, from the

huge 'Dill's Atlantic Giant', which can produce fruits weighing up to 800kg (around 1750lb) to the tiny 'Jack Be Little' which bears miniature pumpkins just 7cm (3") across.

Most pumpkins need space, but if you don't have a big garden, you can grow smaller varieties as climbers. And if you want a change from the traditional orange-skinned pumpkin, there are pumpkins with striped, knobby or pleated skins, and even white or blue pumpkins. It's safe to say, there's a pumpkin for every taste! Here are few to look out for:

- Pumpkin 'Evergold' – the classic pumpkin, perfect for both cooking and carving.
- Pumpkin 'Becky' – smooth orange fruits around 20cm (10in) across, with very tasty flesh.
- Pumpkin 'Munchkin' – a small variety producing fruits with attractive pleated orange skins.
- Pumpkin 'Queensland Blue' – an unusual variety with blue-green skin and rich, sweet orange flesh.



## Your essential equipment list for growing pumpkins

Here's what you'll need for growing perfect pumpkins in your garden.

For seed sowing:

- 9cm pots
- Seed compost such as [Levington Seed & Cutting Compost](#)
- Labels
- Propagator or clear plastic bags

For planting out:

- Compost or [farmyard manure](#)
- Spade
- Slate tiles or bricks

For growing pumpkins as climbers:

- Wooden poles, around 2m (6.5ft) long
- String

## How to grow pumpkins from seed

Sow pumpkin seeds indoors early in the year, in mid to late April, as the plants have a long growing season.

- 1.Fill individual 9cm pots with seed compost.
- 2.Plant the seeds 2.5cm (1in) deep, on their sides.
- 3.Water the pots and place them in a propagator or in clear plastic bags in a well-lit position at a temperature of around 20°C (68°F).  
The seeds should germinate in around five to seven days.

4. After germination, take the pots out of the propagator or plastic bag and let the seedlings grow on in a greenhouse or on a sunny windowsill until they are large enough to be planted out.

### How to plant pumpkins

Planning when to plant pumpkins depends on the weather. Pumpkins won't grow in the cold, so wait until late May or early June before planting them in a sunny, sheltered position.

A few weeks before planting, create planting pockets by digging a hole for each plant, approximately 20cm (10") square x 20cm (10") deep. Allow 2-3m (6.5-10ft) between plants and between rows.

Fill each hole with compost or well-rotted farmyard manure. Pumpkins are hungry plants and need rich, fertile soil to produce good fruits.

To train pumpkins as climbers, drive three sturdy poles firmly into the ground around a planting pocket and tie them together at the top to create a tripod or wigwam to support the plants. Make sure the structure is strong, as even small pumpkin plants weigh a lot by harvest time. Allow 1m (3.5ft) between climber-grown pumpkin plants.

Harden seedlings off for a week before planting, by placing the pots outside during the day and bringing them back in again at night.

Plant one seedling in each planting pocket. Firm the soil around the plant and water well.

### Tips for pumpkin care

Caring for your pumpkins is essential as they grow. Water your pumpkins thoroughly once a week. In very hot, dry weather, increase this to twice a week. Always water the soil, not the leaves, to reduce the risk of fungal disease.

If you're growing pumpkins as climbers, tie the trailing stems to the support poles as they grow.

When fruits start to develop, feed the plants fortnightly with a high potassium liquid feed (tomato feed is ideal). Slide a piece of slate under each pumpkin or place them on bricks to keep them off damp ground and protect them from slugs and rot. Pumpkin plants will usually produce two to three fruits per plant, although the smaller varieties can produce more.

### Key steps for harvesting pumpkins

1. Leave the fruits to ripen on the plants as long as possible for the best flavour. If there's a risk of early frosts, protect the pumpkins with cardboard and straw.
2. To judge when to harvest pumpkins, knock gently on the fruit. If they sound hollow, they're ready to harvest.
3. Use secateurs to cut pumpkins off the vine, leaving a long stalk on the fruit.
4. Before storing pumpkins, first cure the skins by leaving the fruits out in the sun for around 10 days. In poor weather, place them in a greenhouse, or on a sunny windowsill.
5. Once the skins have cured, store the pumpkins in a well-ventilated, cool room, at a temperature of around 7-10°C (44-50°F). Check periodically for any signs of rot and remove any affected fruits. Stored pumpkins can last for up to six months.

### Potential pumpkin problems

Pumpkins can be affected by **powdery mildew**, a fungal disease that leaves white powdery markings on the leaves, and in heavy cases can stunt the plants' growth. Drought makes plants more susceptible to

powdery mildew, so reduce the risk of infection by watering regularly, and avoid wetting leaves when watering. Remove and dispose of any affected leaves as soon as you see them.

In cool weather, fruits sometimes fail to develop, or drop off the plant while small. This is due to the flowers not being pollinated. Once the weather warms up, the problem usually resolves.

### Key features of pumpkins

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer, Autumn
<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 45cm (18in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 3m (10ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	4 months

Remember to sow fast-maturing vegetables, such as salads, every 10-14 days to ensure a continuous supply.

Meanwhile, if you're already looking ahead to those pumpkin stews in October, you can sow your pumpkin seeds indoors in a greenhouse, conservatory or even on a windowsill.

Consider using a peat-free compost specially formulated for growing fruit and vegetables. This can keep your seeds fed for up to six weeks, providing a nurturing bed for them to put down strong roots.

## Growing vegetables in June

June is typically when the weather starts getting really hot and dry, so make sure your vegetables get a good drink of water during dry spells. Try to give them an intermittent, thorough soaking rather than a light spray every few days and remember to water them early in the day so that the soil soaks up the water before the sun has a chance to dry it out.

The other primary focus for June is going to be thinning, planting out, and transplanting vegetables to their final locations. Start with tender crops such as lettuce, and use brassica collars when planting out cabbages, as this will help prevent cabbage root fly. If you're thinning out carrots, always make sure that the soil around the remaining plants is firm and be sure to dispose of the plants you've thinned out, as this will deter carrot root flies.

Monitor sweet peas and other climbers, tying them into supports where needed to ensure they don't flop and break their stems. Continue tying in runner beans.

June is usually the time of year we finish earthing up our main crop of potatoes, so make sure to do this if you haven't already.

Finally, as we come towards the end of the month, shallots planted in spring may begin to swell. You should scrape away the soil from the necks of the bulbs. This will ensure they are exposed to warmth and light

**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 June

If you've already been busy in your vegetable garden this year and you have plenty of crops growing, you'll be in for a large harvest in June, so make sure you brush up on your favourite recipes. The vegetables usually ready to harvest in June are:

## 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 un-rotted 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 owns, 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

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 or modules 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.

### 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 and care for runner beans

**Runner beans (*Phaseolus coccineus*) are among the easiest and most rewarding vegetables to grow. And with their colourful flowers and heart-shaped leaves, they look as good as they taste. Follow our simple guide for a bountiful harvest of runner beans.**

### Best runner beans to plant

Whether you're planting runner beans in rows on your allotment or just growing a few plants in a pot, there are plenty of varieties to choose from. Here are some of the most popular types of runner beans:

- Runner bean 'Red Rum' AGM – a heavy cropper that does well in all weather conditions.
- Runner bean 'Celebration' AGM – very attractive, with pink flowers and tender, tasty pods, almost stringless when young.
- Runner bean 'Tenderstar' – pretty pink and red bicolour flowers and smooth, tender, stringless pods.
- Runner bean 'Scarlet Emperor' – bright red flowers and masses of smooth dark green pods that can reach up to 35cm (14in) in length.
- Runner bean 'Snowstorm' – white flowers and plenty of tasty pods.
- Runner bean 'Hestia' – a dwarf variety growing to 45cm (1.5ft) tall, ideal for containers.

## Essential equipment

To grow runner beans you will need:

- Bean seeds
- Small pots
- Multipurpose compost**
- 2.4m long poles to create a support framework
- String
- Garden fork and spade
- Garden compost or well-rotted **farmyard manure**

## When and where to plant runner beans

Sow runner beans indoors in pots in mid-spring, or sow directly into the ground outdoors in late spring and early summer once all risk of frost is gone.

A rich, well-drained soil in full sun is ideal for planting runner beans. You can also **grow them in containers** filled with multipurpose compost.

### Sowing runner beans indoors

1. Fill small pots with multipurpose compost.
2. With a dibber or pencil, make a hole 5cm (2in) deep in the compost and drop in a bean seed. Plant one seed per pot and sow a few extra pots in case seeds fail to germinate or young plants are eaten by slugs and snails.
3. Cover over with compost and firm it down gently.
4. Water the pots and put them on a sunny windowsill or in a greenhouse to germinate. This should take about one week.
5. Let the seedlings grow on indoors until all risk of frost is past, then plant them out. Harden the seedlings off for a week before planting by placing the pots outside during the day and bringing them back in at night.

### Sowing runner beans directly outdoors

1. Dig the area over a few weeks before planting and clear the soil of all weeds and stones. Dig in well-rotted farmyard manure or compost to improve the soil structure and drainage.
2. Rake the soil to create a level surface with a light, crumbly texture.
3. Put in sturdy supports for the bean plants, such as two rows of poles sloping towards each other. Traditionally, the poles are tied together at the tops to create an A-frame but tying them in the middle to create an X-shape makes it easier to pick the beans, as they are not all clustered together at the top of the frame. Space the poles 45-60cm (1.5-2ft) apart. If you are only growing a few

4. plants, a wigwam of poles makes a good support for them to climb up.

5. Sow the bean seeds 5cm (2in) deep, sowing two seeds at the base of each pole.

6. Water regularly.

7. Once the seedlings are around 10cm (4in) tall, pull out the weaker seedling from each pair.

### Tips on how to care for runner beans

- Beans will twine automatically around their supports, but you may need to tie the young seedlings into the poles at first.
- Once the plants reach the tops of the supports, pinch out the growing tips. This will encourage the plants to put out side shoots, producing more beans.
- Water regularly, especially during dry periods and when the flowers are setting (i.e. developing into beans).
- Protect young plants from slugs and snails, using crushed eggshells, sawdust, beer traps, copper tape on pots, or wildlife-friendly pellets.
- Colonies of **aphids** often appear on young shoots. In large quantities they can distort the plant's growth and reduce vigour. Check young plants and wipe off aphids as soon as you see them to stop them becoming a problem. Natural predators like ladybirds will help to control aphid infestations. If using pesticide sprays, always check that they are suitable for use on edible plants. To avoid harming pollinators, don't spray when the plants are in flower.
- In hot, dry weather, flowers sometimes drop off the plant without developing into beans. To ensure you are caring for runner beans,

- regular watering will help, and the problem usually resolves itself once cooler weather returns.

### Growing runner beans in containers

If you're short on space, dwarf runner beans are ideal for containers, growing into bushy plants around 45cm (1.5ft) tall.

1. Choose a container at least 30cm (1ft) in diameter, with good drainage holes. Fill with multipurpose compost.
2. Sow seeds 5cm (2in) deep directly into the compost in late spring or start seedlings indoors in mid-spring and transplant into the container once they are big enough (around 10cm/4in tall).
3. Water regularly and feed the plants with a high potassium feed (such as tomato feed) fortnightly once the flowers start setting.

### Harvesting runner beans

Harvest runner beans when the pods are between 15-20cm (6-8in) long, before the beans start to swell in the pods. Harvesting runner beans encourages the plant to produce more, so pick frequently.



## Common runner bean problems

### Pods failing to set

One of the most common runner beans problems is plants flowering but failing to develop pods. This can be caused by a range of environmental conditions, including very hot weather, lack of water, few pollinators, and birds damaging flowers. The problem often resolves itself as the season progresses.

- Water plants regularly in dry periods.
- Plant near other flowering plants to attract more pollinators.

### Blackfly

One common runner bean pest is the blackfly. Blackflies are a small black sap-sucking insect that infests the soft new shoots on bean plants, stunting and distorting them. The best way to get rid of blackfly on runner beans is to check regularly and tackle the problem as soon as it appears.

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

### Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** will eat the leaves of young runner bean seedlings, and can be identified by the slime trails that they leave, as well as the damage they do. As the plants grow taller, they are less at risk of slug and snail damage.

- 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 insufficient.

### Key features of runner beans

<b>Flowering season(s)</b>	Summer, Autumn
<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 1.8m (6ft)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 30cm (1ft)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	6 months

### How to grow salad leaves

Bags of salad leaves are quite expensive to buy and have a fairly short lifespan in the fridge. Grow your own and you can pick exactly how much you want and need. By growing a range of different types and sowing at different times of year, you can have fresh salad leaves available nearly all year round. Many salads leaves are grown as 'cut-and-come-again' crops, which you can harvest over a long time.

### Salad leaf varieties

There are lots of different salad leaves available. Here are some of the best and most popular ones. Many seed suppliers sell them as salad leaf mixes, with different types, colours and flavours.

- **Chinese cabbage:** Often sold as Chinese leaves, it is fast growing and can be ready for cutting in as little as 6 weeks.

- Corn salad or lamb's lettuce:** Hardy, making it the perfect choice for winter and early spring salads. It forms small rosettes of bright green, succulent leaves.
- Endive:** Usually blanched to reduce its bitter content.
- Land cress or American cress:** A tasty watercress substitute, ready to eat in 7 to 8 weeks.
- Rocket:** An easy to grow, fast-maturing salad. Late summer sowings will continue cropping into the winter if the plants are protected by cloches.
- Winter purslane:** An attractive winter salad also known as claytonia or miner's lettuce.
- Oriental vegetables:** There are numerous ways of using these, from adding to salads, stews and soup, for stir-fries and as a lightly steamed vegetable. They include Chinese mustard greens, chopsuey greens, Japanese mustard spinach (komatsuna), mibuna and mizuna and texel greens.



## What you'll need to start growing salad leaves

Get your salad leaves off to a good start with these growing essentials:

- Garden fork and spade
- Trowel
- Well-rotted **farmyard manure**
- General purpose fertilizer
- Salad leaf seeds

For container sowing:

- A suitable container, such as a windowbox or pot
- Multipurpose compost**
- Balanced liquid plant food

## How to grow salad leaves

### Cultivation

Most salad leaves prefer an open, sunny position, although they will tolerate light shade. During hot, sunny summers, they may do better in light shade.

Before sowing, improve the soil with some organic matter to improve water holding and add a dressing of **a general granular plant food**.

Most salad leaves can also be grown in small pots, window boxes, growing bags or planters. Grow some in containers on the windowsill to have them ready at your finger tips - and at times when it may be too cold outside.

## Sowing salad leaves

Sow in short rows every fortnight or so, enough for your needs, to have a continuous crop. Sow seeds thinly 13mm (0.5in) deep, cover with soil and water in well.

## How to care for salad leaves

Keep the soil moist at all times, but without overwatering. If the soil dries out the plants may bolt (go to seed prematurely) and lose their strong flavours.

If necessary, thin out seedlings when they're about 2.5cm (1in) high. The thinnings can be used in the kitchen.

To encourage fast growth that is tender and full of flavour, feed plants every 3 weeks with **a balanced liquid feed**.

## Harvesting salad leaves

Harvest leaves as and when needed once the plants are about 7.5-10cm (3-4in) high. You can either pick individual leaves from the outside of the plants or harvest over the whole plant using scissors.

It is best to cut in the morning, when the plants will be at their freshest.

## Common salad pests and diseases

### Grey mould/botrytis mould

Grey mould is a fungal disease that appears as pale discoloured patches on salad leaves, turning to a grey fuzzy growth. It is more common in wet weather.

- Remove any affected plants promptly.
- Space plants well when planting to allow good air circulation.
- There are no chemical controls available for grey mould.

## Slugs and snails

**Slugs and snails** feed on young lettuce seedlings, and 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 insufficient.

## Lettuce root aphid

Lettuce root **aphids** feed on the roots of lettuce plants, causing plants to suddenly wilt and die. It is more common in dry conditions.

- Water regularly especially during dry periods.
- Grow lettuce under insect-proof mesh.
- Pull up and destroy affected plants.

## Key features of salad leaves

<b>Foliage season(s)</b>	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
<b>Sunlight</b>	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 (12in)
<b>Ultimate spread</b>	Up to 15cm (6in)
<b>Time to ultimate height</b>	4-10 weeks

## How to grow and care for sweet peas

Sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) are an incredibly popular summer climbing plant. They produce masses of flowers all summer long - providing they are picked regularly - and most (but not all) varieties have a delicious scent. Sweet peas are easy to grow from seed, or you can also buy young plants from garden centres in spring.

### Suggested planting locations and garden types

You can plant sweet peas in flower borders and beds, patios, containers, cut flowers, city and courtyard gardens, cottage and informal gardens, walls and fences. Sweet peas need a sunny position and good, well-drained soil. Before sowing sweet pea seeds or planting out, improve the soil with bulky organic matter or soil conditioner to help hold plenty of moisture.



## What you'll need to start growing sweet peas

This list of equipment will get your sweet pea growing off to a great start. Here's what you'll need:

- Garden fork and spade
- Trowel
- Well-rotted **farmyard manure**
- General purpose fertilizer
- High-potash feed**
- 9cm (3.5in) pots
- Seed sowing compost**
- Pea sticks, **bamboo** canes or other support framework
- String or twine
- Sweet pea seeds

## Sowing sweet peas

For best results, sow seeds in long pots filled with a good seed sowing compost in March or April. Sow seeds individually in 9cm (3.5") pots or 5-7 seeds in a 12.5cm (5") pot. Germinate and grow on the plants at about 15°C (60°F). If several seeds are sown into a pot, pot on seedlings individually into 9cm (3.5in) pots when they reach about 5cm (2") high.

You can sow seeds directly into the ground in March or April or even May, but the results are usually not as good. In milder areas, you can also sow in pots during October or November and overwinter the young plants in a cold frame or unheated greenhouse. This will produce plants that flower earlier the following year.

Some varieties have a hard seed coat and may be difficult to germinate. The advice to chip away part of the hard seed coat using a sharp knife to help germination isn't always necessary. If you want to try, make a small nick on the opposite side to the 'eye'. Certainly don't soak the seeds in water as this can lead to rotting.

### How to care for sweet peas

When plants are about 7.5-10cm (3-4") high, pinch out the growing tips to encourage branching, bushier plants and so more flowers.

Plant out overwintered plants in mid-spring and those sown in spring in late spring or early summer, after first hardening them off. The plants may need protection from cold and late frosts, so it may be better to wait until after the final spring frost. Plant 20-30cm (8-12") apart.

After planting out, water the plants thoroughly to settle them in and again during dry spells.

Feeding regularly throughout summer with a high potash liquid feed will help promote continuous flowering.

Cut flowers frequently as they become ready, and certainly before the flowers fade and they produce seed pods. Otherwise they will stop flowering.

Drying out, drought and temperature-related stress causes flower bud drop.

### Training and supports for sweet peas

Sweet peas are usually grown up pea sticks, wigwams of bamboo canes, trellis or post and netting supports. They can either be left to their own devices and allowed to scramble for a natural look or carefully trained and tied in.

Dwarf, bushy varieties of sweet peas are perfect for pots, hanging baskets or even as ground cover.



### **Sweet pea cordon training**

Cordon training is used by professional growers and gardeners who regularly exhibit plants as it produces the best, top quality blooms. But it is labour intensive.

In the cordon system, sweet peas are trained as single-stemmed plants, tied to individual bamboo canes. All the sideshoots and tendrils are carefully removed when they form, so that all the plant's energy is put into producing flowers, and the plants have to be tied in regularly to the canes.

### **Common pests and diseases in sweet peas**

#### **Powdery mildew on sweet peas**

**Powdery mildew** is a fungal disease that appears as a white powder on sweet pea 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 sweet peas when planting to ensure good air circulation.
- Remove any affected growth promptly.
- Water regularly in dry periods.

### **Slugs and snails on sweet peas**

**Slugs and snails** will attack young sweet pea seedlings, eating the leaves. 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 insufficient.

### **Aphids on sweet peas**

**Aphids** can be a problem on sweet peas. They are sap-sucking insects which can quickly infest new shoots on young sweet pea plants, stunting growth.

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

### **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-born 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 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 Cavolo Nero

**‘Cavolo Nero’ is a variety of kale, closely related to broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage. It has the same characteristic fleshy thick green leaves and health benefits as other plants in the Brassica family, such as being a great source of Vitamin C and iron. Cavolo Nero kale has a long growing season, and has different needs as it matures - read on for our top tips on how to grow Cavolo Nero.**

### Types of Cavolo Nero to grow

Cavolo Nero translates as ‘black cabbage’ in Italian and is sometimes called this, as well as ‘black Tuscan palm’ or ‘dinosaur kale’.

The leaves are very dark green - nearly black – and are flat and strap-like, but with a bumpy texture resembling that of dinosaur skin. The plant also grows upright with the leaf tips peeling over like a palm tree.

Cavolo Nero has an earthier and sweeter flavour than other types of kale. It is very well regarded in famous kitchens across the culinary world,

where it is used cooked in pasta dishes, stir-fries and soups, as well as raw in salads.



### What you'll need to grow Cavolo Nero

If growing from seed, sow between March to May. You will need:

- A pot or seed tray
- Seed compost, such as **Levington® John Innes Seed Compost**
- Watering can with fine rose
- Cavolo nero seeds

1. Loosely fill the container with seed compost.

2. Water the compost well, allowing it to drain away and the compost to fall beneath the lip of the container.

3. Place the Cavolo Nero seeds on top of compost, allowing 1cm between them.

4. Cover the seeds with more compost, allowing a small gap between the surface and the lip of the container.

5. Water again, and keep well watered.

By June, the seeds will have germinated and will be ready for pricking out to individual pots. You will need:

- Pots
- Compost, such as **Miracle-Gro® Peat Free Premium Fruit & Vegetable Compost**
- Watering can with fine rose
- Dibber or an upturned pencil
- Seedlings

1. Loosely fill each pot with compost.

2. Water the compost, allow to drain away, and use the dibber or pencil to make a deep hole in the middle of each pot of compost.

3. Gently tease the seedlings apart, and place one in each pot of compost, in the middle of the hole. The bottom leaves of the seedling should be just above the top of the hole.

4. Add more compost to the hole and around the stem of the seedling, water again, and leave to grow on, keeping well watered.

In July, the Cavolo Nero plants can be transplanted to their final positions. They are the perfect plant to transplant out to fill the gaps left by recently harvested garlic and broad beans. In optimum growing conditions each plant can grow up to 1m (3') in height and width, so allow plenty of space between them. Simply:

1. Create a hole in the soil big enough for the seedling and rootball.

2.Fill the hole with water, allow it to drain away, and then place the seedling in the hole and backfill with soil.

3.Water well until established and showing signs of new growth.

### Where to plant and place your Cavolo Nero

Cavolo Nero can be grown in containers, but will need to be watered and fed more frequently to provide the plant with the same conditions as open soil. It prefers light and sandy soil with good drainage.

The bold and distinctive, large shape of Cavolo Nero gives structural interest to any border or vegetable patch. Plant them with shorter, brightly coloured plants in front, where the contrasting tones of their dark green blistered leaves can look stunning.

They like full sun to partial shade, but enjoy cold weather, so grow them outside rather than indoors. They really do look spectacular against a cold, white backdrop of snow or frost.

### Caring and nurturing your Cavolo Nero

Regularly water Cavolo Nero in warm weather, adding a mulch of **Miracle-Gro® Peat Free Premium Fruit & Vegetable Compost** once or twice during the growing season to help the soil to retain moisture.

The plant is very hardy to cold weather, and the flavour of Cavolo Nero is said to improve after a few frosts. Harvest from October through to April, always leaving some green growth on the plant. Harvest the bottom outer leaves first, as new growth will sprout from the top, centre of the plant.

Remove any flower shoots which appear whilst you are still harvesting leaves. Allow the plant to flower in early spring, once you have finished harvesting leaves from the plant, to provide a source of nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinators.

## Common pests and diseases with Cavolo Nero

### Why are the leaves of my Cavolo Nero shredded and disappearing?

Caterpillars of the cabbage white butterfly will quickly strip green leafy growth from Cavolo Nero. Prevention is better than cure - add fine netting as soon as they are planted out, to prevent the butterflies from landing on them and laying eggs.

### Why are the leaves of my Cavolo Nero covered in tiny pinholes?

Flea beetles love munching on Cavolo Nero leaves, making it look unattractive. Cover with fine netting or horticultural mesh from the moment they are sown. Encourage natural predators such as ladybirds and ground beetles, or spray with **BugClear™ Fruit & Veg**. However, tolerate it where possible - although it doesn't look nice, the leaves are still edible.

### Why are the leaves of my young plants disappearing, with shiny, slimy mucus left in their place?

Slugs and snails can devastate young Cavolo Nero plants, so protect from these pests by following our **top tips**.

### What are the groups of flat grey-white bugs on the underside of the leaves of my Cavolo Nero?

Cabbage whitefly look unpleasant, but do not usually do much damage to a plant. Tolerate them as far as possible, and wash off prior to eating.

### What are the groups of tiny green bugs on my Cavolo Nero?

Aphids suck sap from a plant, and have a particular taste for new, fresh growth. They can limit the production of new leaves, so should be tackled. Squish by hand, and encourage ladybirds and hoverflies, which will feast on them.

## Frequently asked questions about Cavolo Nero

### Do I need to protect my Cavolo Nero from birds?

It's a good idea to do this, as birds like to eat brassicas. However Cavolo Nero seems to appeal slightly less than other varieties, so you might be lucky! Place netting or humane bird scarers nearby if you are worried.

### Can I eat Cavolo Nero raw?

Yes, Cavolo Nero can be eaten raw.

### Is Cavolo Nero safe for dogs and other pets to eat?

Cavolo Nero is not known to be toxic to dogs, guinea pigs, rabbits, tortoises or bearded dragons. However, it is very rich in iron, so feed sparingly, and if in any doubt, check with your vet first.

### Can Cavolo Nero be frozen?

Yes, blanch prepared leaves in boiling water for 1-2 minutes, and then immediately cool in ice cold water. Place in the freezer and add to dishes as needed.

## Key features of Cavolo Nero

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<i>Brassica oleracea</i> (Acephala Group) 'Cavolo nero'
<b>Plant Type</b>	Annual
<b>Family</b>	Brassicaceae
<b>Sun Exposure</b>	Sun to partial shade
<b>Soil pH</b>	Neutral to alkaline
<b>Harvesting Time</b>	October - April
<b>Flower Colour</b>	Yellow

## How to grow and care for salad rocket

**Salad rocket, like its name, is a fast-growing salad leaf, perfect for adding a peppery spiciness to your salads. It will give a crop for most of the year, and if allowed to, will seed freely providing new plants for the next season too. This is a tough plant that needs little care, and a great way to easily grow some healthy food. Here we run through how to grow rocket and offer some handy rocket growing tips.**

### Types of salad rocket to grow

Salad rocket (*Eruca vesicaria*) is also known as 'Arugula' in many other parts of the world but is slightly different from Wild rocket. It is, however, grown and harvested in the same way.

The main difference is that salad rocket is an annual, with creamy-white flowers and softer leaves, and wild rocket is a perennial, has yellow flowers and a much spicier flavour.

Salad rocket is rich in potassium, vitamins A, B C and K. The leaves are the most commonly eaten part of the plant but you can also eat rocket flowers. Younger leaves and flowers are best eaten fresh, whereas older parts of the plant are better blanched or popped in a stir fry.

Varieties of salad rocket:

- 'Sky Rocket' - a very fast grower, providing a crop quickly
- 'Letizia' - slow to flower and set seed, giving a longer growing season than many others
- 'Esmee' - very attractive lobed leaves, looks lovely in pots
- 'Wasabi' - a wild rocket variety with a particularly peppery flavour



### What you'll need to grow salad rocket

It's super easy to grow rocket from seed. It is fairly tough and can cope with poor soil, although you will get a more tender leaf if you can provide fertile soil and try to keep the soil moist in dry weather.

Sow rocket seeds from April through to September, and expect to harvest it from March (from autumn sowings), all the way through to December.

To grow rocket directly in the soil you will need:

- A trowel or hoe
- Watering can with fine rose
- Rocket seed

1.Create a shallow drill in the soil, no more than 1cm deep, using the trowel or hoe.

2.Water the drill, and then place 2 seeds 6cm (2") apart, along the length of it. If sowing more than one row, allow 15cm (6") between the rows.

3.Cover the seeds with soil, and water again using the fine rose on your watering can.

4. Water every day until seedlings germinate.

Salad rocket can also be grown in containers from seed using a peat-free multi-purpose compost and sowing closer together. Don't allow the containers to dry out as this will encourage the plants to bolt (set seed).

### When to plant salad rocket

Sow from spring through to late summer and then cover with fleece or a cloche when it gets cold to continue harvesting rocket in the autumn.

Rocket can be grown indoors, although can go to seed very quickly with too much heat or sunlight.

Allow some plants to flower and develop seedpods, which you can then leave to sow themselves, or collect and dry out to sow again next season.

### Where to plant and place your salad rocket

Rocket is a low growing plant which rarely reaches 1m (3') in height. It can become quite spindly towards the top when it gets to this height, and is best grown towards the front of a patch, where it is easy to harvest.

Although rocket likes warmth if it gets too much sunshine and too hot it will go to seed very quickly. It's often better to sow rocket after the summer solstice to lessen the chance of bolting.

Rocket is related to other Brassicas, such as cauliflowers, cabbage and broccoli. For that reason, it's best to sow salad rocket in a place where these plants haven't grown recently. This stops unwanted pests and diseases from building up in the soil.

### Caring and nurturing your salad rocket

To keep the plant producing fresh, young green growth, feed weekly with **Miracle-Gro® Performance Organics Fruit & Veg Concentrated**

**Liquid Plant Food**. Water well during dry spells as it has a tendency to bolt when the weather is hot and dry.

Rocket does not need to be pruned, but keep cutting the young leaves so that they repeatedly come again. This will be just four to six weeks after sowing, when it can start to be harvested. Pick the outer leaves first and you should find new leaves appearing. Pick them fresh, as they do not store well, and more mature leaves can taste bitter and be much tougher.

### Frequently asked questions about salad rocket

#### Is rocket safe to eat?

Yes, rocket is delicious eaten raw in salads, on top of pizzas and added to pasta dishes. It does have a peppery flavour that some people may need to get used to.

#### Is rocket easy to grow from seed?

Rocket is super easy to grow from seed. It copes with any soil but does prefer a bit of sun. The best part is that if it's grown from seed when the outside temperature is warm then you can pick just four to six weeks from sowing.

#### Can rocket be grown as a perennial?

Wild rocket is a perennial plant. Salad rocket is an annual but can be treated as a perennial by simply leaving it to self-seed from year to year.

#### Common pests and diseases of salad rocket

Rocket is largely unaffected by pests and diseases, but you can run into a few problems...

#### Why are my rocket leaves covered in tiny holes?

Flea beetles love munching on rocket leaves, making it look unattractive. Cover with fine netting or horticultural mesh from the moment they are

sown. Encourage natural predators such as ladybirds and ground beetles, or spray with [BugClear™ Fruit & Veg](#). However, tolerate it where possible - although it doesn't look nice, the leaves are still edible.

### Key features of salad rocket

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<i>Eruca vesicaria</i>
<b>Plant Type</b>	Annual
<b>Family</b>	Brassicaceae
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Full sun - partial shade
<b>Soil pH</b>	Any
<b>Flowering Time</b>	Summer
<b>Flower Colour</b>	Creamy-white

### How to Grow and Care for Bay Trees

The bay tree is a versatile evergreen shrub or small tree with dark green, aromatic leaves. (*Laurus nobilis*) originates from the Mediterranean and is widely grown in the ground, or in containers, clipped into attractive shapes. A slow-growing and easy-to-care-for plant, the bay tree is extremely popular. The aromatic leaves are widely used in all types of cookery, fresh from the garden or dried. Here's everything you need to know about growing bay trees.

#### Types of bay tree to grow

*Laurus nobilis* is commonly known as 'bay tree' or 'laurel'. Be aware that other species of plant are called laurel, and some of them are poisonous

- cherry laurel and Portuguese laurel for example. Check that the plant is a true *Laurus nobilis* when using the leaves for culinary purposes.

There are very few types of bay tree to choose from:

- *Laurus nobilis*. This is the most common variety, with dark, glossy green leaves.
- *Laurus nobilis* 'Aurea'. A more unusual cultivar of bay tree, this one has golden yellow leaves.
- *Laurus nobilis* f. *angustifolia* (also known as 'willow leaved bay tree'). It has light green leaves which are narrower than other varieties, with undulating edges.

Bay trees have small and unremarkable flowers, followed by insignificant berries. The fragrant leaves and overall shape of the tree are the most impactful features of this popular plant.



## What you'll need to grow bay trees

Bay trees can be grown in a container or in the ground, and are easy to prune to elegant and interesting shapes. They are most often grown outside, but indoor bay trees can succeed with the right levels of light and moisture.

They can be grown from seed or cuttings, but take a long time. It is much quicker to buy a bay tree from the garden centre or an online retailer.

Aim to plant it out from April to June, and then:

1. Dig a hole slightly bigger than the rootball, or if growing in a pot, add plenty of **compost** to a large container.
2. Add plenty of water to the hole or pot, and allow to drain away.
3. Place the plant in the hole, making sure that the stem is vertical.
4. 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.
5. For bay trees planted in the ground, water and then add a mulch of **Levington® Composted Bark**.

Water newly planted bay trees well for the first year, and regularly for all container grown plants.

## Where to plant and place your bay trees

Bay trees can be used as hedging, to divide a large space, and as standalone shrubs. Alternatively they can look very impressive as carefully shaped container-grown plants. They can grow to 8 metres high (20'), but are a slow grower, so they're easy to keep to a manageable size. Pot grown plants will be smaller in height as a container will limit the space available for roots to spread into.

Bay tree soil needs to be, well-drained, but they are tolerant of most conditions, including slightly **acidic and alkaline soils**.

Bay trees should be positioned in full sun and sheltered from wind. They are sensitive to long periods of frost, so in cooler parts of the UK ensure that trees are planted in a sheltered location. Alternatively prepare to wrap with horticultural fleece, or move container grown bay trees inside if temperatures are expected to drop below -5C (23F).

### Caring and nurturing your bay trees

Bay trees like lots of natural light and warmth. Those growing in the ground should not need to be watered once established. Water container grown plants throughout the year, and feed them monthly in the spring and summer with **Miracle-Gro® Performance Organics All Purpose Concentrated Liquid Plant Food**.

Prune from April through to August to maintain shape. Look out for suckers appearing on the stem and remove them if they are not in keeping with the desired shape of plant. Use secateurs rather than shears, so that entire leaves are removed - part sliced leaves will die back and make the plant look unsightly.



## Common pests and diseases with bay trees

Bay trees are largely unaffected by pests and diseases, but it is worth looking out for a few minor problems.

### What are the white-grey blobs on the under-side of my bay tree leaves?

Bay suckers draw sap from the bay tree, causing leaves to distort and change colour. Encourage ladybirds and birds to the garden, which will eat the bay suckers. Remove and dispose of any affected leaves.

### Why are the leaves on my bay tree folding and sticking together?

Tortix moth caterpillars can bind bay leaf trees together, damaging and spoiling the appearance of the plant. Tolerate small numbers, but be aware that this pest can easily spread to other nearby plants, so for larger infestations act quickly by spraying with **BugClear™ Fruit & Veg Ultra**.

### Why are there white patches on parts of my bay tree?

Powdery mildew presents as a coating of white over the leaves and branches of a bay tree. Encourage air flow around plants to reduce humidity, and remove affected growth from the plant. Apply a fungicide such as **FungusClear® Ultra 2**.

### What are the raised brown lumps on the leaves of my bay tree, and why are my bay tree leaves turning brown?

Scale insects are difficult to eradicate, lying low on the underside of a leaf and slowly feeding on the bay tree. Wipe or lift away, checking and repeating frequently until the population is reduced or removed.

## Frequently asked questions about bay trees

### Can I grow bay trees in a container?

Yes, bay trees grow really well in a container, looking impactful when pruned tidily. Just make sure to keep well-watered and fed.

### Can I cook with fresh bay leaves?

Bay leaves make a wonderful aromatic addition to many dishes including casseroles and soups. You can use either dried, fresh or frozen whole leaves. Some people find them hard to digest, so remove them before serving the dish. They can be harvested all year round.

### Can bay trees stay outside in winter?

Yes, bay trees can be kept outside when the weather is mild, but they do not like sustained periods of cold weather. Protect from lengthy cold spells by moving the plant indoors or wrapping it with horticultural fleece.

## Key features of bay trees

<b>Botanical Name</b>	Lauris nobilium
<b>Plant Type</b>	Evergreen woody perennial
<b>Family</b>	Lauraceae
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Full sun to partial shade
<b>Soil pH</b>	Any
<b>Flowering Time</b>	March-May
<b>Flower Colour</b>	Yellow

## 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

## How to grow sugar snap peas

Sugar snap peas are a deliciously sweet, fun and quick-cropping vegetable to grow. They will produce a prolific amount of peas from even the tiniest space, and are a great way to involve kids in the garden. Kids love to eat these delicious peas straight from the pod, so don't count on too many making it to the kitchen! Just provide water, food, compost, and sunlight, and you'll have a harvest of tasty healthy snacks in no time.

## Varieties of sugar snap peas you can grow

Sugar snap peas are different to other peas as the entire swollen pea pod of a sugar snap pea can be eaten raw. Garden peas have a thicker pod which isn't so palatable, so the peas need to be removed from the pod first. The entire flat pod of a mange tout can be eaten, but they can be a little tough, so should be steamed or marinated for a while first.

We really like the following sugar snap peas:

- **Delikett**. A prolific producer of very sweet sugar snap peas, 'Delikett' has been awarded the prestigious RHS Award of Garden

- Merit (AGM). These plants grow to just 60cm (2') tall and are compact, making them perfect for a container or small patch of soil.
- Sugar Ann.** One of the fastest maturing cultivars, 'Sugar Ann' will begin to produce peas in under two months from sowing. It grows to 75cm (2 ½') tall, with heavy showers of small and sweet pods.
- Sugar Lace.** A good type to grow where powdery mildew is a problem, showing resistance to this nuisance disease. This cultivar puts most of its energy into producing peas rather than leaves, producing super juicy pods.

Sugar snap peas are a good source of Vitamin C. Their sweetness and ease of eating makes them a healthy addition to any lunchbox!



### Essential equipment for growing sugar snap peas

To grow sugar snap peas you will need:

- Small pots at least 9cm (3") deep.

• **Miracle-Gro® Peat Free Premium Fruit & Vegetable Compost**, or all purpose compost such as **Miracle-Gro® Premium All Purpose Compost**.

• Dibber.

• Sugar snap pea seeds.

• Garden rake (if growing in the ground).

• Container (if growing in pots).

• Watering can.

• Plant food, such as **Miracle-Gro® Performance Organics Fruit & Veg Granular Plant Food**.

• 1m (3') tall supports (sturdy sticks, trellis, or canes with netting).

• **Levington® Composted Bark**.

### How to grow sugar snap peas

You can sow sugar snap peas from March - April indoors or April - June outside as long as all risk of frost has passed. The cultivars we have recommended above grow to under 1m (3') tall, but some can reach 2m (6'), so make sure you check the packet first and use taller supports if needed.

### How to sow sugar snap peas indoors

1. Fill the small pots with compost, leaving 2-3 cm (1") between the top of the compost and the rim of the pot.

2. Push 3-4 seeds into the compost in each pot, so that they aren't touching each other. You might need to limit this to 2 seeds in small pots.

3. Keep well watered, and prepare to move them outside when they are 12-15cm (4-5") tall, from April onwards.

## How to sow sugar snap peas outdoors

1. Prepare the soil with a garden rake, removing weeds and evening out any large clumps of soil. If growing in pots, fill the container with compost, so that it is just 1cm (1/2") below the rim of the container.
2. Use the dibber to make a hole 2-3cm (1-1.5") deep for each pea.
3. Fill each hole with water, place a pea seed in, and fill the hole with compost.

## Supporting your crop

1. Once peas have germinated, or after you have planted out the peas you started indoors, it's time to add supports. These can be arranged in a row, or a wigwam arrangement shape.
2. Insert twigs and sticks (being careful to avoid the delicate roots), a trellis, or canes with netting wrapped around, into the ground. Sugar snap peas climb using tendrils and need a roughly textured surface to scramble up.
3. The supports you use should be strong enough to support the plants as they grow - make sure they don't wobble in the ground!

## Caring for sugar snap peas

Make sure that your sugar snap peas receive lots of sun. Ideally this should be six hours or more each day, so check that they do not become overshadowed by other plants.

Shelter plants from strong winds, and keep well watered. Sugar snap peas need moist, well drained soil, so water them daily. Add a mulch of **Levington® Composted Bark** in early summer, to conserve moisture, which will help the plant to keep producing more pods.

Check that supports are firmly in the ground, securing them as needed. Occasionally a plant will veer away from the supports, so gently help it back towards them if needed.

Sugar snap pea plants will produce pods up until the first frosts. They are annual plants that you will need to sow each year. One of the many great things about them is that you can dry and save some of the seeds for using again next time.

### Harvesting sugar snap peas



The earliest sown sugar snap pea pods will be ready by June. Wait until they have filled out and have a tubular shape, but before you can start to see the individual peas in the pod. Depending on the variety, they are likely to be 4cm (1.5") long, but pick them before they get to 8cm (3") big as the pods then start to become fibrous.

1. Once pea pods start to swell, they can be harvested. Hold the stem of the plant just above the pea pod, and gently snap the pod away.
2. Feed the plants throughout the cropping season with **Miracle-Gro® Performance Performance Organics Fruit & Veg Concentrated Liquid Plant Food**.
3. Sow more peas around the base of the supports every 2-3 weeks up until the end of June, to ensure a succession of peas to harvest.

## **Storing and cooking with sugar snap peas**

You should eat sugar snap peas soon after picking them, for maximum sweetness. If you store them before use, place them in the salad drawer of the fridge.

Add fresh sugar snap peas to salads, whole or sliced, and washed but uncooked. They pair well with salad leaves, pak choi, radish, baby carrots and spring onions.

Mature pods that were picked a little late are better cooked before eating. They are great used in stir-fries alongside noodles and broccoli, or served as a side dish with new potatoes and a slice of quiche.

Sugar snap peas can be frozen for cooking at a later date. Blanche them by adding whole pods to a pan of boiling water for two minutes, before draining and plunging into ice cold water. You can then store in the freezer and add to pasta dishes and risottos.

## **Common Pests And Diseases**

Sugar snap peas are susceptible to a number of pests and diseases. They are all better prevented rather than treated after an attack has started.

### **What is the white growth on the surface of my sugar snap pea leaves?**

**Powdery mildew** can affect sugar snap peas in hot, dry weather. Keep plants well watered, avoiding touching the leaves with water. Some cultivars, such as 'Sugar Lace' and 'Super Snappy' have better resistance to powdery mildew, so try these if you have had problems in the past.

### **What has eaten my sugar snap pea seedlings?**

**Mice** can eat the seeds of freshly planted sugar snap peas, leaving stalks scattered over the surface of the soil. **Slugs and snails** will eat any green part of the plant that they can reach, with only shiny, slimy trails to show. Start plants inside and move outside once they are big enough to fend off attacks from any of these culprits.

## What is eating my sugar snap pea plants?

Pigeons will nibble the leafy foliage, stunting their growth before they can develop pods. Use secure netting to prevent pigeons reaching plants, removing it once plants start to flower. Hang shiny items nearby to confuse them and deter them from landing.

## Fruit

When considering what fruits to plant in June, it's very much all about the big names of the home gardening world – tomatoes and strawberries. You can also do a little bit of fruit picking in June, but this month is mainly going to be about care and maintenance.

## The Ultimate Guide To Grow, Plant and Care for Strawberries

**Who doesn't love strawberries? If you're a strawberry fan, the many varieties of 'Fragaria × ananassa' are easy to grow at home, allowing you to enjoy the perks of harvesting ripe fruits in your own garden. What all strawberry growers will soon realise – you'll be having the juicy fruit with everything, as just one plant can be a prolific cropper.**

## Understanding the different types of strawberry

Strawberries are either summer-bearing or everbearing. Summer-bearing strawberries tend to grow bigger fruits and produce one larger harvest over a two-week period in the summer. The exact timing depends on the cultivar. These larger harvests are ideal if you plan to make jam

with your strawberries, as you will require a glut of fruit in order to do this.

Everbearing plants, also called perpetual strawberries, produce fruit all season, but in smaller numbers and more sporadically. This type of strawberry is ideal to snack on fairly regularly, or for small harvests to enjoy at breakfast for example.

It's also worth mentioning the alpine, or wild strawberry, *Fragaria vesca*. Technically an everbearing strawberry, it also does well in gardens. The fruits are small and a bit dry but with an intense flavour. They spread easily and make excellent groundcover, which is another perk as the dainty leaves are ornamental.

### Strawberry varieties

Strawberries come in a range of different shapes, sizes, flavours and cropping times. The main summer-fruiting varieties are divided into early, mid, and late-season types. There are also perpetual or everbearing varieties that can fruit more-or-less continuously from July to September.

Some of the best varieties include:

- Early summer fruiting Emily, Honeoye
- Midseason Cambridge Favourite, Hapil, Pegasus
- Late season Rhapsody, Symphony
- Perpetual fruiting Aromel, Bolero

Your local garden centre will probably have a selection of different varieties, so you can pick n' mix your plants for a long cropping period. Make sure you pick strawberry plants with plenty of healthy green leaves, that are fairly compact and not too leggy.



### When to plant strawberries

Strawberries are available as bare-root runners, that are best planted in the spring or as young plug and potted plants.

You can plant strawberries at any time of the year, as long as the soil is workable and not waterlogged or frozen. However, mid-spring or early autumn are the ideal times to plant strawberries for an effective and bountiful harvest.

### How to plant strawberries

So, you love the taste of strawberries. You're ready to have them with everything, but your big question is: how to grow them? The great news is that strawberries are simple and straightforward to grow. You do need to make sure you follow some basic guidelines, however. Here's how to do it.

### Examine your strawberry plants

The first step is to examine your strawberry plants prior to planting. Check them for signs of **pests and disease** and remove any damaged leaves with clean tools. If your new plants are on the small side, you may

choose to remove any early flowers or immature fruits. This will encourage the plant to put its energy into producing fresh growth, giving it a better chance of producing higher yields in the summer.

### Choosing where to grow strawberries

When left to their own devices, strawberries may become very invasive, which is why many gardeners prefer to grow them in containers.

Traditional strawberry planters are specialised containers that allow multiple plants to be grown in a small amount of space. Strawberries grow well in most containers and hanging baskets, as long as drainage holes are present. Try a multipurpose compost as a growing medium and space the strawberries about 20cm (8in) apart.

When planting strawberries, try a sunny location as they fruit well in full sun. They will tolerate part-shade, although fruit yields may be smaller. Strawberries like fertile but well-drained soil. If you are planting them directly in the ground or a raised bed, it's worth incorporating some manure or general fertiliser into the soil before planting. Space the plants 30-45cm (12-18in) apart, in rows 60-90cm (24-36in) apart

### Planting strawberries

Using a trowel, dig a planting hole twice as large as the plant's root ball. Make sure the plant's crown, where the leaves meet the roots, is level or ever so slightly proud of the compost surface. Planting strawberries too deep can lead to rot, and planting too high will dry the roots out. Backfill around the plant's roots and firm down the soil with your hands.

The final stage is optional but certainly helpful. Add a thin layer of straw to the surface of the soil and around the strawberry plants. If straw isn't available, you can use horticultural grit. This acts as a barrier between the developing fruit and the soil. Fruits resting against the soil surface

are vulnerable to rot if the soil is wet, as well as nibbles from hungry insects.

### When to harvest strawberries

You are likely to know when to harvest your strawberries as the fruits will have darkened in colour and look juicy. Try to harvest as soon as they are ripe, as this is when they taste their best. Remember to be as gentle as possible when harvesting as this prevents bruising the fruit. If you can, remove the stalk and stem from the plant too.

### How to care for strawberry plants

Caring for strawberry plants requires some light maintenance to keep them healthy and productive. The first tip is to water regularly, especially if the plants are growing in a container or raised bed. When watering, aim the flow near the base of the plant, rather than overhead, as the leaves of strawberries can be susceptible to mould when wet.

Regular feeding is also important when growing strawberries, as they are hungry plants. Most gardeners like to use a high-potassium liquid feed every two weeks, such as **Miracle-Gro Performance Organics Fruit & Veg feed**. This kind of feed encourages flowering; and more flowers means more fruit. Tomato feed will also do the job well.

It's worth remembering that strawberry plants eventually lose their vigour and usually need replacing every three to four years. In the second or third year, you may decide to propagate baby plants from the runners your strawberries produce. These are the long creeping shoots that snake along the soil and produce daughter plantlets nearby.

However, in the first year, it's beneficial to remove runners as and when you see them. Cut them off where they meet the mother plant. This encourages your strawberry plants to put more energy into flowering and fruiting.

## Common strawberry plant pests and diseases

### Grey mould/botrytis mould

**Grey mould** is a fungal disease that appears as powdery grey mould at the strawberry stalk, gradually covering the whole fruit, which then rots. Strawberries affected by grey mould should not be eaten.

- Remove any dead leaves or flowers.
- Remove any affected fruit promptly.
- Space strawberry plants well when planting to allow good air circulation.
- There are no chemical controls available for grey mould.

### Powdery mildew

**Powdery mildew** is a fungal disease that appears as a white powdery deposit on strawberry 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 strawberry plants when planting to ensure good air circulation.
- Remove any affected growth promptly.
- Water regularly in dry periods.

### Frost damage

Late frosts can damage strawberry flowers, blackening the centres. Damaged flowers will not develop into fruits.

- Avoid planting strawberry plants in frost pockets.

- Protect plants from late frosts by covering them with horticultural fleece at night during cold snaps.

### Verticillium wilt

Verticillium wilt is a soil-borne fungus. It causes the leaves of strawberry plants to turn brown and wilt, and eventually the whole plant will die.

- Avoid planting strawberries in ground that has been used in the past three years for tomatoes, peppers or potatoes or other strawberries.
- There is no chemical control for verticillium wilt.

### Slugs and snails

Slugs and snails will eat ripe strawberries, and 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.

### 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.



1.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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

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

7. 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 blueberries

Eaten fresh, baked in muffins or as the star attraction in jams or desserts, blueberries (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) are always delicious. They're also rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, so it's no wonder

**they've been hailed as a superfood. It's easy to grow your own blueberry bushes at home in your garden. Read on to find out more about growing blueberries.**

### What are the best blueberries to grow?

Blueberry bushes can grow to around 1.5m (5ft) tall and wide, but there are also compact varieties reaching just 60cm (2ft) tall that are perfect for growing in containers.

All blueberries produce a better harvest if there is at least one blueberry bush of a different variety nearby, to allow cross-pollination. Most are able to self-pollinate to some extent, however. If you only have space for one blueberry bush, choose one listed as being self-pollinating. Here are a few names to look for:

- Blueberry 'Top hat' – a self-pollinating, dwarf variety with good flavour.
- Blueberry 'Bluegold' – a self-pollinating, dwarf variety, good for containers.
- Blueberry 'Northblue' – a self-pollinating, compact variety, good for containers.
- Blueberry 'Patriot' – a vigorous, very hardy variety producing a high yield of tasty berries.
- Blueberry 'Duke' AGM – ready to harvest early, so good for northern areas with short growing seasons.
- Blueberry 'Nelson', a late season, self-pollinating variety, producing large fruits.

### Essential blueberry planting equipment list

To plant blueberries in your garden, you will need...

## For planting in soil

- 1.Spade
- 2.Soil pH test kit
- 3.Leafmould, composted pine needles or other acidic compost

## For container planting

- 1.Container at least 30cm in diameter
- 2.Hand trowel
- 3.Ericaceous soil or compost such as **Miracle-Gro Premium**  
**Ericaceous compost**

## Your guide to planting blueberries

So, when to plant blueberries? The best time to plant blueberry bushes is from late autumn to early spring, in a sheltered position. They produce their best crops in full sun but will cope with some shade.

It's essential to give blueberries the right soil conditions. They will only grow well in acidic soils with a pH of 5.5 or lower. This is a measure of the soil's acidity; soils with a pH below 7 are acidic, and those with a pH above 7 are alkaline.

You can test your soil's pH level with a pH test kit – these are readily available and easy to use. If your soil is only slightly acidic, you can lower the pH by adding sulphur chips. This needs to be done at least a month before planting to allow time for it to take effect. However, the simplest solution to not having the right soil for blueberries is to grow them in a container, where you can control the type of soil used.

## How to plant blueberries

1. Before planting blueberries in the ground, dig in lots of acidic organic matter, like leaf mould or composted pine needles, to
2. improve the soil structure and drainage. Don't use farmyard manure or mushroom compost, as these are too alkaline.
3. Space plants 1.5m apart.
4. After planting, mulch around the base of the plants with pine needles or wood chippings.
5. When planting blueberries in containers, choose a container at least 30cm (12in) in diameter, with good drainage holes. Use ericaceous soil or compost.

## Caring for blueberries

Feed container-grown blueberries monthly with a liquid feed designed for ericaceous plants. As far as possible, use rainwater when watering, as tap water will make the soil more alkaline, especially if you live in a hard water area.

If using ericaceous compost in containers, repot your plants every year to refresh the compost. Once the roots start growing through the pot's drainage holes, repot into a larger container.

Don't overfeed blueberries grown in the ground, as this will reduce the harvest. Instead, mulch the bushes annually with ericaceous compost, and give them a high nitrogen feed like sulphate of ammonia in late winter.

## How to prune blueberries

Make sure you don't prune blueberry bushes until they are at least two years old, then prune annually in late winter or early spring, following these steps:

1. Remove any crossing or damaged stems.
2. Remove any low branches that trail on the ground.
3. Cut one in every four old stems to the base of the plant. This promotes new growth which will bear more fruit.
4. Remove all twiggy growth on the ends of last year's fruit-bearing stems, cutting back to a strong upward-facing bud or shoot lower down the stem.

### Harvesting blueberries

Blueberries start to ripen from mid-summer onwards. It's easy to tell when to harvest blueberries, as the fruits turn a dusty blue colour. Leave the berries on the plant for a day or two after ripening to allow them to develop their flavour, and then pick them.

Ripe blueberries should come away easily from the stalks. Fruits ripen at different times on the same bush, so keep checking the bushes and pick the berries as they ripen.



## Understanding any potential blueberry problems

### Birds

The biggest challenge when growing blueberries is stopping the birds getting to the berries before you do.

- Cover the bushes with horticultural fleece or mesh, but only do this once the berries have started to develop or you'll stop bees and other insects getting to the flowers to pollinate them.

### Powdery mildew

Blueberries can be affected by **powdery mildew**, a fungal disease that looks like a white powdery deposit on leaves that can reduce the plant's vigour. It is often a sign of drought stress, so to reduce the risk:

- water regularly.
- Powdery mildew is less of a problem for plants grown in cooler areas.

### Frost

In very cold areas, blueberries may need winter protection.

- Cover the bushes with fleece to protect the buds from late frosts in spring or move pot-grown plants indoors.

## Key features of blueberries

<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>	Clay, Loamy, Sandy
<b>Soil pH</b>	Acid loving/ericaceous
<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>	5-7 years

## 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 mango trees

**Everyone loves mangoes, but did you know that you can grow a mango tree from a seed? The mango tree (*Mangifera indica*) comes from Southern Asia and although it's unlikely to produce fruit in our cooler climate, it makes a lovely foliage plant for a conservatory or greenhouse. Why not try growing your own mango tree?**

### Types of mango tree to grow

There are many different varieties of mango tree, each bearing fruit with a unique flavour and texture. Here are some of the most common mango varieties:

- Mango 'Alphonso' is an exceptionally popular Indian mango variety with golden-green fruits and a superb mild, sweet flavour.

- Mango 'Kesar' is said to be one of the sweetest mango varieties available, with delicious smooth fibre-free orange flesh.
- Mango 'Honey' (previously called Mango 'Ataulfo') produces fruits with a distinctive sweet and sour flavour. The skins are bright yellow, turning golden yellow when ripe. The yellow flesh is firm with no fibres, and the seed is very small.
- Mango 'Francis' produces green-tinged yellow fruits that turn golden-yellow when ripe. The fibrous flesh is soft and juicy with a sweet, fruity flavour.
- Mango 'Haden' is a popular variety with firm, fine-fibred flesh. The flavour is sweet and sour with a faintly bitter aftertaste of tropical fruit. 'Haden' mangoes have red skins with green and yellow overtones, turning yellower when ripe.
- Mango 'Kent' produces juicy fruit with few fibres and a sweet flavour with hints of sour. This variety is great for juicing and drying. The fruits have dark green skins with a red blush, developing yellow overtones as they ripen.

### What you'll need to grow a mango tree

Mango trees can be grown successfully in the UK in a conservatory or greenhouse, provided they're given plenty of warmth, sunshine and protection from frosts. Here's what you will need to grow a mango tree in the UK:

- Mango trees are best grown in pots, so that they can be moved indoors in winter, using a very free-draining compost such as [cactus compost](#).
- Mango trees need a warm environment with a temperature ideally above 21°C (70°F) and a minimum temperature of 4°C (40°F).

- Mango trees ideally need 8 hours of sunlight per day to produce flowers and fruit. Place pot-grown mango trees outside in summer if possible, to give them sufficient sunlight.
- Mango trees like a humid environment, so when growing a mango tree indoors, mist the tree regularly to raise the humidity level around the plant. Surrounding your mango tree with other indoor plants will help to create a microclimate with raised humidity.

### Where to plant and place your mango tree

Mango trees are native to tropical southern Asia, so in the UK they are best grown in a conservatory or greenhouse. They can be germinated from seed and grown in pots. Mango trees have long tap roots, so choose a pot at least 45cm (18") deep to accommodate the roots.

### How to grow a mango tree from a seed

You will need:

- A ripe mango
- A sharp knife
- A deep, narrow container with drainage holes, filled with **a specialist cacti/succulent compost**

- 1.Remove the mango flesh to expose the pit (seed) at the centre of the fruit. Leave this pit out to dry for 3-4 days.
- 2.Look for an indentation at the top of the pit, and insert the point of the knife into this, peeling back the outer rind to expose the seed inside.
- 3.Place the large seed approximately 2cm (1in) deep in the container filled with cactus compost.

4. Water the pot and place it in a warm spot at a temperature of around 21°C (70°F). It should take 1-2 weeks to germinate.

### Nurturing and caring for your mango tree

As your mango seedling grows, pot it on into larger pots filled with a free-draining compost such as **cactus compost**.

Keep the temperature around your mango tree at 21°C (70°F), with a minimum temperature of 4°C (40°F). Mist indoor trees regularly. Feed pot-grown mango trees once a month with **a liquid feed** in the growing season and water when the top few inches of compost in the pot has dried out.

Repot your mango tree every few years if it becomes root-bound.

Remove it from its pot and place it in a larger pot, making sure the trunk of the tree is at the same depth in the new pot. Fill around the rootball with fresh potting compost and water well.



## How to prune a mango tree

You should prune mature mango trees in late summer. Remove any dead or crossing branches, and thin the canopy as necessary to allow air and sunlight to reach the remaining branches.

## How to take mango cuttings

You can propagate a mango tree from cuttings taken in summer.

1. Cut a 15-20cm (6-8in) length from a young, healthy stem. Remove all leaves from the lower half of the cutting.
2. Dip the cut end into rooting hormone powder.
3. Fill a small container with [cactus compost](#).
4. Insert the cut end of the cutting into the compost mix.
5. Water the compost and place the pot in a warm, humid environment in bright but indirect light. If possible, place the pot on a heat mat at a temperature of 24-29°C (75-85°F) to encourage root growth.
6. Keep the compost moist. It can take 7-8 weeks for roots to develop.
7. Once the roots are sufficiently developed, repot the plant into a larger container.

## Common pests and diseases with mango trees

### How do I get rid of aphids on my mango tree?

Aphids are small green or black insects that suck the sap of young shoots. Blast them off with a strong water jet or use an insecticide spray.

### How do I get rid of mealybugs on my mango tree?

Mealybugs are small white fluffy-looking insects that suck sap and over time can weaken a plant. To get rid of them, use an insecticide spray such as [BugClear Ultra 2](#).

### How do I control anthracnose?

Anthracnose is a fungal disease that causes black blotches on leaves. Remove any infected leaves promptly and ensure the plant has sufficient sunlight and water, as stressed plants are less likely to recover.

## Frequently asked questions about mango trees

### Can you grow a mango tree in the UK?

Yes, although they are unlikely to produce fruit. In the UK mango trees are best grown in a conservatory or greenhouse.

## How long does it take to grow a mango tree?

It takes between 5-8 years to grow a mango tree from seed.

## Can you grow a mango in a pot?

Yes, mango trees grow well in pots and can be pruned to keep them to the required size.

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

Mangoes are self-fertile so you don't need two mango trees to produce fruit.

## Key features of mango tree

<b>Botanical Name</b>	Mangifera indica
<b>Family Name</b>	Anacardiaceae
<b>Plant Type</b>	Tree
<b>Size</b>	Up to 30m (100ft) x 10m (35ft)
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Full sun
<b>Soil Type</b>	Free-draining
<b>Soil pH</b>	Acid, alkaline or neutral
<b>Flowering Time</b>	Winter
<b>Toxicity</b>	Stems, leaves and fruit skins contain sap that can cause skin irritation and blisters. Mango wood smoke is highly irritant.

## 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

## 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.
7. **Compost** or soil improver for planting

## Essential shopping list

- A potted fig tree
- **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.

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.

1. 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 stem).
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.

If you still have crop left over from May, you can continue picking rhubarb, but make sure you stop at the end of June to give the plants time to build up their strength for next year.

### Growing fruit in June

It's important to make sure you're protecting your fruit garden from the local wildlife in June, as their activity tends to increase with the arrival of summer. Cover soft fruits with netting to protect them from birds and squirrels, and consider slug control as our slimy friends can pose a threat to newly planted seedlings.

June is also a great time to begin pruning your plum and cherry trees. This is generally a good opportunity to check all of your fruit trees for shot hole and any suckers growing around the base of your trees – these can be removed by hand.

Pears, plums, peaches and apricots can be thinned earlier in June, and apples at the end of the month.

Water any potted blueberries, cranberries and lingonberries with rainwater rather than tap water – the lime in tap water will reduce the acidity of the soil over time. You should also continue watering your tomatoes regularly to prevent blossom end rot. Feed any fruits that you're growing in containers with a high potash liquid feed to keep them healthy.

### Shot hole

#### What is shot hole?

There are numerous reasons for the appearance of holes in leaves, including poor growing conditions, environmental stress, insect pests feeding on foliage and even droplets of water acting as a magnifying glass in strong sunlight.

But a specific type of hole, called 'shot hole', is caused by a couple of plant diseases which create leaf spots after which the damaged area falls away, leaving a hole. The condition is also known as coryneum blight. One of the hole diseases is a **leaf spot** fungus (Stigminia or Eupropolella). Shot hole on laurel and cherry tree leaves is likely to be caused by a **bacterial canker** (Pseudomonas syringae) which affects edible and ornamental members of the Prunus family, including plums.

### **How to identify shot hole?**

Leaves are peppered with small round holes and look as if they have been blasted with shotgun pellets. There is often a faint yellow or brown ring around the edge of each hole.

Where there are large and irregular shaped holes in the leaves, this is probably not shot hole and is likely to be caused by insect pests eating the foliage.



### **Shot hole symptoms and damage**

Brown spots develop on leaves, after which the damaged area drops out, leaving round holes in the leaves. Some fungal leaf spot fungi cause

larger brown patches, which fall away giving the leaf a ragged appearance. Sometimes you can see traces of fungal growth.

### Shot hole treatment and control

- Where the damage is very unsightly, trim off affected leaves which will encourage new growth, but avoid heavy pruning which stresses the plants and might make the problem worse.
- Spray with a **fungicide**, repeating as recommended to treat fungal leaf spot disease on laurels and other ornamental members of the Prunus family. **There are no chemicals approved for control of diseases on edible plants.**
- If the shot hole is caused by bacterial canker, treatment with a fungicide is ineffective.

### How to prevent shot hole?

- Improve the plant's growing conditions, to strengthen the plant and make it less vulnerable to disease.
- When you buy a new edible Prunus tree, choose a variety with some resistance to disease: **Cherries:** 'Merton Glory', 'Merton Premier', 'Merla' and 'Merpet'. **Plums:** 'Marjorie's Seedling' and 'Warwickshire Drooper'.

### What fruit to harvest in June

If you have any budding gardeners you're looking to keep entertained, then fruit picking in June is a great activity for children, and the ideal month to start harvesting strawberries. You can pick and eat them straight from the plant or have them with cream just in time for Wimbledon at the end of the month.

Unripe gooseberries can be harvested in June to make tarts, jams and sauces. Pick around half of them, leaving the others to ripen for harvesting in July.

## Herbs and spices

If you're wondering what herbs to plant in June, you have quite a few options for some last-minute planting. Elsewhere, June is all about pruning and maintenance.

### What to plant this month

You've just about got time to sow some herb seeds in June before the weather gets too hot. Plant any 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

## How to grow and care for salad rocket

Salad rocket, like its name, is a fast-growing salad leaf, perfect for adding a peppery spiciness to your salads. It will give a crop for most of the year, and if allowed to, will seed freely providing new plants for the next season too. This is a tough plant that needs little care, and a great way to easily grow some healthy food. Here we run

**through how to grow rocket and offer some handy rocket growing tips.**

### Types of salad rocket to grow

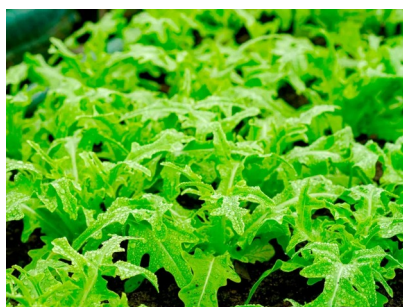
Salad rocket (*Eruca vesicaria*) is also known as 'Arugula' in many other parts of the world but is slightly different from Wild rocket. It is, however, grown and harvested in the same way.

The main difference is that salad rocket is an annual, with creamy-white flowers and softer leaves, and wild rocket is a perennial, has yellow flowers and a much spicier flavour.

Salad rocket is rich in potassium, vitamins A, B C and K. The leaves are the most commonly eaten part of the plant but you can also eat rocket flowers. Younger leaves and flowers are best eaten fresh, whereas older parts of the plant are better blanched or popped in a stir fry.

Varieties of salad rocket:

- 'Sky Rocket' - a very fast grower, providing a crop quickly
- 'Letizia' - slow to flower and set seed, giving a longer growing season than many others
- 'Esmee' - very attractive lobed leaves, looks lovely in pots
- 'Wasabi' - a wild rocket variety with a particularly peppery flavour



## What you'll need to grow salad rocket

It's super easy to grow rocket from seed. It is fairly tough and can cope with poor soil, although you will get a more tender leaf if you can provide fertile soil and try to keep the soil moist in dry weather.

Sow rocket seeds from April through to September, and expect to harvest it from March (from autumn sowings), all the way through to December.

To grow rocket directly in the soil you will need:

- A trowel or hoe
- Watering can with fine rose
- Rocket seed

1.Create a shallow drill in the soil, no more than 1cm deep, using the trowel or hoe.

2.Water the drill, and then place 2 seeds 6cm (2") apart, along the length of it. If sowing more than one row, allow 15cm (6") between the rows.

3.Cover the seeds with soil, and water again using the fine rose on your watering can.

4.Water every day until seedlings germinate.

Salad rocket can also be grown in containers from seed using a peat-free multi-purpose compost and sowing closer together. Don't allow the containers to dry out as this will encourage the plants to bolt (set seed).

## When to plant salad rocket

Sow from spring through to late summer and then cover with fleece or a cloche when it gets cold to continue harvesting rocket in the autumn.

Rocket can be grown indoors, although can go to seed very quickly with too much heat or sunlight.

Allow some plants to flower and develop seedpods, which you can then leave to sow themselves, or collect and dry out to sow again next season.

### Where to plant and place your salad rocket

Rocket is a low growing plant which rarely reaches 1m (3') in height. It can become quite spindly towards the top when it gets to this height, and is best grown towards the front of a patch, where it is easy to harvest.

Although rocket likes warmth if it gets too much sunshine and too hot it will go to seed very quickly. It's often better to sow rocket after the summer solstice to lessen the chance of bolting.

Rocket is related to other Brassicas, such as cauliflowers, cabbage and broccoli. For that reason, it's best to sow salad rocket in a place where these plants haven't grown recently. This stops unwanted pests and diseases from building up in the soil.

### Caring and nurturing your salad rocket

To keep the plant producing fresh, young green growth, feed weekly with **Miracle-Gro® Performance Organics Fruit & Veg Concentrated Liquid Plant Food**. Water well during dry spells as it has a tendency to bolt when the weather is hot and dry.

Rocket does not need to be pruned, but keep cutting the young leaves so that they repeatedly come again. This will be just four to six weeks after sowing, when it can start to be harvested. Pick the outer leaves first and you should find new leaves appearing. Pick them fresh, as they do not store well, and more mature leaves can taste bitter and be much tougher.

## Frequently asked questions about salad rocket

### Is rocket safe to eat?

Yes, rocket is delicious eaten raw in salads, on top of pizzas and added to pasta dishes. It does have a peppery flavour that some people may need to get used to.

### Is rocket easy to grow from seed?

Rocket is super easy to grow from seed. It copes with any soil but does prefer a bit of sun. The best part is that if it's grown from seed when the outside temperature is warm then you can pick just four to six weeks from sowing.

### Can rocket be grown as a perennial?

Wild rocket is a perennial plant. Salad rocket is an annual but can be treated as a perennial by simply leaving it to self-seed from year to year.

### Common pests and diseases of salad rocket

Rocket is largely unaffected by pests and diseases, but you can run into a few problems...

### Why are my rocket leaves covered in tiny holes?

Flea beetles love munching on rocket leaves, making it look unattractive. Cover with fine netting or horticultural mesh from the moment they are sown. Encourage natural predators such as ladybirds and ground beetles, or spray with [\*\*BugClear™ Fruit & Veg\*\*](#). However, tolerate it where possible - although it doesn't look nice, the leaves are still edible.

## Key features of salad rocket

<b>Botanical Name</b>	<i>Eruca vesicaria</i>
<b>Plant Type</b>	Annual
<b>Family</b>	Brassicaceae
<b>Light Exposure</b>	Full sun - partial shade
<b>Soil pH</b>	Any
<b>Flowering Time</b>	Summer
<b>Flower Colour</b>	Creamy-white

June is also the ideal time to transplant any container-grown herbs, whether they're freshly bought, or you've propagated and raised them yourself. This is a good opportunity to enrich your soil with some peat-free compost or organic plant food to ensure that your herbs take to the soil quickly and put down strong roots.

This month is all about chopping back herbs to remove tired old leaves, which should stimulate the growth of fresh new ones in their place. You can do this to any of the following:

Basil

Coriander

Rocket

The likes of coriander, dill, basil and wild rocket can be quick to bolt when overcrowded or in poor and dry soil. With plenty of potential dry spells during June,

make sure you water your herbs regularly and use a naturally derived liquid plant feed to give them a helping hand. Don't forget to thin them out where required.





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