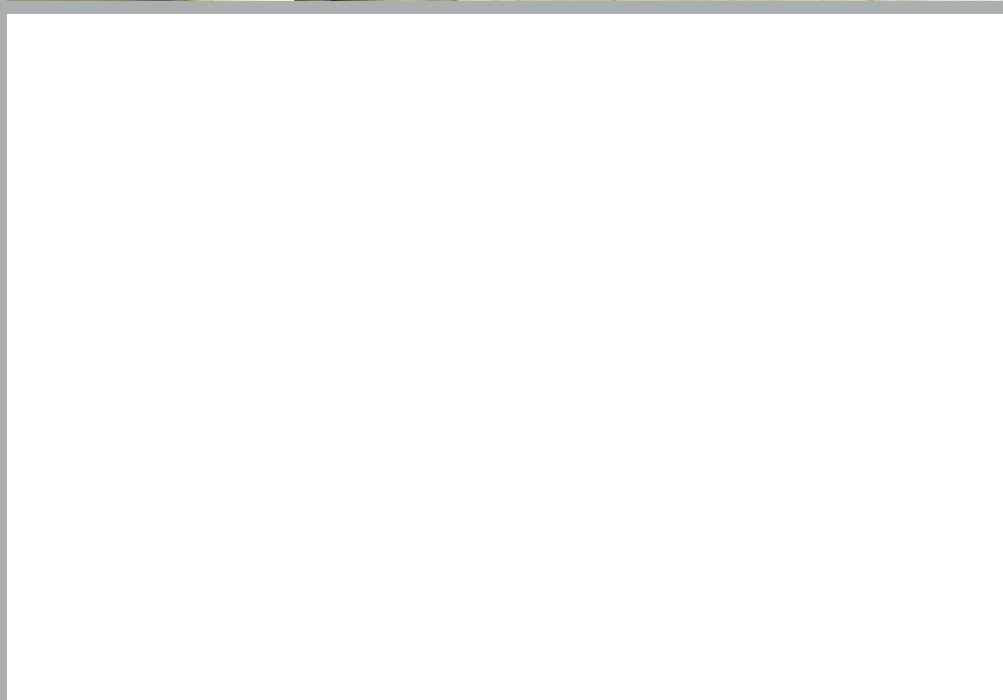




INDOOR *edible* GARDEN

Creative ways to grow herbs, fruit, and vegetables in your home







INDOOR
edible
GARDEN



INDOOR *edible* GARDEN

ZIA ALLAWAY





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Try a sample first

When you try something new, there is a possibility that you may be allergic to it or simply not like the flavor. Before growing a crop that you then can't eat, buy a sample from a store first. If you are pregnant or suffer from an ailment, contact your doctor before trying a new herb or fruit.

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Introduction

Whether you live in an **apartment** with **no outdoor space**, or simply want to try a few tender crops, this book opens up a world of possibilities for **growing your own food indoors**. Most of the projects are very easy, too, so you will need no previous experience if you want to enjoy your own freshly picked produce.

Nothing beats the fresh taste of a just-picked tomato or lettuce that is harvested minutes before eating, and simple delights like these can be within easy reach if you care for just a few crops in pots inside your home. Packed with projects, this book shows you how to grow everything from herbs on a windowsill to eggplants in a sunny dining room, and each has a level of difficulty to help you choose what's right for you. It also provides all the information and growing advice you'll need to raise a wide variety of delicious crops successfully indoors.

Just remember that unlike other projects in the home, such as decorating and cooking, all gardening projects require some aftercare, so you need to assess how much time you will have to nurture your treasures. If you have a busy schedule, choose crops that will tolerate less watering and feeding, such as herbs or edible flowers. Also, experiment and have fun trying

new things; part of the joy of growing your own is simply doing it. You may be surprised at what you can achieve—and which plants will thrive happily indoors. As well as growing staples such as salad greens, strawberries, and tomatoes, why not include an exotic crop or two? Cape gooseberries produce small fruits inside papery cases with little fuss, while citrus trees can fruit successfully given the right conditions.

Research shows that gardening, whether it is indoors or outdoors, improves the health of both mind and body, and although you won't be exerting yourself by digging a border, you will feel the benefits of growing a plant from seed or enjoying the jewel-like colors of fruits as they form. Guaranteed to reduce stress, calm your nerves, and rest your eyes from an ever-present screen, growing your own food is one of the best therapies for a modern lifestyle. Now all you have to do is turn the page and start growing!

Lia Allaway





Planning an indoor edible garden

Find out how much space and sunlight you will need to create a productive mini-garden inside your home, and explore the range of beautiful pots and containers you can use to accommodate your homegrown crops.



Where to grow your edibles

Whatever the size of your home, there will be a selection of edible plants you can grow indoors, as long as you have some **natural daylight** filtering in. The areas, or "**zones**," where plants will grow can be **windowsills**, beneath a **skylight**, in **bright rooms**, and even in a **dark**, unlit area if you install grow lights.

Bright sunlit zones

These zones, which include south-facing rooms, areas by large west- or east-facing windows, and below skylights, will suit the widest range of plants. They offer the maximum amount of natural sunlight for much of the day, especially during spring and summer.



**SOUTH-FACING
WINDOWS**



**OTHER
WINDOWS**



**BELOW A
SKYLIGHT**

Partially sunlit zones

For rooms with windows facing east or west, choose crops such as lettuces that tolerate partial shade. Sun-loving plants may produce fruit on windowsills, but not as much as in a bright area. In gloomy sites such as north-facing rooms, grow lights will aid productivity.



WALLS



**DARK
CORNERS**



**CENTER OF
A ROOM**

Cool zones

Outside windowsills and unheated rooms are useful for crops such as fruit trees that, in their native habitat, have a dormant winter period and plants with flowers normally pollinated by insects.



**COOL, SOUTH-
FACING ROOM**

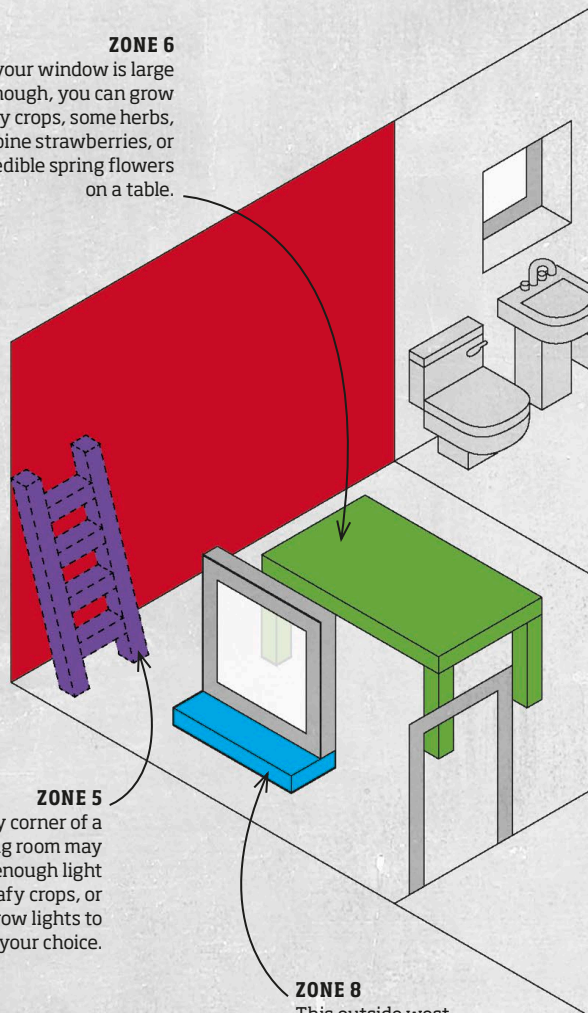


**OUTSIDE
WINDOWSILL**

ZONE 6
If your window is large enough, you can grow leafy crops, some herbs, Alpine strawberries, or edible spring flowers on a table.

ZONE 5
A gloomy corner of a west-facing room may provide enough light for leafy crops, or install grow lights to broaden your choice.

ZONE 8
This outside west-facing windowsill receives sufficient sunlight in summer for some herbs, fruiting vegetables such as patio tomatoes, and strawberries.

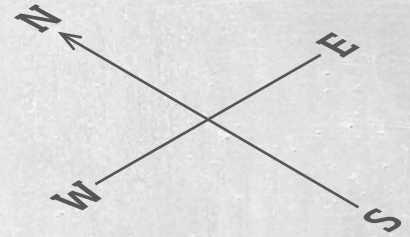


**ZONE 4**

The wall of an east- or west-facing room may receive enough sun in spring and summer for leafy crops, some herbs, and Alpine strawberries.

ZONE 2

An east-facing indoor windowsill is a good spot for strawberries, many herbs, and possibly small fruiting vegetables such as patio tomatoes.

**ZONE 3**

Unless it is shaded by trees or buildings, a large skylight should provide sunlight for most of the day, allowing you to grow most crops beneath it.

ZONE 7

An unheated or cool hallway that faces south is a good place to store overwintering fruit and citrus trees and grow crops such as carrots.

ZONE 1

A large, south-facing window enables you to grow almost any crop successfully.

Indoor growing spaces

This illustration shows areas in a small apartment where indoor edibles could grow. There are many opportunities, especially as this property faces south, which means the front room would be bright and sunny for most of the day in spring and summer. Other rooms would provide space for edibles such as leafy crops that require less sunlight.



Bright, sunlit zones

Check your home through the day to locate the **brightest, sunniest spots**; rooms that receive direct sun for **six or more hours** a day in summer are best for crops that need good light. These include most **fruit plants** and **herbs**, and **fruiting vegetable crops** such as tomatoes, eggplants, and peppers.



South-facing windows

Most indoor crops that produce fruit, edible flowers, and herbs will thrive by a south-facing window (it may be too hot and bright for lettuces and other salad crops). These areas receive light for most of the day in summer when the plants need sun for healthy leaves or to ripen their fruits.

SUITABLE PLANTS

- Herbs (most) pp32-75
- Edible flowers (summer blooms) pp32-75
- Fruiting vegetables pp122-63
- Fruits (except Alpine strawberries) pp164-95



East- and west-facing windows

While these zones won't receive sun all day, they offer many hours of bright light in spring and summer during the peak growing period. This may be sufficient for fruits to ripen, so try growing the crops listed below. To maximize their exposure to the sun, keep your curtains or blinds open.

SUITABLE PLANTS

- Herbs (most) pp32-75
- Edible flowers pp32-75
- Sprouts, leaves, & roots pp76-121
- Fruiting vegetables pp122-63
- Fruits pp164-95



Beneath a skylight

Skylights are a real boon, as the even top light promotes good growth throughout the day. A skylight and a window will make the room very bright and provide ideal conditions for sun-loving crops such as fruits and fruiting vegetables; but if the room is too hot, leafy vegetables will suffer.

SUITABLE PLANTS

- Herbs pp32-75
- Edible flowers pp32-75
- Sprouts, leaves, & roots (if the room is not too hot) pp76-121
- Fruiting vegetables pp122-63
- Fruits (except Alpine strawberries) pp164-95



Mediterranean mix (pp132-33)



Oranges in pots (pp180-81)



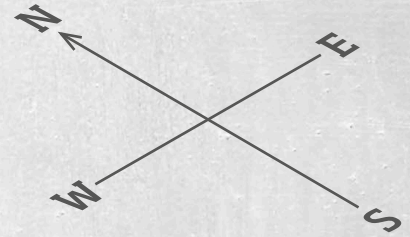
Cucamelons in crates (pp156-57)

**ZONE 2**

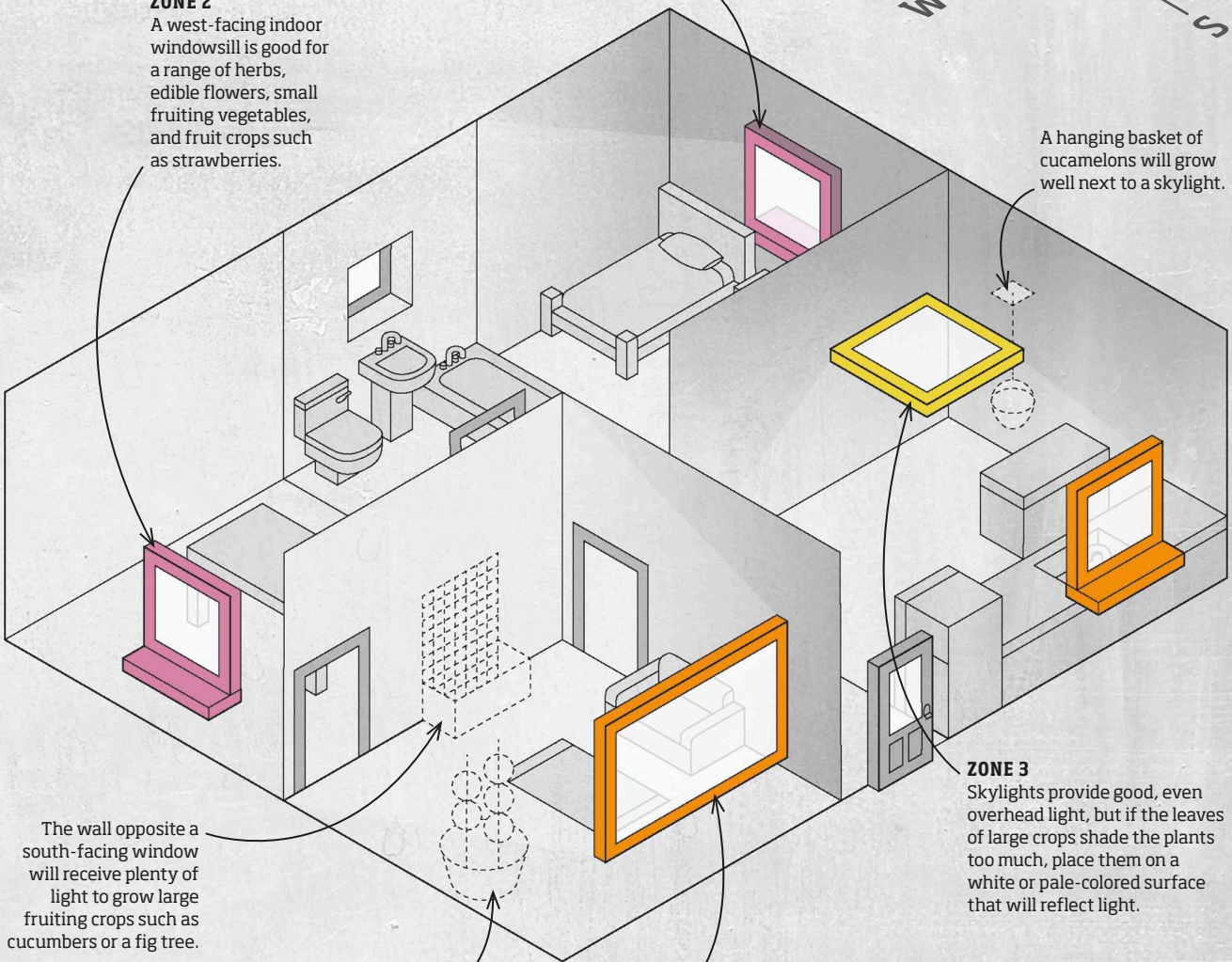
An east-facing window will provide sunlight for half the day if it is not shaded by trees or buildings. Set fruiting vegetable and fruit crops directly in front of it.

ZONE 2

A west-facing indoor windowsill is good for a range of herbs, edible flowers, small fruiting vegetables, and fruit crops such as strawberries.



A hanging basket of cucamelons will grow well next to a skylight.



The wall opposite a south-facing window will receive plenty of light to grow large fruiting crops such as cucumbers or a fig tree.

Fruiting vegetable crops such as tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, and cucumbers are happiest in a south-facing room with a large window.

ZONE 1

Edible flowers, fruiting vegetables, and most herbs and fruits will thrive in the bright sunshine that floods through a south-facing window in summer.

ZONE 3

Skylights provide good, even overhead light, but if the leaves of large crops shade the plants too much, place them on a white or pale-colored surface that will reflect light.

Growing in sunlit spaces

This illustration shows where bright, sunlit zones are typically located. Make the most of your sunlit spaces by keeping blinds and curtains open during the day and at night to maximize the hours of light available. Plants are very sensitive to their environment, and any extra sun can make the difference between a good or poor crop.



Partially sunlit zones

Areas that receive **sun** for **part of the day** or even **dark corners** that barely see any light can still be productive spaces for indoor edibles. You can use **mirrors** to illuminate gloomy areas and introduce **grow lights** that imitate the sun, or simply **choose crops**, such as salad greens, that thrive in **partial shade**.



Walls

The crops you choose for a wall unit or shelf depend on which direction your wall faces and how close it is to natural light. A south-facing wall is classified as zone 1, but a wall facing east or west that receives just a few hours of sunlight a day and a north-facing wall offer less scope for crops.

SUITABLE PLANTS

- Shade-tolerant herbs (eg, mint p66, parsley p72)
- Sprouts pp80-83
- Lettuce pp96-97
- Small root crops, such as radishes pp110-11
- Alpine strawberries pp168-71



Dark corners

Only mushrooms will grow successfully in gloomy areas that receive little or no direct sunlight, but if you introduce a grow light or two your choices will be much greater. Most grow lights are suitable for small plants, so choose compact crops such as herbs, lettuce, and bush tomatoes.

SUITABLE PLANTS

- Herbs and edible flowers pp32-75
- Microgreens pp88-89
- Mushrooms (no need for grow lights) pp118-21
- Lettuce pp96-97
- Bush tomatoes pp138-41
- Chile peppers pp130-31
- Sweet peppers pp162-63



Center of a room

Lettuce, sprouts, and root crops will cope well in the center of a room with a large window that faces east or west and receives some sunlight during the day. (The center of a small south-facing room falls into zone 1, and the middle of a north-facing room is too dark for most crops.)

SUITABLE PLANTS

- Shade-tolerant herbs (eg, mint p66, parsley p72)
- Edible spring flowers pp56-57
- Edible orchids pp52-55
- Sprouts, leaves, & some roots pp76-117
- Alpine strawberries pp168-71



Alpine strawberries (pp168-71)



Lettuce (pp90-95)



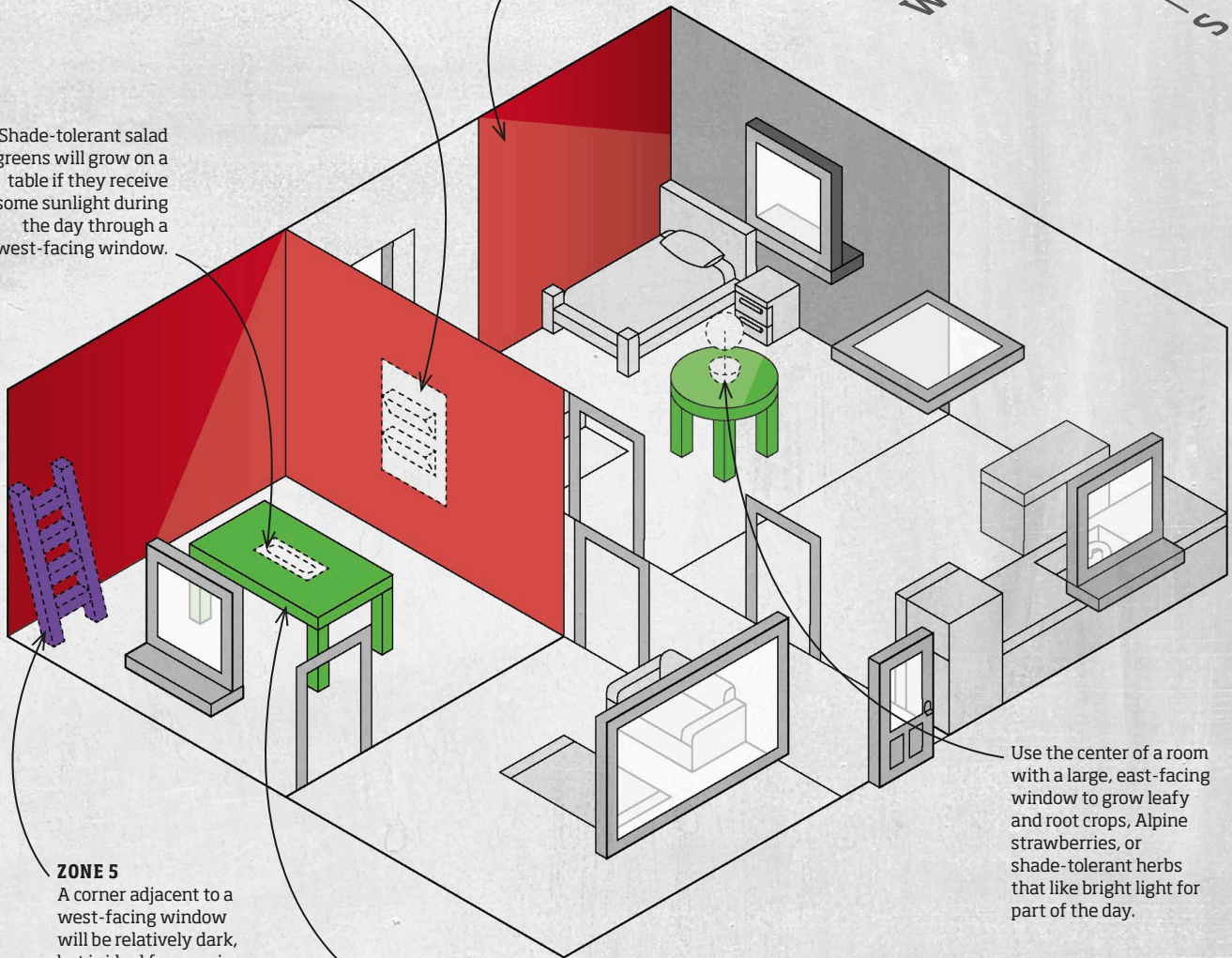
Asian-style salad greens (pp98-101)

ZONE 4

Check the sunlight flooding the walls in an east- or west-facing room, as they may be brighter than the floor area. You could try growing a few leafy vegetables on a wall adjacent to the window, although you may need grow lights if it is too dark.

Alpine strawberries will thrive on a west-facing wall.

Shade-tolerant salad greens will grow on a table if they receive some sunlight during the day through a west-facing window.

**ZONE 5**

A corner adjacent to a west-facing window will be relatively dark, but is ideal for growing crops under grow lights fixed above a table or to shelves.

ZONE 6

A table at window height set in the center of a west-facing room should be light enough to grow a range of leafy crops, some flowers and herbs, and Alpine strawberries.

Use the center of a room with a large, east-facing window to grow leafy and root crops, Alpine strawberries, or shade-tolerant herbs that like bright light for part of the day.

Growing in partially sunlit spaces

These highlighted zones receive the most hours of sunlight in darker areas of the home; if your floor or surfaces are bright for part of the day, set leafy or root crops there. Experiment to find out what thrives where, taking into account any external factors such as trees or buildings that cast additional shade, which may affect the plants' health.



Cool zones

Some plants that are normally **pollinated** by insects are easier to grow on an **outside windowsill** where bees can still reach them, while other crops that hail from Mediterranean climes or areas with a cool winter need **lower temperatures** at this time of year to produce their **fruits** the **following summer**.

Zone 7

Cool (unheated) south-facing room

Grow plants such as strawberries, some herbs, and leafy and root vegetables in this zone all year round. Most fruit trees, including figs, citrus, peaches, and nectarines, need lower temperatures in winter to produce fruits the next year; move them out of a warm, heated room into cooler conditions at this time of year to guarantee their success.

SUITABLE PLANTS

- Herbs (most) pp32-75
- Leafy crops pp76-105
- Root vegetables pp106-17
- Fruits (over winter) pp164-95

Zone 8

Outside windowsill

Some outdoor space, such as a windowsill, is useful for a gardener: plants normally pollinated by insects tend to be more productive here. The increase in air circulation also guards against some plant fungal diseases. Tender crops, such as tomatoes, peppers, and cucamelons, should not be put outside until all risk of frost has passed in late spring.

SUITABLE PLANTS

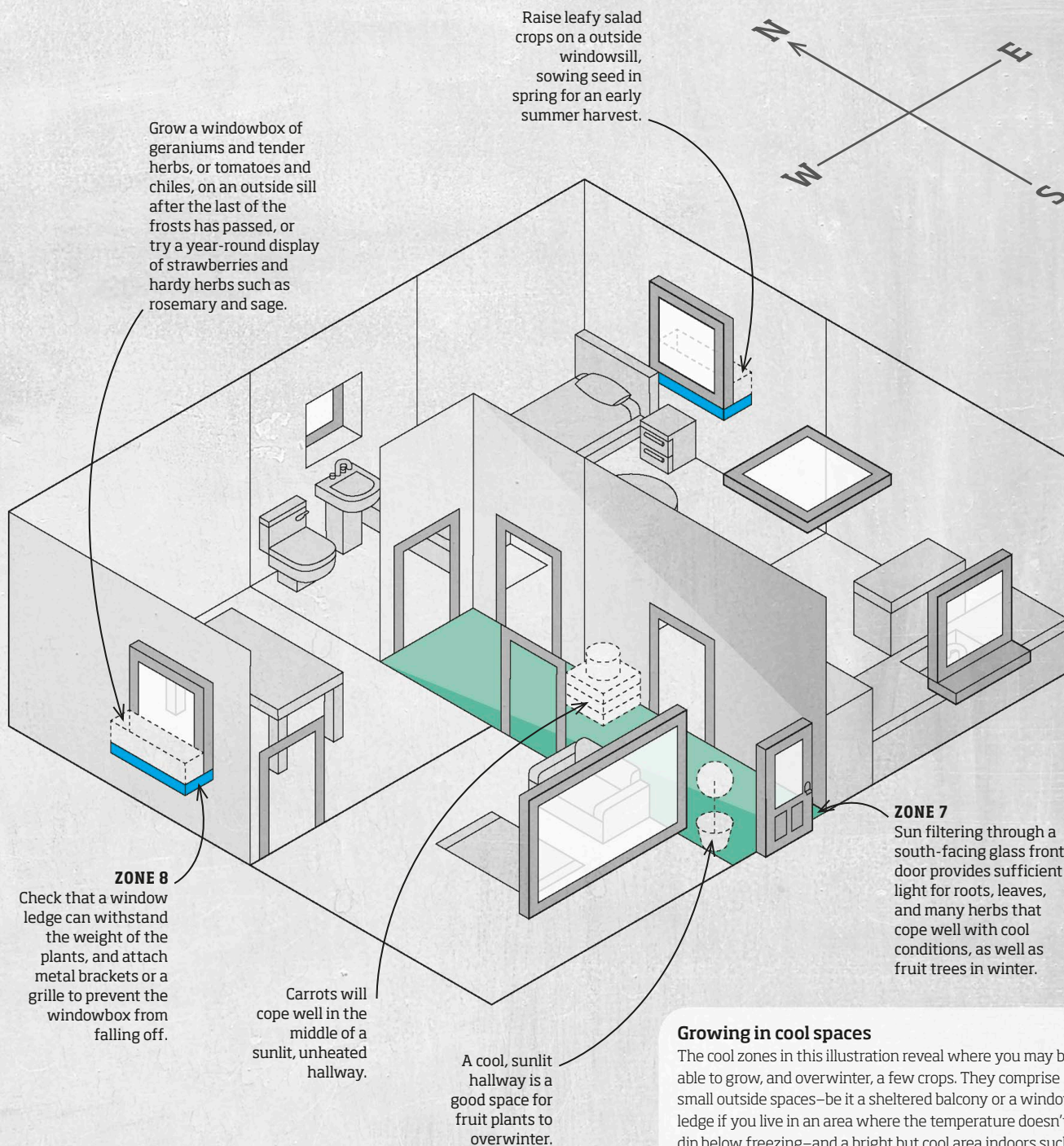
- Herbs & edible flowers (most) pp32-75
- Leafy crops pp76-105
- Bush tomatoes pp142-43
- Chiles pp130-31
- Sweet peppers pp162-63
- Cucamelons pp156-59
- Strawberries pp172-73



Carrots (pp112-15)



Geraniums & herbs (pp42-45)





Best indoor edibles

All the edible crops listed here are **ideal** for **growing in containers** indoors, and most are **easy to look after**, providing you with the freshest, tastiest harvests. Refer to individual projects and plant profiles to find out how to grow them.

Herbs & edible flowers

Among the easiest of indoor edibles, most herbs and edible flowers require just a sunny windowsill and warmth to succeed, though mint, tulips, and orchids are happier in bright conditions out of direct sunlight. For more details, see pp 32-75.

Basil

Annual herb, providing fresh, spicy leaves for many months from spring to fall.

Zones: 1, 2, 3

Chives

Mild, onion-flavored leaves from mid-spring to fall. Leaves appear year after year but die back each winter and sprout again in spring.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Lemongrass

Grow this tall, grasslike plant in a large container in a sunny room or deep windowsill and harvest the lemon-flavored stems—ideal for Asian dishes—from late spring to late summer.

Zones: 1, 2, 3

Mint

Tall deciduous herb that produces lots of fresh-flavored leaves on sturdy stems from late spring to fall; dies back over winter.

Zones: 2, 3, 6, 7, 8

Oregano

A compact deciduous herb with green, yellow, or variegated foliage. Leaves appear from spring to fall but die back each winter.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Parsley

Both flat- and curly-leaf varieties do well in pots in a sunny room, providing leaves from spring to late fall.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Rosemary

An aromatic, shrub-like herb, the small needlelike foliage is evergreen, but is best harvested only from early spring to late fall.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Sage

An evergreen shrub-like herb that produces fresh green, purple, or variegated new leaves from spring to fall each year.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Thyme

This small-leaved evergreen herb forms a mound of edible foliage all year; harvest from early spring to late fall and allow the plant to rest in midwinter when it is not growing.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Dendrobium orchid

The cucumber- and kale-flavored blooms make beautiful cake decorations.

Zones: 2, 3, 6, 7

Tulip

Buy young plants about to flower in spring. (Dry bulbs planted in fall won't mature indoors.)

Zones: 2, 6, 7, 8

Viola

These diminutive flowers are available in bloom year-round and are easy to grow in small pots.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8

Calendula

These colorful orange or yellow flowers have a peppery flavor and will bloom all summer if you set them in a sunny area.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8

Scented geraniums

Easy to grow on a sunny windowsill. You can eat both the flowers and the foliage.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8



Growing zones

For details on growing zones, see pp16-23.



SOUTH-FACING WINDOWS



OTHER WINDOWS



BENEATH A SKYLIGHT



WALLS



DARK CORNERS



CENTER OF A ROOM



COOL SOUTH-FACING ROOM



OUTSIDE WINDOWSILL

Sprouts, roots, & leaves

It is possible to grow fresh sprouts, and a selection of delicious root and leafy crops, in your home. Most leaves do not need bright sunlight (unlike the majority of fruit and vegetables). For more details, see pp76-121.

Beets

Sow beets in spring for a crop of sweet roots later in the summer and fall.

Zones: 2, 6, 7, 8

Bok choy

These leaves, with their mild, mustardy flavor, can be grown as microgreens or larger crops indoors for a summer to fall crop.

Zones: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Carrots

Long or short varieties are available to grow in pots indoors; sow seeds in spring and summer for two crops later in the year.

Zones: 2, 6, 7, 8

Garlic greens

The bulbs will not bulk up indoors, but you can still enjoy the garlic-flavored leaves they produce in just a few weeks.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Lettuce

Green- or red-leaved lettuces can be grown for most of the year in a bright area out of direct sunlight or under a grow light, providing you with fresh salad greens in an array of colors.

Zones: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Microgreens

One of the easiest crops to grow indoors, microgreens produce fresh, tiny leaves and can be grown year-round. There is also a wide selection of flavors and colors to choose from.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

Mizuna & mibuna

These leafy crops hail from Asia and have a spicy taste that is great in salads and stir-fries. They are easy to grow from seed each year and require similar conditions to salad greens.

Zones: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Mushrooms

You can grow a variety of mushrooms, which are easy to grow from kits, year-round, and many are ready to harvest after just a couple of weeks.

Zones: 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Radish

A fast-maturing crop, the seeds can be sown in pots every month for crunchy radishes in summer and early fall. The larger white winter radishes should be sown in fall.

Zones: 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8

Scallions

The mild-flavored stems do not take up much space indoors, but they need bright but cool conditions to mature.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7

Sprouts

Ideal for any home, nutrient-rich sprouts can be grown in glass jars in a bright location, such as on a windowsill or kitchen counter.

Zones: 2, 3, 4



Continued >>



Fruiting vegetables

Colorful fruiting vegetables will add a rich diversity of produce to your home micro-garden. Chiles, sweet peppers, and patio—also known as bush—tomatoes are ideal for a windowsill, but other crops are larger and will need more space to grow. All require bright sunlight and heat to produce their jewel-like fruits. See pp122–163 for more details.

Chile peppers

These compact, woody plants will live from year to year, and are covered with colorful fruits from summer to early fall. The little white flowers that precede the fruits are pretty, too.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 8

Cucamelons

These trailing plants can be grown in large hanging baskets in a sunny room, and produce small fruits that look like baby watermelons and taste like cucumber with a hint of lime.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 8

Cucumbers

You need a large, sunny room to accommodate this climbing plant, but the tasty fruits, which have much more flavor than those you can buy in stores, make them worth growing.

Zones: 1, 2, 3

Eggplants

Keep the plants, which can grow up to 3ft (1m) in height, close to a window in bright sunlight if you want to guarantee a good crop of round or blimp-shaped purple or white fruits.

Zones: 1, 2, 3

Sweet peppers

Also known as bell peppers, these compact plants produce large green, yellow, red, or purple fruits in late summer or early fall. Unlike chiles, sweet peppers have a mild flavor.

Zones: 1, 2, 3

Tamarillo

If you have a big, sunny room to accommodate this large-leaved, handsome plant, you will be rewarded with beautiful yellow or red fruits that taste like a blend of tomato and kiwi fruit.

Zones: 1, 2, 3

Tomatoes

For summer or early fall crops, choose compact bush, or patio, types for hanging baskets and windowsills, or indeterminate tomatoes with vines that grow up a stake.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 8

Fruit

Tropical and Mediterranean fruit plants can grow successfully indoors if you have the right conditions, such as a cool room in winter but warmth and bright sunlight in summer. See pp164–195 for more details.

Calamondin

When grown in a sunny area, this diminutive orange will produce a bumper crop of small sour fruits, which are ideal for making marmalade, from late winter to late spring. The plants need to be housed in a cool but bright room in winter.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Cape gooseberry

These sun-loving bushy plants produce small white flowers, followed in late summer by cherry-sized yellow or orange fruits that are encased in decorative papery husks.

Zones: 1, 2, 3

Fig

Set a potted plant in a bright room in direct sun, and your fig should produce a few ripe fruits each year from summer to early fall. The plants need cooler conditions in winter.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 6, 7





Kumquat

Tall and elegant, kumquat plants produce pear-shaped fruits with edible skins from early spring to summer, but to grow successfully the following year, they need a cool room in winter.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Lemons

These beautiful plants need bright, sunny conditions for a good crop of fruits to develop and ripen, but also require a cool but bright room in the winter when they are resting.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Limes

Very similar in size and appearance to lemon trees, limes need a bright, sunny, warm location from spring to early fall and a cool but bright room in winter. The Kaffir lime differs slightly in appearance from other limes with its large, divided leaves and knobby green fruits.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Mandarin

This is a variety of orange plant, and requires heat and bright sun from late spring to fall when the fruits are starting to develop, followed by cool conditions to overwinter.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Nectarines

Nectarines, like their close cousins peaches, produce sweet, juicy fruits in summer, but you will need to pollinate the flowers by hand to ensure they fruit when growing them indoors.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Oranges

As well as the delicious fruits, these citrus trees produce scented blossoms that will perfume your home. Keep the plants in a bright, sunny spot in summer, and a cool but bright room during the winter.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Peaches

The peach tree's sweet, fuzzy-skinned fruits appear in summer, and require bright sunlight to ripen. Keep the tree in cooler conditions in winter after it has lost its leaves.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Pineapple guava

The fruits of this evergreen tropical plant, which appear in late summer or fall, are small and sweet with a pineapple flavor. The flowers are also edible. This shrub requires bright sunlight and warmth in summer, but keep it in a cooler room in the winter.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 7

Strawberry

Choose from alpine strawberries, which produce small fruits over many weeks from late spring, or plants with full-sized strawberries that ripen in summer or early fall. These regular strawberries need a bright spot to produce the best crops, but the alpine types will fruit in areas that are out of direct sunlight.

Zones: 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8





Choosing a container

There are some **important factors** to consider when you choose a **pot or container** for your fruit and vegetables. Before you settle on its style and material (pp30–31), ensure it meets all the **practical aspects** required.

Basic requirements

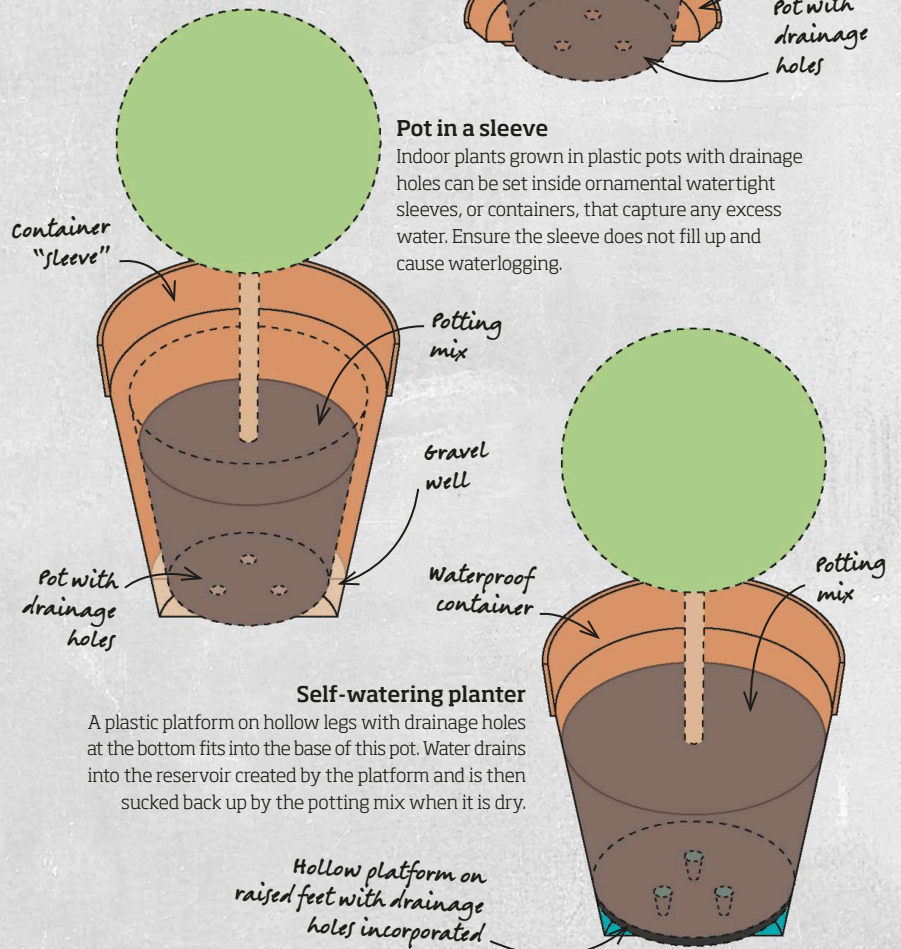
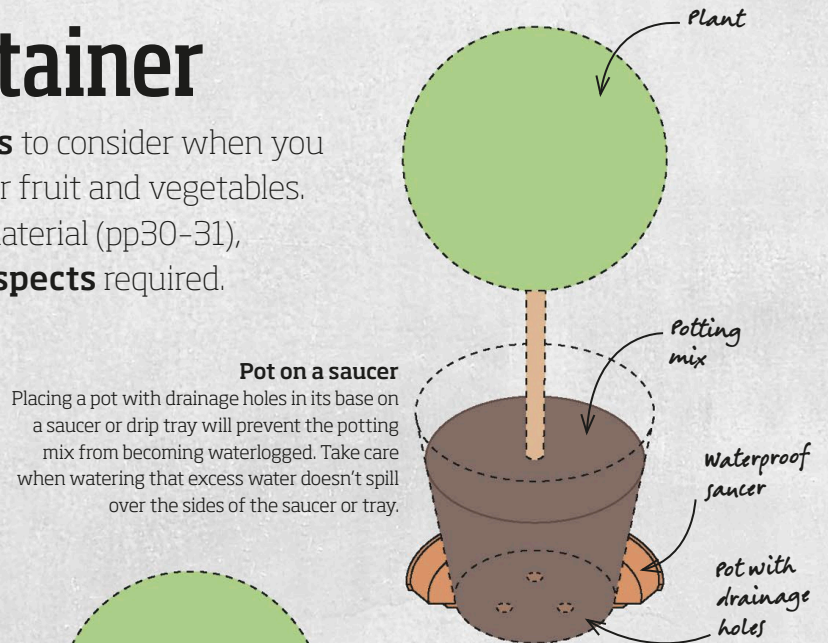
Before buying a container, first make sure that it will meet the needs of the indoor edibles you are planning to grow. Selecting a pot of the right size (see opposite) is crucial if you want your plants to thrive. And although the outer casings of all your containers must be waterproof so they don't leak dirty water onto your floors or furniture, few edible plants like to sit in soggy soil, so you should also consider how water can drain away easily without creating a mess.

Drainage essentials

The simplest way to combine these two elements is to use a container with drainage holes at the bottom and set it on a tray or deep saucer, which will capture any excess water (see illustration, top right).

Another option is to plant your edible crops in a plastic pot with drainage holes and place the pot inside a waterproof decorative container, also known as a "sleeve" (see illustration, center right). Alternatively, if you want to plant your crops directly into a container, fill the base with a layer of gravel at least 1in (2.5cm) deep to create a "well" for the water to drain into and place a plastic liner punctured with drainage holes over the gravel before you add potting mix.

You can also buy specially designed containers that incorporate a drainage system and reservoir at the bottom (see illustration, below right). These are often labeled "self-watering" because water in the reservoir feeds back into the potting mix.



Size matters

The size of the plants you intend to grow will determine the size of pot you need. Large plants and trees, such as oranges and lemons, will require plenty of root room, and because many live for a number of years, they will also need to be repotted into larger containers as they grow. To avoid spending money on expensive containers each time you repot, you could plant into plastic pots and slip those inside an oversized decorative container, which will accommodate the growing plant for a few years.

Calculating a plant's needs

Tall plants, such as indeterminate tomatoes, will need a pot at least 10in (25cm) deep and 8in (21cm) wide to accommodate the roots and provide the tall stems—which need to be tied to canes as they grow upward—with some stability.

Small edibles such as radishes do not need much space individually, but for a reasonable crop it is easier to plant them en masse in a large pot with room for 10 or more plants. Plants from dry climates, such as herbs and figs, will grow in more cramped conditions, as they do not require lots of potting mix and water to thrive.

Crops in pots that offer no space for drainage are more susceptible to fungal diseases

Leave a good gap between the top of the potting mix and the rim of the pot so water won't spill out.

Thyme will be happy in a small container.



Small containers

While tiny pots look great, not many edible plants will survive for long in them. Choose small herb plants, flowers, and microgreens for these containers, but remember that they will need watering more frequently than larger types.



Medium-sized containers

Many crops, including tomatoes, peppers, chiles, and herbs, will thrive in containers measuring 10–15in (25–38cm) in diameter and the same in depth. Also use them for multiples of smaller crops, such as salad greens and carrots.



Large containers

Big containers hold more potting mix and water than smaller ones, which means you will not need to water them as frequently. They also provide stability for large trees, although some, such as figs, perform best when their roots are restricted.



Types of containers

The material from which a container or pot is made affects not only the way it looks, but also its longevity and weight. **Light pots** are a **good choice**, as they are easy to move around indoors, while containers made from **heavy materials** help to **anchor** larger plants and fruit trees. Take a look at the containers showcased here to help you choose the right pots for your home.

Terracotta and glazed clay pots can be heavy once planted in.



Glazed clay and terracotta

Terracotta and glazed clay pots lend a rustic, earthy look to indoor displays, but are porous and should not be set directly onto carpets, wooden floors, or other delicate flooring. Set both types of pots on waterproof trays to prevent staining.

Line artisan-style crates and baskets before planting.



Wood and basketry

Natural planters suit modern and traditional decors. As they aren't waterproof, line them with plastic to prevent them from rotting or their contents staining furniture and flooring. Plant crops in plastic pots with drainage holes and put them inside the lined containers.

Small herb plants will thrive in a hanging pot.

Hanging containers

Most hanging baskets are not waterproof, but they can be lined with plastic or a mixing bowl to create the right conditions for growing crops indoors.

Fill the base of sealed hanging containers with gravel to create an area for water to drain into.



Choose a material that suits your style and shows off your plants to their best effect

Metal heats up quickly, so plants need watering frequently.



Fiberglass and resin pots are lightweight and versatile.



Plastic pots often incorporate a tray or hidden water reservoir.

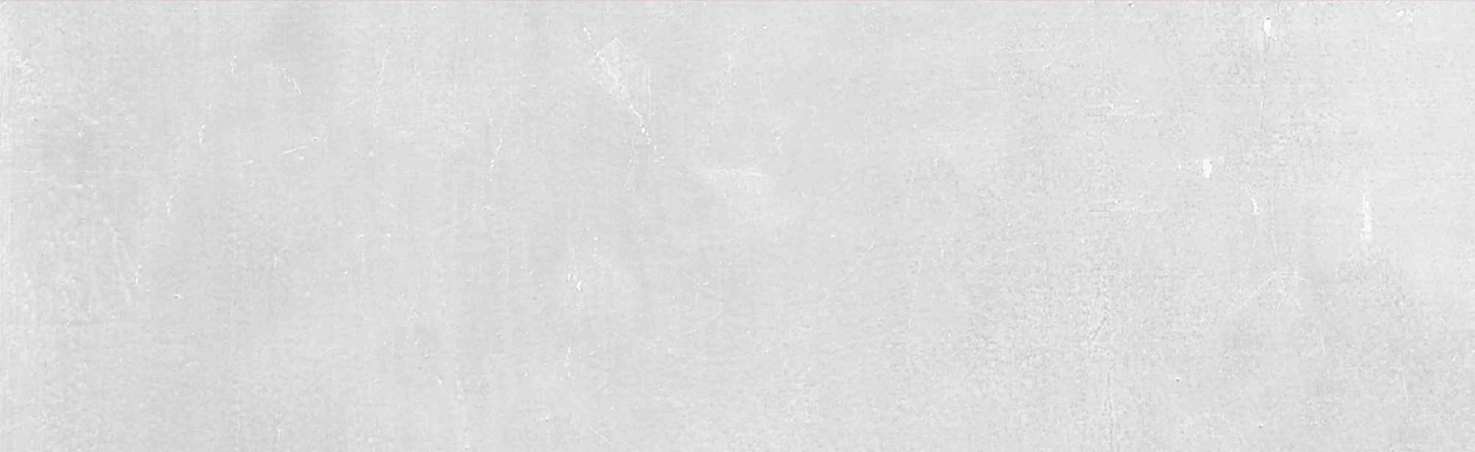


Metal and faux metals

True and faux metals enhance a contemporary industrial design, or you can choose a classic fake lead pot for a more traditional interior. Most are also light and easy to move around, but not all are waterproof, so line with plastic before planting if necessary.

Fiberglass, resin, and plastics

Containers made from fiberglass and resin come in traditional and contemporary styles, and are a good choice for indoor planting. Plain plastic pots with drainage holes in the base can be inserted in waterproof containers to create a decorative display.





Herbs & edible flowers

Discover the wide range of herbs—among the easiest crops to grow indoors—that thrive in pots, and plants that produce flowers you can eat. Try a few of the projects that enable you to grow these colorful edibles in your home.

Introducing herbs & edible flowers

Just a few pots of **fresh herbs** and **edible flowers** growing in your home will provide the **essential ingredients** for an array of dishes and drinks.



What is an herb?

While herbs grow just like any other plant, what sets them apart is the intense flavor of their edible leaves and their traditional health-giving properties. The varieties included in this book, such as thyme, mint, and basil, are universally valued by cooks for their unique taste and aroma in sweet and savory recipes. Many fresh herbs contain essential minerals and vitamins, such as A and C, and can benefit your health in other ways, too. For example, mint leaves taken as a tisane, or hot tea, can aid digestion, while research has shown that the smell of rosemary and sage can help improve cognitive skills and memory retention. Herbs are rewarding plants to grow indoors since most can be raised in containers by a sunny window, offering an abundance of fresh leaves close at hand as you cook.



The power of flowers

Many edible flowers are surprisingly tasty and can be used to both flavor and decorate fresh salads, desserts, cakes, and even bread. They can also add a few vitamins to your cuisine; some, such as lavender, are sources of antioxidants, which promote good health and keep diseases at bay.

It's worth growing a few different varieties through the year: the exquisite blooms will inject color into your indoor edible designs, lifting your spirits, and you can change the display every few months to reflect the seasons, starting in spring with tulips and English daisies, and then moving on to summer flowers. The plants will keep on giving, too, as in many cases the more blooms you pick the more they produce; plants such as calendula, viola, primrose, and geranium will perform over a long period, although tulips will bloom just once before fading.

Best zones for herbs & flowers

All flowers and herbs will perform best in bright light conditions, and grow well in zones 1, 2 or 3. Certain plants will also grow in partially sunlit zones, but you will need to install grow lights for any darker areas in your home.

Zone 1

South-facing windows

All herbs and edible flowers will do well here, but keep them well watered, as these sills become very hot in summer and on sunny spring and fall days.

Zone 2

East- and west-facing windows

All herbs and edible flowers will be happy set directly in front of an east- or west-facing window, although basil and lavender may not do as well here as in zone 1.

Zone 3

Beneath a skylight

All herbs and edible flowers perform well under a skylight, especially if there is supplementary light from a vertical window. Water plants regularly in rooms that get hot.

Zone 4

Walls

Sunny walls will suit all herbs and edible flowers. However, opt for mint, oregano, parsley, orchids, and violas for any walls that are shaded for part of the day.

Zone 5

Dark corners

All herbs and edible flowers can be grown in dark corners if you set them under a grow light. However, without this supplementary lighting, most would fail.

Zone 6

Center of a room

All herbs and edible flowers will be happy in the middle of a bright room. Grow orchids, violas, oregano, parsley, or mint if it is out of direct sun for part of the day.

Zone 7

Cool (unheated) south-facing room

All herbs and edible flowers will grow in cool, bright conditions, except basil, which needs a little more heat but may thrive here during the summer months.

Zone 8

Outside windowsill

All herbs and edible flowers except orchids will grow well here. Basil needs to be protected from frost, so do not plant this until temperatures rise in late spring.





Herbs & edible flowers in pots for a windowsill

If the leaves of a rosemary plant turn pale green or yellow, apply a fertilizer suitable for leafy crops.

Fragrant herbs and edible flowers arranged in pretty pots on a **kitchen windowsill** make a beautiful feature and provide an array of **fresh culinary leaves and blooms** to use (see project overleaf).



MINT

One of the few herbs that prefers cooler conditions, mint will grow alongside sun-loving plants if you keep the potting mix damp at all times, but guard against waterlogging.

VIOLAS

Perfect for adding color to salads or cakes, violas inject lively visual interest to a container display. These undemanding plants will flower for many weeks and thrive in small pots if watered regularly.

PARSLEY

There are a few parsley varieties to choose from (see pp72-73) and all grow well in containers. Although these herbs live for two years, the leaves are most tender and flavorful in their first year.

ROSEMARY

In spring, this woody-stemmed, versatile herb is covered in tiny blue flowers, which are also edible. Given the chance, rosemary will grow into quite a large shrub, and will only be happy in a pot for a few seasons.

Potting herbs & flowers

Most herbs and edible flowers will be happy on a bright windowsill, and you can harvest the leaves and blooms for most of the year, although pick them sparingly in winter when the plants do not grow very much. Choose a selection for a variety of flavors and uses.

Choosing culinary herbs

Among the easiest to grow and most useful herbs for kitchen use are those outlined below. If you do not have much windowsill space, opt for just a few of your favorites so you will always have sufficient leaves on hand. Never strip a plant of all or most of its foliage, as this will kill it.

Turn your herb and flower pots around every day or two as they sit on the windowsill so that each part of the plant grows equally as it seeks the light and doesn't grow leggy on one side.



SAGE

This Mediterranean herb thrives in a pot for a year or two, but will then need replacing or repotting into a larger container. Place your sage on a sunny windowsill and ensure the mix does not become waterlogged.

THYME

Choose from a range of thymes (see pp40-41), which are easy to grow. Some reach 12in (30cm) in height and will need a larger pot than the container shown here. Keep moist, but guard against soggy potting mix.

CHIVE

This grass-like, onion-flavored herb grows well in a pot on a windowsill, but does require full sun. Harvest from spring to autumn; the plants die off over winter, but shoots will emerge again the following spring.

Quick growing guide



30 minutes to repot



Full sunlight
50-72°F
(10-22°C)



Water only when top of potting mix feels dry



Feed every 2-4 weeks from late spring to fall with a fertilizer for leafy crops



Snip leaves as needed when plants are in full growth

Project >>



Growing herbs & flowers in pots

Although herbs and flowers are among the **easiest edibles** to grow indoors, they require plenty of **drainage**, and are best grown in **plastic pots** with holes in the base, which can be easily inserted inside decorative containers.

YOU WILL NEED

- herbs—choose a variety (see pp40-41, 46-47, 66-67, 72-75)
- edible flowers, such as violas (see pp56-57 for other ideas)
- plastic pots to fit inside decorative containers of your choice
- commercial potting mix
- horticultural sand
- gravel
- decorative pots
- small watering can

Turn your herb plants in their pots upside down to check the root system, and repot any that have long roots growing out of the drainage holes.

1 You can buy many herbs in plastic pots and just slip them into decorative containers with a layer of gravel in the base to prevent waterlogging. However, sage and rosemary, in particular, will soon outgrow small containers and need repotting. To do this, line the base of a plastic pot with potting mix.



2 Mix a little horticultural sand in with the potting mix to make it more free draining. Water the plant, then slip it out of its original container, placing your fingers between the stems to avoid damaging them. Set the plant on the potting mix, and check that the rootball is sitting just below the rim of the new pot.



Transplant your rosemary into a pot a couple of sizes larger than its original one.



3 Gently fill in around the herb with more potting mix; do not bury the stems or they may rot. Firm the potting mix gently with your fingers, then water the plant well.

Check that you leave no air gaps when filling in around the plant.



You can use gravel or small pieces of polystyrene in the base of the pot.

4 Add a layer of gravel to the bottom of your decorative pot. This will raise the herb slightly off the bottom, allowing excess water to drain into this area. Put the repotted herb into its final container.



Aftercare

Few herbs or flowers will be happy in containers measuring less than 3½in (9cm) in diameter and 5in (12cm) deep, although some, including thyme and violas, will cope in tiny pots for a short while—but do not take any leaves from small herbs. Any plants in small pots will need repotting after a couple of months. Only water your herbs and flowers when the top of the potting mix feels dry, and don't add too much. If the top of the compost is glistening with water, drain away the excess. Water the plant again only when the potting mix feels dry. Feed every two to four weeks from late spring to autumn with a liquid fertilizer designed for leafy crops.



Potted herbs with a thin layer of gravel on top to help the potting mix stay moist.



Thyme

Thymus species

A decorative addition to an indoor garden, thyme thrives on a sunny windowsill and can be harvested from spring to autumn.

Add the leaves to soups, sauces, fish, and meat dishes.

Common thyme produces small, pink flowers in summer, which can be eaten together with the leaves.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Young plants are available all year, but if you buy in winter don't harvest the leaves until spring when new growth appears. Repot plants with crowded roots into slightly larger containers filled with commercial potting mix, with added sand or perlite.

Light & heat

Hailing from the Mediterranean, thyme needs a sunny location to succeed; it likes warmth in summer, but keep it in cooler conditions in winter. Increase the ventilation by opening your windows whenever possible. This is a hardy plant that will also be happy year-round on a windowsill outside or on a sunny balcony.

Watering

Like all Mediterranean herbs, thyme may rot in waterlogged soil. Plant it in a pot with drainage holes to maintain the correct moisture level, and water only when the top of the mix feels dry.

Aftercare

Feed every two weeks from spring to early autumn with an all-purpose liquid fertilizer for leafy crops. Repot every year or two in spring in a 3:1 mix of potting mix and sand or perlite.

Harvesting

Harvest a few leaves from each plant at any one time from early spring to late autumn. Although thyme is an evergreen shrub, leave the plant to rest in winter.



Common thyme

Best indoor varieties

Buy a selection of thymes to provide a wealth of colorful foliage on a windowsill, as well as leaves for cooking. Some forms, such as lemon thymes, have distinctive aromas, while low-lying creeping types look pretty trailing from wide, shallow containers.

COMMON THYME ▀

(*Thymus vulgaris*)

This plain green variety is easy to grow, and the traditional flavor of its leaves is ideal for meat and fish dishes.

Height & spread:

12 x 12in (30 x 30cm)

VARIEGATED LEMON THYME ▀

(*Thymus X citriodora*)

This thyme has white, variegated leaves that make a beautiful display. The leaves have a refreshing citrus flavor.

Height & spread: 4 x 8in (10 x 20cm)

WILD THYME ▀

(*Thymus serpyllum*)

Grow this thyme, with its highly scented spiky leaves and pink flowers, in a wide, shallow pot, and use the leaves in stews and casseroles.

Height & spread:

4 x 12in (10 x 30cm)

GOLDEN LEMON THYME ▲

(*Thymus X citriodora*)

The golden, lemon-scented leaves of this thyme are perfect for chicken and fish recipes.

Height & spread:

10 x 10in (25 x 25cm)

'SILVER POSIE' ▀

(*Thymus* 'Silver Posie')

A bushy, creeping thyme, with white-edged gray-green leaves and purple to white flowers in late spring and early summer. Use in bouquets garni, stuffings, and sauces.

Height & spread:

12 x 12in (30 x 30cm)

CREeping RED THYME ▀

(*Thymus* 'Coccineus Group')

This mat-forming thyme is ideal for the edge of a big pot with a tall herb, such as sage, in the center. It produces pink flowers in early summer. Use in meat and fish dishes.

Height & spread: 4 x 8in (10 x 20cm)



Boosting flavor

Scatter thyme leaves over roast meats and fish to boost their flavor.

Add to bouquets garni with parsley and bay leaves for casseroles and stews.

Sprinkle a little over feta and honey for a Greek-inspired pancake topping.

Mix lemon thyme leaves with olive oil, lemon juice, mustard, seasoning, and a little sugar to make a zesty vinaigrette for vegetables.

Crush thyme leaves with sea salt flakes and sprinkle over potatoes or leafy greens.

Thyme is a great partner for chicken or turkey; sprinkle some roughly chopped fresh leaves on top of the bird just before roasting it, or add the leaves to the stuffing mix.



Roast chicken with thyme

*Water sorrel
regularly to
keep it happy.*

*Use edible thyme
flowers to decorate
salads, but leave some
for the bees to enjoy.*

Choose a sunny windowsill
for your herbs and flowers. They
will cope with shade for a few
hours each day, but will fail to
thrive if positioned on a gloomy
north-facing windowsill.



Scented geranium & herb windowbox

Utilize **any outdoor space**, such as a windowsill, to extend your selection of edible crops. A **mix of herbs and geranium flowers** provides you with fresh ingredients as well as a beautiful, **long-lasting** display (see project overleaf).

Using your outdoor space

An exterior windowsill provides a good growing environment for many compact crops, offering bright light, relative warmth, and shelter. You can plant the windowbox indoors before positioning it on your windowsill, and then tend the plants from inside. Ensure the box is attached securely to the sill, and water the plants as frequently as you would if they were indoors, even during rainy weather, since most sills are protected from the elements. Flowering herbs such as thyme and basil will help to feed the bee population, too.

Pest-free crops

A strip of copper tape fixed to the outside of the windowbox will help deter any slugs and snails.



Choosing geraniums & herbs

Most herbs and edible flowers will thrive in a windowbox, but choose the largest possible container that will fit your windowsill to give the plants plenty of space to develop.

Scented geranium

This drought-tolerant plant is easy to grow. Infuse cordials with its crushed leaves to add subtle flavor, and use the flowers as a garnish.



Creeping thyme

This trailing variety softens the edges of a windowbox display. Use the leaves in the same way as common thyme.



Sorrel

Red-veined bloody sorrel is the prettiest variety of this herb. Use in soups, salads, and fish dishes to inject a spicy, bitter taste.

Quick growing guide



2 hours



Full sun or light shade



Water every day or two



Feed with all-purpose liquid fertilizer (see overleaf)



Pick flowers and leaves as needed

Project >>



Plant a geranium & herb windowbox

This **easy planting project** is ideal for those new to gardening, and will provide you with a continuous supply of **flowers and leaves** that can be harvested through the **summer** and **early autumn**.

If you don't have an outside sill, fix some metal brackets securely to a wall below a window

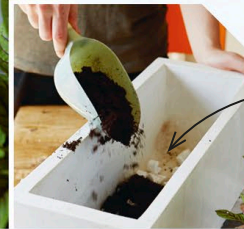
YOU WILL NEED

- windowbox, measuring approx 18 x 8 x 8in (45 x 20 x 20cm)
- polystyrene pieces
- potting mix
- 2 x scented geraniums (pelargonium species such as 'Orange Fizz' and 'Attar of Roses')
- 1 x red-veined sorrel (*Rumex sanguineus*)
- 1 x creeping thyme (*Thymus serpyllum*)
- 1 x variegated oregano (*Oreganum vulgare* 'Country Cream')
- 1 x Thai basil (*Ocimum basilicum* var. *thyrsiflora*)
- watering can
- all-purpose liquid fertilizer

The geranium leaves will infuse your home with scent when the windows are open



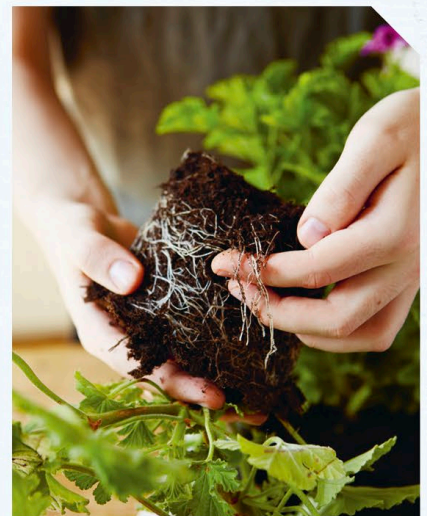
1 If your windowbox does not have drainage holes, drill a few in the bottom. Add a thin layer of polystyrene pieces to the base of the box—these will help to prevent the drainage holes from becoming blocked—followed by a layer of potting mix.



Use potting mix enriched with fertilizer.



2 Set the largest geranium—the variety 'Orange Fizz' is shown here—on the soil and check that the top of the root ball sits at least 1in (2.5cm) below the rim.



3 If the plant's roots are tightly bound around the rootball, gently tease them out with your fingers, as shown. This will allow them to expand more easily.

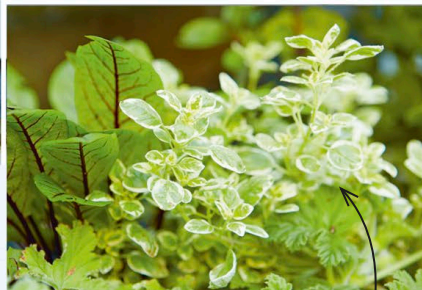


4 Plant the other herbs and flowers, with the basil and sorrel at the back and a spreading geranium to one side. Ensure all are set 1in (2.5cm) below the rim of the box.

5 Finally, tuck in a creeping thyme at the front, where it will not be too shaded by the other plants' leaves. Firm the potting mix around all the rootballs with your fingers.



6 Set the planted windowbox on an outside sill (or indoors on a tray on a sunny sill) and water well. Make sure the windowbox is sitting securely on the sill, and fix a metal bracket underneath if necessary to prevent it from falling off.



Pick herb leaves regularly to encourage more to grow.

Aftercare

If you have used a potting mix enriched with fertilizers, you will not need to feed the plants for a few weeks. You can then add an all-purpose liquid feed if the plants start to look lackluster. Remove any dead and fading flowers to encourage the plants to produce more blooms.



Removing faded geranium blooms



Basil

Ocimum species

An indispensable aromatic herb, basil is the perfect accompaniment for fresh tomatoes and Mediterranean-inspired dishes. There are many varieties, offering a range of leaf colors and flavors.

Basil flowers add color and flavor to dishes, as they, like the leaves, are edible.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Sow basil seed in spring in pots of seed-starting mix, or buy young plants from a garden center in late spring, when they are readily available. If you buy mature basil, plant it in commercial potting mix.

Light & heat

Basil needs lots of light, and is best grown on a south-facing windowsill. Keep in a warm room with a small fan blowing away from it for ventilation.

Watering

Basil is quite fussy when it comes to watering. The plants like damp but free-draining conditions; in wet or waterlogged soil they quickly succumb to fungal diseases. Ensure the pot in which the basil is planted has plenty of drainage holes, and water it every two to three days. Try to avoid wetting the leaves, as this will also protect your basil from disease.

Aftercare

When mature, feed your plants every two weeks with an all-purpose liquid fertilizer for leafy crops. Remove any flower stems before they produce seed.

Harvesting

Pinch off the leafy tips as you need them, taking just a few sprigs from each plant at any one time. This also encourages the plant to grow new stems. Avoid removing the lower, woody sections of the stems, which will cause the plant to die back.



Spice basil

Best indoor varieties

As well as the common green sweet basil, there are purple-leaved forms and those with fruity or highly spiced flavors. For a citrus note, try lemon or lime basil, which offers traditional flavor combined with refreshing aroma. Garden centers sell a range of young basil plants, but your choice of varieties will be wider if you choose to grow your plants from seed.



SWEET BASIL ▲

(*Ocimum basilicum*)

This is the common basil you will find in supermarkets. Its clove-scented foliage makes it a great partner for tomato dishes, and it's ideal for pesto sauces.

Height & spread: 10 x 10in (25 x 25cm)

SPICE BASIL ▀

(*Ocimum basilicum* 'Spice')

Similar to sweet basil, this plant produces spikes of pretty pink flowers that add to its decorative value. It has a sweet, spicy taste and can be used in salads and Mediterranean-style dishes.

Height & spread: 10 x 10in (25 x 25cm)



◀ 'DARK OPAL'

(*Ocimum basilicum* 'Dark Opal')

One of the purple-leaved basil varieties, it has a mild spicy flavor. It requires full sunlight and good drainage to thrive. Water plants sparingly, allowing the top of the potting mix to dry out between watering.

Height & spread: 12 x 12in (30 x 30cm)



◀ BUSH BASIL

(*Ocimum minimum* 'Bush')

Also known as Greek basil, this dwarf form has small leaves and a strong, spicy taste. It is a little less likely to succumb to mildew than its cousins.

Height & spread: 8 x 8in (20 x 20cm)



THAI BASIL ▀

(*Ocimum basilicum* var. *thyrsoiflorum*)

Also called cinnamon basil, it has pretty purple stems, and the leaves have a spicy, licorice taste. It is often used in Asian-style dishes and stir-fries.

Height & spread: 12 x 12in (30 x 30cm)



LEMON

BASIL ▀
(*Ocimum x citriodorum*)

This light-green leaved form has a citrus flavor and is ideal for fish and Asian dishes, or use it raw in salads to add a tantalizing zing. Also try the similar lime basil.

Height & spread: 12 x 12in (30 x 30cm)



Ideas to try

One of the best ways to enjoy the fresh leaves is in a classic tricolore salad of basil, tomatoes, and mozzarella cheese.

Blend basil leaves with lemon juice, honey, and cold water to make lemonade.

Purée basil with lime juice and sugar syrup, and freeze for an unusual sorbet.

Process Thai basil with baby spinach, cilantro, avocado, olive oil, and a pinch of salt and sugar for an Asian-style pesto sauce.

To make Caprese farro salad, add cooked protein-rich farro grains (or brown rice or quinoa if you prefer) to a classic tricolore salad (see below) and top with a simple olive oil dressing.



Tricolore salad

Pick only the leafy stem tips to encourage the plants to produce more shoots

Chocolate mint

Peppermint

Lemon verbena

stevia

Lemon verbena

stevia

Dry some of the fresh leaves to use in the winter months after the deciduous plants have died down.

Choose lightweight plastic, wooden, or metal waterproof containers to house your pots of tea herbs, and make sure you distribute the plants evenly along the shelves so they don't tip over.



Grow your own herbal teas

Fresh herbal teas have many health and medicinal benefits. Choose a range of herbs and let them flourish on a set of homemade hanging shelves in front of a window. This will allow you to pack lots of plants into a small space—ideal if you love a daily cup of herbal tea.

Healthy leaf tea

Herbal teas are caffeine-free and high in antioxidants, but many have additional benefits. Mint tea soothes stomach ache, relieves nausea, and can keep you alert; chamomile calms the nerves and aids sleep; and lemon verbena tea is thought to reduce joint pain.

Choosing plants for herbal teas

Herbal plants to grow include chamomile, stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana*; see also p221), feverfew, lemon verbena, and peppermint (see below). Most like full sun, but they grow well near any window except one facing north.



Mint tea promotes good digestion



Feverfew

(*Tanacetum parthenium*)

Grow this member of the daisy family in a large pot of well-drained growing mix. Its leaves are thought to help relieve migraines and muscular aches and pains.



Lemon verbena

(*Aloysia citrodora*)

Keep this shrubby plant from growing too tall by picking the leafy tips regularly. It will drop its leaves in winter and grow new leaves the following spring.



Peppermint

(*Mentha x piperita*)

Plant a few large pots of this fast-growing herb and keep it going from year to year—it is a deciduous plant, so new growth will appear each spring.

Quick growing guide



2-3 hours for various stages



Full sun/part shade



Every 2-3 days



After 6 weeks, feed twice weekly with fertilizer for leafy crops



Snip off stem tips as required

Project >>



Make suspended shelves for herbs

These stylish wooden shelves take just a short while to make, and will allow you to utilize the full length of your window for growing a range of tea herbs. You can even adjust the space between the shelves to accommodate taller plants.

YOU WILL NEED

- 2 x pieces of timber, approximately 24 x 8 x $\frac{3}{4}$ in (60 x 20 x 2cm), cut to size and sanded so the edges are smooth
- pencil
- tape measure
- screwdriver and drill bit
- 26ft (8m) sash cord or rope
- clothespins
- herbs, such as mint and lemon verbena, to use for making tea
- potting mix
- vermiculite (or perlite)
- plastic pots with drainage holes
- decorative, lightweight, waterproof pots
- watering can

For a more colorful effect, use dyed cord or rope and paint the wooden shelves in a bright shade

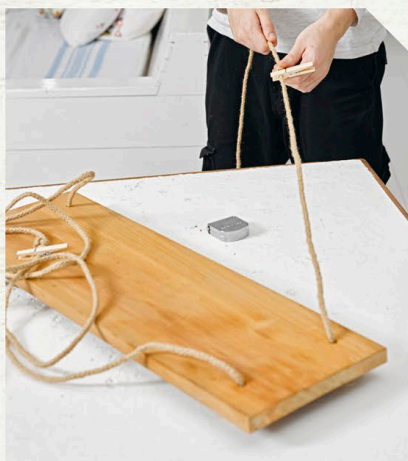


The four knotted ends of cord should all be on the underside of the shelf.

1 Make a pencil mark in each corner of both pieces of wood $\frac{3}{4}$ in (2cm) from the edge. To drill through the marked points, place each piece of wood on an old table or scrap wood. Make holes large enough for the sash cord to fit through easily.



2 Cut the sash cord into four equal lengths of 6ft (2m), or longer if you have a high ceiling. Tie a double knot securely at the end of one length of cord, thread the other through one hole in the shelf, and pull the cord tight. Repeat with the other three lengths of cord.



3 To calculate how much space you require between shelves, measure the height of your plants and add a little extra room for growth. Pull one cord taut and mark this measurement with a clothespin. Repeat with the other cord lengths.



4 Make a knot just above each pin and thread the lengths of cord through the holes of the second piece of wood. Adjust the knots if the top shelf doesn't hang level.



5 Plant the herbs in plastic pots with drainage holes using commercial potting mix with a handful of vermiculite added. Place these pots in lightweight, ornamental, waterproof pots.



Place one potted herb in the center of each shelf; then add other pots to prevent the shelf from tipping.

6 Make a loop in the top of each length of cord with another secure knot. To suspend the shelves, hang each loop from a sturdy hook fixed to a crossbeam in the ceiling by a window. Place the potted herbs on the shelves, ensuring their weight is evenly distributed so the shelves hang level.

To enjoy fresh herbal tea, steep harvested leaves in boiling water for five minutes before drinking

Caring for tea herbs

Water the plants every two to three days, ensuring the potting mix doesn't become waterlogged—pour any excess out of the decorative pots if this occurs. Feed with an all-purpose fertilizer every two weeks. Harvest the leaves no more than once a week; if any stems start to die off, cut them out. More shoots should then appear at the base.



Water herbs every 2-3 days

Orchids on bark create an eye-catching wall display. If the stems of the orchid plant start to stretch toward the light, try moving the display to the opposite wall.

Mounting orchids onto bark emulates the way they grow on trees naturally.



Edible orchids mounted onto bark

Level 2
moderate

Dendrobiums are a group of edible orchids that taste like a mixture of kale and cucumber. They make colorful **cake decorations**—or try battering and frying them like **tempura**. Dendrobiums can be grown in pots; or some, like 'Berry Oda', can be **fixed to bark** and displayed on a wall (see project overleaf).

Choosing dendrobiums

There are many types of dendrobium, and although all the flowers are edible, some people are allergic to them, so try a tiny piece first to make sure you don't have a reaction. Check individual plant labels for specific care tips, since different types of dendrobium require different conditions. Many like a cool environment in winter and warmth in summer, and all grow best in bright but not direct sunlight. To crystallize dendrobiums for cake decorations, paint the flowers with beaten egg white, then dust with sugar. Leave the blooms to dry for about 24 hours.

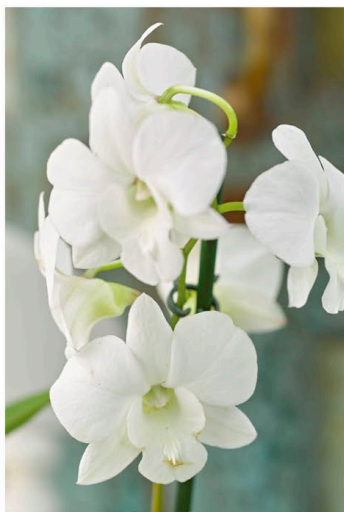
Orchid cake decoration

Dendrobiums like bright light all year, but keep them out of direct sun in summer



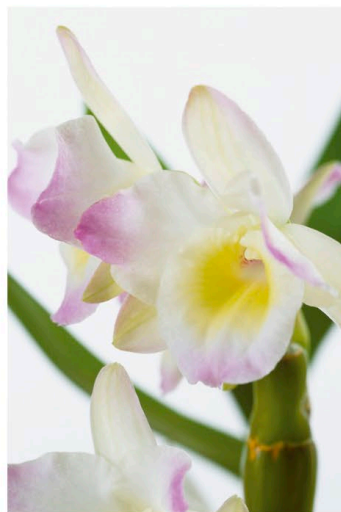
Named varieties

Orchids such as this 'Berry Oda' have been specially bred to suit growing in centrally heated homes. Like all dendrobiums, however, they still require high humidity and good ventilation.



Phalaenopsis type

These dendrobiums are evergreen and flower two to three times a year. They enjoy warmth in summer, but prefer lower temperatures and less watering between flowering periods.



Nobile type

Nobile dendrobiums flower in summer. They prefer warm temperatures in summer and cooler, drier conditions in winter; if pot-grown, allow the top of the mix to dry out between waterings.

Quick growing guide



1-2 hours to mount on bark



Likes bright light. Temperature depends on season and orchid variety



Water every two days in summer; once a week in winter



Feed weekly with an orchid fertilizer once in bloom



Cut flowers when needed

Project >>



Mount an edible orchid onto bark

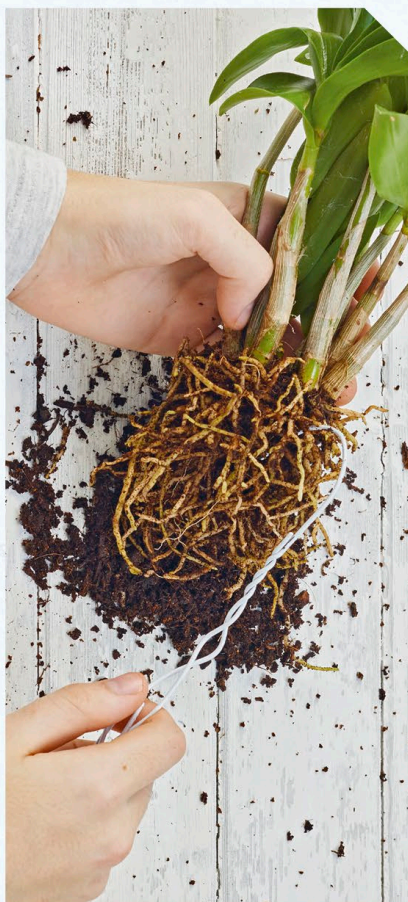
A small-flowered, **compact** dendrobium with delicate, sweetly scented flowers is perfect for mounting onto bark for a wall display. Hang it in a **bright spot** near a window, and **mist** it once a day. It will also need **watering** a few times a week.

It's best to mount your orchid when it is not in flower, causing the plant less stress and allowing it to adapt to its new home easily

YOU WILL NEED

- small dendrobium orchid, such as 'Berry Oda'
- coat hanger or short length of wire bent into a hook at one end
- sharp scissors or shears
- piece of cork bark or tree bark (available online); a piece of slate is also an option
- small bag of sphagnum moss
- small roll of transparent fishing line
- small roll of medium-gauge wire for the mount
- screwdriver
- screw or small picture hook for wall
- mist sprayer
- bucket

Use this method to mount orchids on pieces of slate for a different look



1 Water the plant a few hours before transplanting it. Knock it out of its pot onto a clean surface. If you suffer from any plant allergies, wear gloves to handle the orchid. Using the coat hanger, gently remove the potting mix from the roots. Take your time to tease out all the mix to leave the roots as clean as possible.



2 Using a pair of sharp, clean scissors or shears, carefully trim the orchid roots so they measure about 4in (10cm) in length. This will encourage new roots to form once the orchid has been mounted onto the bark. Also remove any dead growth or old stems from the upper part of the orchid.



3 Gently wrap the roots with damp sphagnum moss. Secure the moss in place with a length of fishing line. Make sure the line is not wrapped too tightly around the roots, as this could damage them.

Caring for your orchid

Your bark-mounted orchid will need to be misted with distilled water or rainwater every day from spring to autumn; mist it once every two to three days in winter. In spring and summer, give the roots a good drink at least twice a week by dunking the whole display in a bucket of water for 10–15 minutes. To feed the orchid, dilute orchid fertilizer at the recommended rate in the bucket of water first before submerging the roots. Leave to drain on a drain board before hanging it up again. In winter, move it to a cool room and water it once a week; a temperature of 50–55°F (10–13°C) is ideal.



4 Cut a long length of fishing line, tie one end of it around the bark, and knot it firmly to secure it to the bark. Leave the other end free to wrap around the orchid. Set the orchid onto the front of the bark and wrap the line around the rootball 2–3 times to fix the plant in place. Take care not to damage the plant.



5 Wrap a length of wire firmly around the top section of the bark and secure it with a knot. Tie some wire to it at the back to form a loop. Or, make two small holes at the top of the bark with a screwdriver, thread the wire through, and tie it in a loop. Hang on a hook fixed to a wall in a bright room by a window.



Watering a bark-mounted dendrobium



Edible flowers

Multiple varieties

A surprising number of flowers are edible, and offer a wide range of delicate flavors and colors. Use this selection to add a sparkling note to salads and cake decorations, or include them in any dish as a garnish.

How to grow

When to buy

Buy flowers when they are in season, from spring to summer. Violas and pansies include spring/summer- and winter-flowering varieties, which together will supply you with blooms year-round.

Light & heat

All these flowers need a sunny spot to bloom well. Spring flowers last longer in cool conditions, while summer flowers thrive in warmer temperatures.

Watering

Keep all edible flowers well watered, but guard against waterlogging, which will cause many to rot.

Aftercare

Feed flowers weekly with a balanced fertilizer unless you are using a potting mix already enriched with plant food.

Harvesting

Remove the flower and its stalk when the blooms have fully opened. Picking the blooms frequently encourages more flowers to form (except with tulips).

Varieties to try

There are many delicately flavored edible flowers, but these are among the best for growing indoors. Check the plant labels first for more specific care advice on those flowers you wish to grow.

ENGLISH DAISY ♥

Bellis perennis
These spring flowers are cousins of the common lawn daisy, and you can use the petals as a colorful garnish on desserts or soups, or in salads. Do not eat these flowers if you are a hayfever sufferer, though, as they may trigger an allergic reaction.

PANSY ♥

Viola species
The pretty blooms of both pansies and dainty violas have a delicate lettuce-like flavor, and there are even varieties that flower in the winter months. The flowers can be crystallized and used on cakes, cookies, and desserts, or use the fresh petals on salads.

TULIP ♥

Tulipa species
Tulip petals have a surprisingly sweet, pea-like flavor, but some people have a strong allergic reaction to them, so take care before sampling. The most flavorful are the single, early-flowering tulips. Never eat the bulbs, which are poisonous.





Colorful gems

Tulip petals make pretty canapés when topped with a little beet or goat cheese dip.

Add color to your pancakes by sprinkling pansy petals onto the batter during cooking.

Pair violas with primroses and scatter the blooms over lightly dressed iceberg lettuce leaves for a delicately flavored salad.

To crystallize edible flowers

such as violas and dendrobium orchids, use a clean paintbrush to cover the petals with whisked egg white, then dip in granulated sugar and leave to dry for about 24 hours until hard (see also p51).

Scatter primrose petals over a salad of lettuce leaves, cucumber, walnuts, grapes, and goat cheese to add color and flavor.



Decorative crystallized orchids on a cake

Primrose blooms add a splash of color to desserts.

PRIMROSE ♥

Primula species

This group of edible spring flowers includes polyanthus, cowslips, primroses, and primulas. All have a subtle sweet taste, and are ideal to crystallize for decorations for cakes and desserts. Remove the stalks before using the flowers.

Flavor a glass of champagne with a few lavender blooms.

LAVENDER ♥

Lavandula species

The aromatic flavor of lavender flowers complements both sweet and savory dishes. Add them to a bag of sugar to enhance cakes and desserts, or pop a few blooms into a glass of sparkling wine or champagne. Lavender flowers also work well in meat dishes and in ice cream.

Choose fragrant carnations for their clove-like taste.

CARNATION ♥

Dianthus species

Pinks, sweet Williams, and carnations all fall into this edible flower category, and most have a spicy, clove-like flavor, especially the more fragrant varieties. Remove the white heel at the base of the petals before use, as this part of the flower tastes bitter.





Quick growing guide



2-3 hours to paint the ladder and pot the plants



Bright sunny room
57-72°F
(14-22°C)



Water every day or two



Six weeks after planting, feed weekly



Pick flowers as required



Edible flower ladder

Displaying **pots of edible flowers** on a short stepladder in a bright room is an effective way of ensuring they all receive enough **light and space** to thrive. Use a selection of different **seasonal blooms** to create variety and color.

YOU WILL NEED: • short wooden stepladder • sandpaper • undercoat and topcoat wood paint • paint brush • containers of various sizes and saucers, plus plastic pots • selection of edible flowers (pp56-57) • multipurpose compost • old belt (optional) and adhesive putty • potash fertilizer

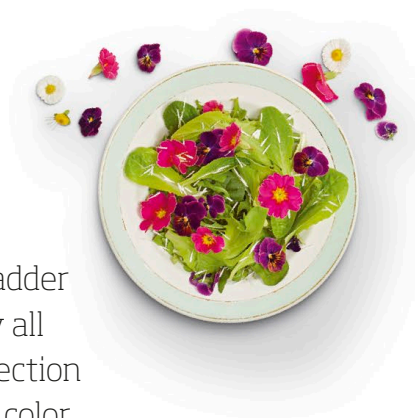
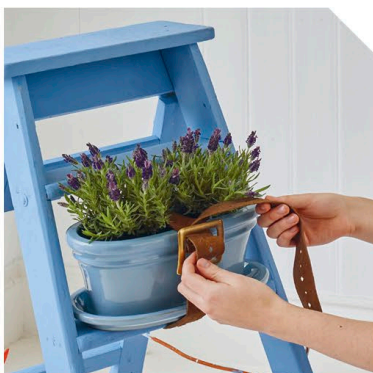


1 Sand down the stepladder, apply one coat of undercoat, and allow to dry. Add one or two coats of emulsion paint, allowing the first coat to dry thoroughly if you add a second coat of emulsion.



Cover the undercoat with emulsion in a color that matches your interior decor.

2 Choose short-stemmed flowering plants that will sit comfortably on the steps. Select pots with drip trays or planters without drainage holes at the bottom. If using the latter, plant the flowers in plastic pots that can then be slipped inside them. Use multipurpose compost to pot the plants. Secure longer pots with an old belt or thick twine.



3 Secure the bases or saucers of the smaller containers to the steps with adhesive putty. Keep the plants well watered, checking on them daily. After six weeks, start feeding the flowers with a liquid potash fertilizer using a watering can with a fine rose head.

The flavor of edible herb flowers such as chives and lavender is similar to their leaves

Primroses need good drainage to prevent mildew disease.

Violas and pansies will flower for several weeks.

Blooming steps Choose a wide range of edible flowers (see pp56-57) for a beautiful display that tastes as good as it looks.

For a lavender plant, choose a large container with a drip tray.

Taller plants can be displayed next to the ladder.

Water small pots daily, but ensure they do not become waterlogged.





Quick growing guide



1 hour for various stages



Full sun



Water every 3-4 days



Feed with balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks



Harvest when the stems are mature



Grow lemongrass from store-bought stems

An essential ingredient in many **Asian dishes**, this large, grass-like **tropical herb** can be grown indoors by rooting some fresh stems bought from the supermarket and growing them in a **sunny room**.

YOU WILL NEED • lemongrass stems • cutting board • sharp knife • glass or mug for water • small plastic pots • potting mix • large container for mature plants

Take care not to damage the fragile roots when planting.



1 Peel off the outer layer from each of the lemongrass stems. With a sharp knife, cut off the top half of the stems, and use these to flavor stir-fries and rice dishes.



2 Place the stems in a glass of clean water and leave in a bright area out of direct sun for a few weeks. You will then see tiny roots emerge from the base of the stems.



3 Fill some small plastic pots with potting mix. Make a hole in the center and put a rooted stem in each. Firm gently with your fingertips and water them.

Caring for & harvesting lemongrass

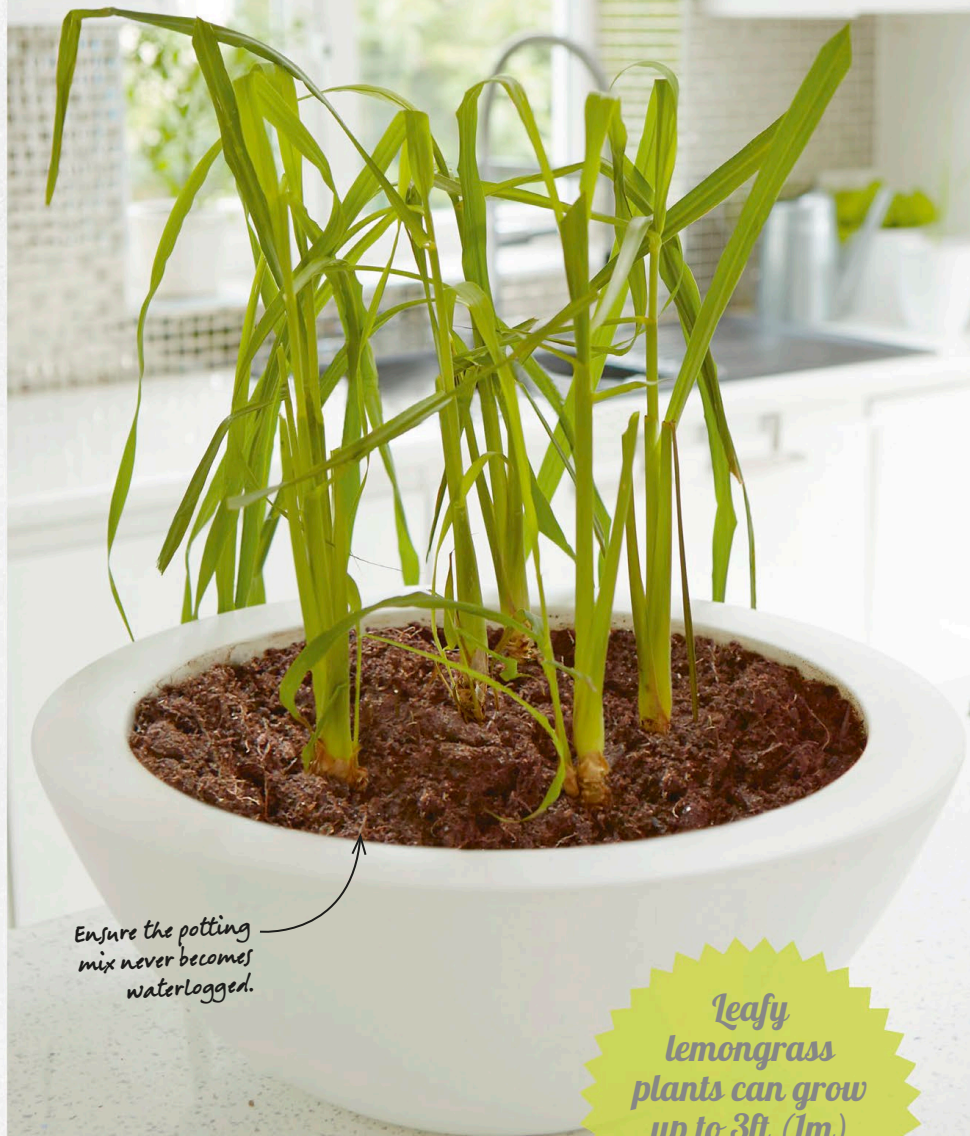
Set the lemongrass plants in a bright, sunny room. Keep the potting mix moist, but not wet. Feed the plants twice per week. Harvest when they are 18-24in (45-60cm) in height; cut whole stems and trim off the leafy tops.

Apply a balanced liquid fertilizer to promote healthy growth.



4 Water regularly, and leaves will soon form. When the roots start to grow through the pots' drainage holes, repot into a larger container of potting mix.

Choose a large pot with drainage holes at the bottom, or a self-watering container, for your homegrown lemongrass.



Ensure the potting mix never becomes waterlogged.

Leafy lemongrass plants can grow up to 3ft (1m) or more in height

Ensure the
hyssop plant
receives plenty
of sunlight.

Anise hyssop
leaves can also be
used as tea to soothe
coughs and
stomach aches

Set sun-loving plants on
the top shelf of the cart and
mint on the bottom. Attach
hanging planters of trailing
strawberries and cucamelons
to the handles.

Ensure the weight
of the plants is
evenly distributed
to prevent the
cart from tipping.





Cocktail herbs & fruits

Impress your friends by serving **cocktails** made with **fresh, homegrown ingredients**, such as **mint, cucamelons, hyssop**, and **strawberries**, from a customized **cocktail cart**. The cart makes a practical plant stand and helps to create an attractive decorative display (see project overleaf).

Displaying your cocktail crops

A cart makes the perfect plant stand for this range of potted herbs, edible flowers, and fruit. The cucamelons and hyssop (*Agastache*) should be placed on the top shelf or sunniest section of the cart, while strawberries and mint, which grow happily in lower light conditions, will thrive on the lower shelf or in a container with hooks that can hang from one of the handles. If you don't own a cart or don't have the space for one, a large windowsill or home-made hanging shelves (p48) will work equally well.

Move the cart around every few days to ensure your plants receive light on all sides

Cocktail herb & fruit options

Grow herbs to add to cocktails; search online for drink recipes including fresh herbs (or look on p65). Limes, strawberries, and cucamelons also make delicious cocktail ingredients and garnishes (see p64-65 for growing instructions).



Cucamelons

These tiny watermelon lookalikes taste like cucumber with a hint of lime; blend the fruits or use as a garnish (see pp157-59 for growing instructions).

Strawberries

Choose an everbearing variety that produces fruits all summer (see pp172-73 for varieties and growing instructions).



Try adding strawberries to a daiquiri cocktail made with rum.



Mint

Peppermint and spearmint are most frequently added to cocktails, but there are many other varieties you can try, too (see pp66-67).

Quick growing guide



3-4 hours for various stages



Full sun/part shade



Every 2-3 days



Weekly when fruit flowers appear with tomato fertilizer; twice weekly for herbs with all-purpose fertilizer



When fruits are ripe; snip herb leaves as required

Project >>



Planting herbs & fruits for a cocktail cart

Grow some **herbs**, **flowers**, and **fruits**, such as those listed here, to make the **cocktails you most enjoy** drinking. You can even add to the cocktail theme by dressing your cart with edibles in planters made from **ice buckets** and **drink trays**.

Hyssop and mint will grow from year to year, so store them in a cool area in winter

YOU WILL NEED

- cocktail cart
- 1 x hyssop plant
- 3-4 x small mint plants in pots with drainage holes (see pp66-67 for varieties and growing instructions)
- 3 x everbearing strawberry plants, in plastic pots with drainage holes (see pp169-73 for varieties and growing instructions)
- 2-3 x cucumber plants, in plastic pots with drainage holes (see pp157-59 for growing instructions)
- potting mix for cactus or palms
- gravel
- plastic pots
- ice bucket and trough
- 2 x hanging, or wall, waterproof planters with hooks attached
- gold spray paint for metal surfaces (optional)
- watering can fitted with rose head



1 Start by planting the hyssop, which likes very well-drained conditions. Water the plant well and set to one side to drain. Be sure to use a potting mix intended for cactus or palms.



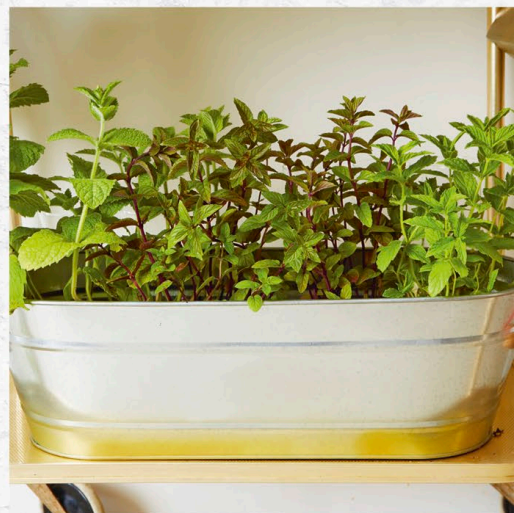
2 Add some of the cactus potting mix to a large plastic pot that fits inside an ice bucket. Set the potted plant on top of the mix and check that once planted it will sit $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ in (1–2cm) below the rim.



3 Slip the hyssop out of its pot and plant it in the larger container, filling the space around the rootball with potting mix, and pressing it down gently to remove any air gaps.



Finish off the planting with a layer of gravel.



4 Water the plant well. Then add a layer of gravel over the compost to act as a mulch (see p201), which is both decorative and helps retain moisture in the compost.

5 Spray the base of the ice bucket in a well-ventilated area with gold paint. Leave to dry; then place the potted hyssop inside it and set it on top of the cart.

6 Water each mint in its plastic pot and set aside to drain. Spray the trough, allow to dry, then set the pots of mint in the trough on the lower shelf at the front.



7 Water the cucamelons in their own plastic pots, allow to drain, and set them inside a long waterproof planter with fixed hooks. Hang the planter by its hooks over the handle at one end of the cart, taking care not to tip the cart over.



8 Water the everbearing strawberry plants in their pots, set them inside a second long waterproof planter with fixed hooks, and attach it to the other side of the cart. Keep all the plants well watered, checking that none become waterlogged.

Cocktail recipe ideas

Strawberry martini

Blend a few handfuls of strawberries in a blender and add a splash of vermouth and gin, or vodka, to taste. Chop for a few more seconds with some ice and serve with a strawberry and cucamelon garnish.

Mint & cucamelon Pimm's

Fill a jug with Pimm's liqueur and lemonade; stir and add ice, mint, and halved strawberries and cucamelons.



Herb- and fruit-infused cocktails



Mint

Mentha species

One of the easiest herbs to grow, mint thrives in part shade and requires little aftercare, but it spreads quickly. To prevent it from taking over other herbs, plant it in a pot of its own.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Mint is a deciduous herb and dies down over winter. Buy young plants in the spring or early summer, and repot them into larger containers using potting mix when you get them home to give them space to grow. This will also ensure they produce a plentiful supply of leaves.

Light & heat

Best in semi-shade and a cool situation, mint will also cope with more sunlight and warmer conditions if watered frequently. Rotate plants every few days to achieve balanced growth, and make sure your home is well ventilated in summer.

Watering

Mint requires watering when the top of the potting mix is just drying out. It's worth checking that your pots have adequate drainage to prevent the plants from developing fungal diseases. Misting the leaves from time to time will encourage good growth, but this is not essential.

Aftercare

Depending on the variety, mint can grow up to 2ft (60cm) or taller, so give your plants plenty of headroom. If the leaves start to look dull or lose their color after a couple of months, apply an all-purpose fertilizer every week or two.



Trailing mint stems can grow up to 3ft (1m) in length.

Basil mint

BASIL MINT

(*Mentha x piperita* f. *citrata* 'Basil')

This mint combines traditional peppermint and basil flavors and will enhance a range of savory dishes. Try it in a pesto for pasta instead of basil.

Height: 2ft (60cm)



Peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) has a rich, fresh flavor, and can be used for teas and in savory dishes.

Peppermint



INDIAN TRAILING MINT

(*Satureja douglassii*)

Not strictly a true mint, the stems of this evergreen herb can grow up to 3ft (1m). It is perfect for a hanging pot, and tastes like garden mint. **Height:** trails up to 3ft (1m)

Best indoor varieties

There are hundreds of varieties of mint to choose from, ranging from the bright tangy flavors of common garden mint (peppermint), through to those with hints of chocolate, basil, grapefruit, and apple scents. Some also sport colorful leaves, such as the black-leaved peppermint and variegated pineapple mint, and all varieties can be grown indoors.



PINEAPPLE MINT

(*Mentha suaveolens* 'Pineapple')

With a hint of pineapple, this mint is ideal for desserts and puddings, or added to a fruit salad for extra zing. It has decorative variegated leaves.

Height: 8-12in (20-30cm).

CHOCOLATE MINT

(*Mentha x piperita* f. *citrata* 'Chocolate')

A rich peppermint flavor combined with a chocolate scent makes this variety an excellent choice for teas and desserts. It is a compact variety with attractive dark foliage.

Height: 12-18in (30-45cm)

APPLE MINT

(*Mentha suaveolens*)

Tangy and fresh, this mint is perfect for lamb dishes, or add it to peas and potatoes. A tall variety with bright green leaves and a delicious scent.

Height: up to 3ft (90cm)

LIME MINT

(*Mentha x piperita* f. *citrata* 'Lime')

The leaves of this refreshing mint have a lemony-lime aroma and work well in fish and chicken dishes, as well as hot or cold teas and cocktails.

Height: 16in (40cm)

Easy propagation

You can make new mint plants for free simply by removing a few stems from one of your existing plants and putting them in water. When you see roots appear, pot the stems in some potting mix. Keep the potting mix moist and they will soon sprout more stems and leaves.



Versatile mint

Add a sprig to potatoes or peas as they boil.

Include a few leaves in ice cream and fruit salads.

Make refreshing fresh mint tea to help soothe stomach upsets and aid digestion.

For a sauce for lamb dishes, finely chop peppermint leaves, put in a bowl, add a teaspoon of sugar and some boiling water, leave to cool, drain off most of the water, and add vinegar to taste.

Roll cubes of feta cheese in a mix of finely chopped mint, chives, and cumin seeds. Thread each cheese square onto a skewer with a cube of cucumber, a black olive, and a single mint leaf (below).



Minty canapés

Create a focal point with a variety of hanging herb pots suspended at different heights—just ensure you can reach them all to water and feed the plants.

Hang your jars close to a sunny window and turn them every few days for the best results.

Use vases as table pots for herbs such as pineapple sage that will grow tall.

Mint will need a large jar to grow well.





Herbs in hanging jars

If you don't have a sunny windowsill on which to sit herbs (pp36-39), try **growing** them in **hanging jars or vases** suspended close to a window from **hooks** in the ceiling (see project overleaf).

Keeping herbs happy

These hanging jars are quite straightforward to make, but check that the containers are large enough to comfortably fit your chosen herb plants. You can paint the bottoms in a color to match your decor and hang them at different heights to create a dynamic display. Twist the herb jars around every few days to ensure that the herb plants grow evenly.

Small, young thyme, mint, sage, and basil plants are ideal for planting in hanging jars

Alternative containers

Any glass or plastic pot with a wide neck that is more than 7in (18cm) deep can be transformed into an herb hanging container. Vigorous plants, such as mint, will be happier in a larger pot; and if weight is an issue, choose a plastic item from the mixed selection of containers below.



Household items such as plastic bowls, jars, tin buckets, and even large beer glasses can be transformed into hanging containers. Simply follow the steps overleaf.

Quick growing guide



2 hours, plus drying time for paint



Full sun
50-72°F
(10-22°C)



Water when the top of the potting mix feels dry



Feed every 2-4 weeks with a fertilizer for leafy crops



Snip leaves as required during growing season

Project >>



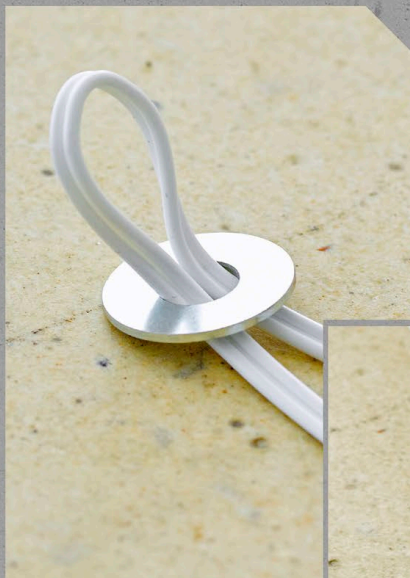
Making hanging jars for herbs

Choose a container that is **deep enough** to accommodate your herb plant and one that has an area at the base for **water to drain** into. **Hang the jars** in plant holders made from electrical cable for a contemporary look, or try using jute rope for a more rustic design.

Water every few days when the top of the mix feels dry, but don't overwater them.

YOU WILL NEED

- glass vessel, such as a large canning jar or vase, with a neck approx 7in (18cm) wide
- 33ft (10m) or more of plastic-coated electrical cable wire (available from hardware stores) or jute rope
- metal washer or ring
- paint for glass (or plastic, depending on your choice of container—see p69)
- handful of polystyrene packaging, broken into pieces, per pot
- horticultural sand
- selection of small herb plants (see pp40-41, 46-47, 66-67, 72-73, 74-75)
- commercial potting mix
- large, sturdy screw-in hooks, or hang the pot from a curtain rod



2 Pull the cable back toward you and tighten it. Repeat this process for the remaining three lengths of cable to form the base of the plant holder.

1 Cut four lengths of electrical cable (or rope) at least 5ft (1.5m) long, or longer if you have high ceilings. A 5ft cable will suspend the jar about 26in (65cm) from the ceiling. Fold the cable in half and slip the folded end through the washer to form a loop (left). Then thread the two ends of the cable through the loop (below).



3 Paint the bottom of the jar using glass paint. A wavy edge creates the impression it has been dipped. Apply two coats and allow to dry between each coat.



4 Turn the jar upside down. Fit the cable-washer base over the bottom of the jar and make four simple knots in each set of cables around the sides, as shown.



5 Separate the cables in two of the sets. Knot two adjacent single cables together at the top of the jar. Repeat with the other three sets of cables.



6 Remove the jar. Add some small pieces of polystyrene to create a well at the bottom for drainage (see p28). Then add a layer of horticultural sand on top, and then some potting mix on top of the sand.



7 Water the herb, and slip it out of its original pot. Place in the jar and fill around the edges with potting mix. Check that there are no gaps and then firm the mix gently with your fingertips.



8 Set the jar in the holder, and tie all the ends together at the top. Hang up on a hook secured firmly to a joist in the ceiling or a curtain rod. Water herbs sparingly when the top of the potting mix feels dry.



Oregano & parsley

Origanum vulgare & Petroselinum crispum

These decorative herbs will grow in full sun or part shade, and make good pot plants for an indoor kitchen windowsill. The nutrient-rich leaves offer distinctive flavors, ideal for a wide range of hot and cold savory dishes.

To harvest the herbs,
simply break off the
tips of the stems.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Oregano is a perennial, while parsley is a biennial, producing leaves in the first year and flowers in the second. Both can be bought as young plants in spring; repot in a container one or two sizes larger in a 3:1 mix of commercial potting mix and builder's sand.

Light & heat

These herbs will be happy on a windowsill, but need watering more frequently if kept in full sun. Use a small fan, blowing away, to increase ventilation. They will do fine in an unheated room.

Watering

Both plants like good drainage and will suffer in wet soil, so water only when the top of the potting mix feels dry. Planting in pots with drainage holes and setting them on saucers helps avoid waterlogging.

Aftercare

Feed from spring to early autumn with all-purpose liquid fertilizer for leafy crops. Oregano dies down in winter, but reshoots again in spring; repot it if the roots are crowded. Use parsley only in its first year, as the leaves can taste bitter in the second.

Harvesting

Remove the stem tips from late spring to early autumn, taking just a few sprigs at a time; removing too many stems will weaken the plant.

Marjoram
(left), a type
of oregano,
and curly-leaf
parsley



Oregano varieties

There are variegated and golden-leaved varieties, as well as plain green, and all look pretty spilling over the sides of a pot. Oregano complements the flavors of fish and meat.



GOLDEN OREGANO ▀

(*Origanum vulgare* 'Aureum') The bright yellow leaves are joined by pink flowers in summer, and both are edible. Add them to pizzas and pasta dishes, or use as a colorful garnish.

Height & spread: 18 x 18in (45 x 45cm)



VARIEGATED OREGANO ▀

(*Origanum vulgare* 'Country Cream') Distinctive white and green variegated leaves and a slightly smaller stature set this variety apart from other forms. Use sprigs as a garnish or add roughly chopped leaves to a salad.

Height & spread: 12 x 12in (30 x 30cm)



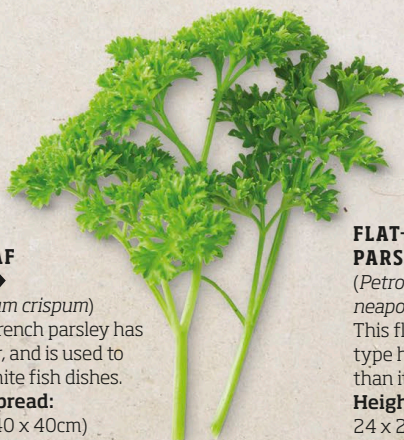
SWEET MARJORAM ▀

(*Origanum majorana*) This is traditional marjoram, and the green foliage has a slightly sweeter taste than other forms of oregano. Sprinkle the fresh leaves on meat and fish before or after cooking.

Height & spread: 18 x 24in (45 x 60cm)

Parsley varieties

Parsley, of which there are two main types, makes the perfect garnish for almost any savory dish, and combines particularly well with garlic and onions.



CURLY-LEAF PARSLEY ▀

(*Petroselinum crispum*) Curly-leaf French parsley has a mild flavor, and is used to enhance white fish dishes.

Height & spread: 16 x 16in (40 x 40cm)



FLAT-LEAF PARSLEY ▀

(*Petroselinum crispum* var. *neapolitanum*) This flat-leaved Italian type has a stronger flavor than its French cousin.

Height & spread: 24 x 24in (60 x 60cm)



Cooking with oregano

Sprinkle oregano leaves over a homemade tomato and mozzarella pizza.

Slice beefsteak and yellow tomatoes and roast with lemon wedges and oregano.

Cooking with parsley

Create a persillade of chopped parsley, crushed garlic, and seasoning, and stir into slow-cooked dishes.

Dress some fresh parsley leaves with lemon juice and zest, walnut oil, honey, sesame oil, and seeds for a flavorful side salad.

Try cooking a dish of raki soslu barbunya: Turkish red mullet seasoned with raki, lemons, and parsley.



Raki soslu barbunya



Sage & rosemary

Salvia species & Rosmarinus officinalis

Both of these woody-stemmed, evergreen shrubby herbs produce tasty leaves that can be harvested year after year from spring to autumn. Use them in meat and vegetable dishes to liven up the flavors.



Feed the herbs regularly to keep the leaves from turning yellow.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Sage and rosemary are best grown from young plants, which are available all year. It is a good idea to repot them in containers that are one or two sizes larger using a commercial potting mix mixed 3:1 with sand for added drainage.

Light & heat

These herbs thrive in full sun on a windowsill. They prefer warmth in summer, and a slightly cooler but bright location in winter. Use a small fan, blowing away from the plants, to increase ventilation.

Watering

Both are happiest in pots with holes in the bottom so water drains away freely. Water only when the top of the soil feels dry, and never allow them to sit in soggy soil, which may cause them to rot.

Aftercare

Feed every two weeks from spring to early autumn with an all-purpose liquid fertilizer for leafy crops. Because these plants will live for more than a year, repot them in spring in a 3:1 blend of potting mix and sand.

Harvesting

Remove just a few stem tips at a time. Do not remove leaves during the winter when the plants don't grow much because doing so will weaken them.

Common sage
and rosemary

Best sage varieties

The more colorful sage varieties can be combined with flowers to produce decorative displays indoors, or set them on a windowsill. Sage is traditionally used as stuffing for pork or turkey, while varieties with blackcurrant or pineapple aromas make great additions to fruit salads.

'ICTERINA' SAGE ▀

(*Salvia officinalis* 'Icterina')
Attractive gold-splashed green leaves make a decorative display on a windowsill. Use the leaves as you would common sage.

Height & spread:

12 x 18in (30 x 45cm)



PURPLE SAGE ▲

(*Salvia officinalis* 'Purpurascens')
The dark purple leaves of this form make a good foil for the plain green variety and have a similar flavor, ideal for meat dishes and stuffing.

Height & spread: 24 x 24in
(60 x 60cm)



▀ 'TRICOLOR' SAGE

(*Salvia officinalis* 'Tricolor')
A beautiful variety with cream-edged gray-green leaves, which are flushed with purple when young. It tastes the same as common sage.

Height & spread: 12 x 18in
(30 x 45cm)



▀ COMMON SAGE

(*Salvia officinalis*)
The plain green variety of sage is the best choice for pork dishes and, of course, stuffing. The flowers are edible, too.

Height & spread: 24 x 24in
(60 x 60cm)

▀ BLACKCURRANT SAGE ▀

(*Salvia microphylla* var. *microphylla*)
This pretty plant produces leaves with a blackcurrant aroma and striking cherry-red flowers in summer. Use it to flavor cocktails.

Height & spread: up to
36 x 8in (90 x 20cm)



PINEAPPLE SAGE ▀

(*Salvia elegans* 'Scarlet Pineapple')
This tall form has spikes of scarlet summer flowers. Use the pineapple-scented leaves to flavor desserts and ice creams.

Height & spread: approx
36 x 18in (90 x 45cm)



Best rosemary varieties

The three main types of rosemary produce leaves with the same flavor, but each forms a slightly different shaped plant. Common rosemary (right) creates a vase-shaped shrub, Salem (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Salem') has a slimmer, upright habit, and prostrate rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Prostratus') trails slightly.



COMMON ROSEMARY ▲

(*Rosmarinus officinalis*)
Typically used as an accompaniment to lamb, chicken, and game.

Height & spread:
24 x 16in (60 x 40cm)

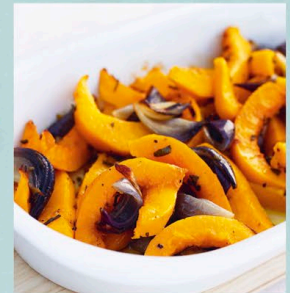


Cooking with sage

Fry sage flower buds and leaves in butter, then mix in capers and lemon juice for a punchy pasta sauce.

Make a fruit salad with pineapple sage leaves, chopped kiwi, pineapple, banana, and orange.

Roast butternut squash in olive oil for 40 minutes, then add sliced red onions and chopped sage leaves for a further 20 minutes.



Roast squash with sage

Cooking with rosemary

Roughly chop rosemary leaves, add with garlic cloves to a tray of potatoes, and roast slowly.

Add chopped rosemary leaves to a bolognese sauce and serve with fresh pasta.





Sprouts, leaves, & roots

Packed with nutrients, most of these edibles are easy to grow. Sprouts and microgreens are ready to eat within a week or two; carrots and other roots take longer, but the flavor they offer in return is worth waiting for.

Introducing sprouts, leaves, & roots

The crops in this group include some of the **quickest** and **easiest plants** to grow indoors, and provide a **consistent supply** of ingredients for your favorite dishes.

Shooting for the stars

Newly sprouted beans, peas, and seeds need no soil or special equipment, but the rewards are great for the indoor gardener, as these little nutrient bombs are bursting with flavor and packed with health-boosting vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They are all very easy to grow and will sprout within a few days in glass jars or special sprouting units, which are available to buy online.

Leafing through the menu

Growing your own lettuce leaves ensures the freshest taste, crispest texture, and highest vitamin content when you pluck them straight from the plant. If you're an impatient gardener or short on space, tiny microgreens offer a perfect solution, with varieties such as radish and broccoli

ready to harvest in just a few weeks. Garlic shoots are another easy option for beginners; all you need is a garlic bulb or two and some little glasses to grow a crop of tangy leaves.

Down to the roots

You may be surprised to learn that a few of the most popular root crops, including carrots and radishes, can be grown indoors. And by growing your own from seed, you will have access to an array of varieties, such as purple carrots and white radishes, that are not available in stores. By controlling their growing environment, you can also reduce the need for pesticides, enabling

you to enjoy chemical-free crops. Root crops enjoy bright conditions in a room that won't get too hot, although if the temperature rises, remember to water them every day or two.





Best zones for sprouts, leaves, & roots

The majority of these crops require cool conditions, and are best grown in zones 2, 6, 7, and 8. They may struggle in warmer areas, and radishes, beets, and salad leaves are likely to bolt (flower) more quickly.

Zone 1

South-facing windows

Most of these crops are too large for a windowsill, and lettuce will struggle in full sun and the intense heat. Scallions and chives may thrive here if watered well.

Zone 2

East- and west-facing windows

A better option for lettuce, microgreens, and sprouts, these cooler locations offer plants plenty of light with less heat than zone 1. Water well to prevent crops from drying out.

Zone 3

Beneath a skylight

These plants will perform well under a skylight from fall to spring, but the room may become too hot in summer. Water plants regularly to prevent wilting.

Zone 4

Walls

You can grow sprouts in jars and microgreens on shelves fixed to bright walls; turn the latter every day so they don't grow spindly. Mushrooms will also grow on a shelf.

Zone 5

Dark corners

Leafy crops, scallions, radishes, and round carrots can all be grown under domestic grow lights in dark corners; mushrooms require no additional light here.

Zone 6

Center of a room

All crops are happy in the middle of a bright room, as long as it is not too hot. Microgreens, lettuce, and mushrooms grow in rooms that don't receive direct sun.

Zone 7

Cool (unheated) south-facing room

All crops will enjoy the bright but cool conditions here. Some seeds may struggle to germinate in spring in an unheated room, but should grow well once sprouted.

Zone 8

Outside windowsill

These crops are all reasonably hardy and will grow well on an east- or west-facing sill; a north-facing sill may work for lettuce crops. Sprouts are best grown indoors.





Quick growing guide



3 minutes to prepare; leave overnight to soak



Keep out of direct sun
64-70°F
(18-21°C)



Rinse 2-3 times a day



No need to feed



Use the seeds as soon as they sprout



Sprouts in jars

Easy to grow, these **seeds and dried beans** will spring into life after just a few days to make **nutritious sprouts** that can be used in salads, stews, curries, and savory smoothies and juices.

YOU WILL NEED: • seeds or beans, sold for sprouting (see pp82-83 for ideas) • wide-mouthed canning jars • fine sieve or strainer • cheesecloth • elastic band (if using canning jars)

Mung beans sprouted in a dark place have fewer nutrients than those grown in the light



1 Place the seeds (or beans) in a canning jar so that it is less than a quarter full. Fill the jar with cold water and leave the seeds to soak overnight. They will swell and expand as they absorb the water.



2 Drain the seeds well using a sieve or strainer as shown, so they remain in the jar. Keep the seeds moist, which enables them to sprout, but not wet, as this can lead to potentially harmful fungal diseases. Leave the jar out of direct sunlight, ideally near a tap to make rinsing the seeds more convenient.



3 Between rinsings, place a piece of cheesecloth over the jar and secure with the screw-top or an elastic band. Rinse your seeds at least twice a day until little shoots appear. Then rinse and strain the sprouts. Pour onto a paper towel to dry before using.

*Buy
sprouting
seeds and beans
from a specialized
supplier for a
cornucopia of
flavors and
textures.*

*Cheesecloth or muslin
prevents insects and dust
from spoiling your sprouts.*

*Sprouts are ready as
soon as the seeds or
beans form little shoots.*

Sprouts can be stored for
up to a week in the fridge
after they have sprouted.
Rinse thoroughly once again
in fresh water before using.



Sprouts

multiple varieties

They may be tiny, but sprouts are packed with nutrients, and add a delicious crunchy texture and flavor to savory dishes such as stir-fries, salads, and sandwiches. They are the ultimate "fast food," growing in just a few days.

Most sprouts are ready to eat within days, making them the ultimate crop for impatient gardeners

How to grow

When to buy

You can buy a variety of beans, seeds, and peas to sprout at any time of year.

Light & heat

To produce sprouts in Mason or jelly jars, use the method described on p80, or buy specially designed sprouting jars or units, which are available to buy online. Keep the jars or units in a bright place out of direct sunlight; most seeds and beans will sprout at 64–70°F (18–21°C).

Watering

Rinse in clean water twice a day until they have sprouted. This process normally takes just a few days under the right conditions.

Aftercare

These fast-growing crops need no aftercare, but do not leave them in the jars for more than a few days after they have sprouted.

Harvesting

When the sprouts are ready, rinse well and use immediately, or leave to dry on a paper towel for a few hours and store in a sealed container or sealed zipper-lock bag in the fridge for up to a week. Discard any sprouts that show signs of mold or smell unpleasant.

Varieties

There is a huge choice of varieties available, ranging from mild alfalfa to curry-flavored fenugreek. You will find the best selection from specialized suppliers online, some of which offer certified organic seeds and beans.



GREEN LENTILS

Nutty and mild in flavor, lentils are available in a range of colors. Sprouted lentils will complement most soups, salads, and stews.



BROCCOLI

These intensely flavored sprouts are packed with antioxidants. They prefer cool conditions, so incorporate an extra daily rinse in hot weather.

Green lentils

Broccoli



Cook's tips

Nutrient boosts

You can add sprouts to almost any dish for a burst of flavor and nutrients; experiment to see which will complement your favorite recipes.

Add a few sprouts to the blender when you make a vegetable smoothie.

Use as a topping scattered over an omelet, in a sandwich, or inside a wrap.

Include a mix of sprouts in stir-fries and salads, or as a garnish on soups and pizza.

Make a fenugreek sprout curry or a chickpea sprout and vegetable stew.



Sprouts wrapped in a vine leaf



ALFALFA

One of the quickest seeds to sprout, alfalfa shoots have a mild taste with a pleasant texture that makes them ideal as a garnish and in sandwiches.



CHICKPEAS

Sprouted chickpeas are high in protein, so they add both bulk and high levels of nutrients to a wide range of hot and cold dishes.



MUNG BEANS

Delicious in stir-fries and salads, the unique flavor and crunchy texture of mung beans makes them the most popular sprout in the world.



ADZUKI BEANS

Colorful and crunchy, adzuki beans have a delicate nutty flavor; ensure the white shoots are at least $\frac{1}{2}$ in (1.5cm) before eating the sprouts raw.





Microgreens in muffin cups

Packed with **nutrients** and exceptionally **easy to care for**, microgreens can be sown at any time of year in silicone muffin cups (see overleaf), and placed on a **windowsill**. Once ready to harvest, display them as a pretty collection of leafy cupcakes.

What are microgreens?

These tiny, flavorful leaves are simply the young seedlings of edible plants that, given time, would grow into mature crops. Most take just two or three weeks to reach the stage when they are ready to eat, having formed a couple of sets of leaves. Research has shown that microgreens contain higher concentrations of nutrients than the mature plants, making them an attractive crop to grow.



Superfood nutrition

As they are picked and eaten almost immediately, none of the vitamins and antioxidants that microgreens contain are lost. Use them to add spice to salads and sandwiches, for example, or as a nutrient-rich garnish on savory dishes.



Muffin cups with tiny drainage holes in the bottom make beautiful yet practical containers for an assortment of microgreens. Grow them on a windowsill and then set on a cake stand as a centerpiece.

Use a pair of scissors to snip off the fresh microgreens just before you want to eat them





Dark-pink beet microgreens grow within a few weeks.

Quick growing guide



10 minutes to prepare and sow seeds



Sunny windowsill
57-72°F
(14-22°C)



Water every day or two



No need to feed



Harvest when stems have 3-4 leaves

Project >>



Grow microgreens in muffin cups

Microgreen seeds need **warmth and light** to germinate, so you may find their shoots appear **more quickly** in spring and summer.

YOU WILL NEED large silicone muffin cups
• scissors • good-quality seed-starting mix • vermiculite (optional) • selection of microgreen seeds • small watering can with a fine rose head, or water bottle • tray that holds water • cake stand or large plate • microgreen snips (optional)



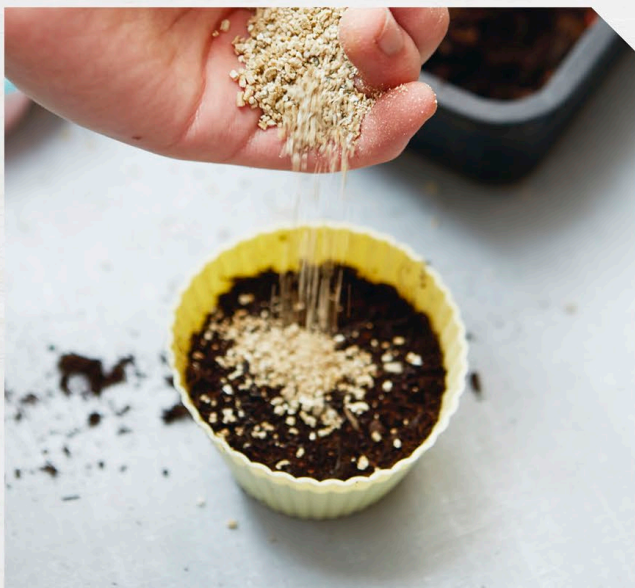
1 Fold the large muffin cup in half (small muffin cups will work too, but the microgreen shoots need more watering as a result) and snip a hole in the base of the cup with sharp scissors.



2 Fill the muffin cup with good-quality seed-starting mix to about ¼ in (5mm) below the rim of the cup. Firm the starting mix gently with your fingers to remove any air pockets.



3 Sow the seeds thickly and evenly on the starting mix, ensuring that they are all in contact with the surface and not sitting on top of one another. Press them down lightly with your fingertips.



4 Cover the seeds with a thin layer of either starting mix or vermiculite (the latter allows light through and retains moisture). Repeat with different seeds in the other muffin cups.



Larger seeds, such as sunflowers, will require soaking overnight before sowing to ensure successful germination





5 Set the muffin cups on a tray, water the seeds gently with a watering can, and place the tray on a windowsill. Turn the cups every day so the stems grow evenly.



Successional sowing

For a continuous harvest, either sow a batch of microgreen seeds in muffin cups or small pots every week, or sow seeds in larger pots for a bigger harvest. You can also sow seeds on one side of a wide pot one week, then sow on the other side the following week to extend the harvest period. Or, if you prefer, choose another variety to grow, which may have a shorter growing time and be ready to harvest around the same time that your first batch is ready. Turn the pot every day or two so that both sides receive sufficient light. Use either of these techniques and you will have fresh microgreens to eat all year round.



Batch-sowing microgreens

6 Water every day or two so that the starting mix is moist, but not wet. When ready, set the “cupcakes” on a cake stand or plate; snip off the shoots as needed.





Microgreens

Multiple varieties

A top crop for tiny indoor spaces, all you need to grow these diminutive leaves are a few small pots and a windowsill or sunny kitchen counter.

Try growing a range of microgreens for different colors and flavors to pick fresh and add to your salads and sandwiches.

How to grow

You can buy and sow microgreen seeds in small plastic pots or silicone muffin cups at any time of year, and most will germinate within a few days (see pp86–87 for more detailed growing tips). Keep your microgreens in a light area in full or part sun, and water the pots or cups every day or two. Harvest the young shoots when the stems have grown 2–4 leaves.

Radish
and beet
microgreens

*Radish grows rapidly
and produces spicy
baby leaves.*

*Beet microgreens
are colorful and
flavorful.*



MICROGREEN SEEDS

VARIETY	HARVEST IN...
RADISH	12 DAYS
MIZUNA	12 DAYS
MUSTARD	14 DAYS
ARUGULA	15 DAYS
BASIL	15 DAYS
BEET	21 DAYS
AMARANTH	21 DAYS
FENUGREEK	21 DAYS
KALE	21 DAYS
CILANTRO	21 DAYS

Best varieties

Suppliers offer a special range of varieties labeled "microgreens," but you can use the more readily available ordinary seed packets for crops such as kale, beet, and basil, since they contain exactly the same seeds and will grow in the same way.

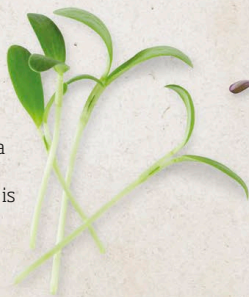


RED AMARANTH

Appearing almost luminous, these sparkling red leaves make a beautiful garnish for almost any dish. Packed with essential vitamins and minerals, the foliage tastes like lettuce.

FENUGREEK

The curry-like flavor of these little leaves will add a spicy kick to a sandwich, salad, or stir-fry. Fenugreek is also used in Asian cooking to aid digestion.



MIZUNA

The mild, slightly peppery taste of these pretty leaves adds depth to salads, and also makes a great topping for pasta and curry dishes.



BEET

These colorful red stems, with leaves in green or red, taste similar to the sweet, earthy roots, and help to brighten up salads and sandwiches.

KALE

Milder in flavor than the dark green mature leaves, but with the same high nutrient content. Sprinkle kale microgreens onto soups or salads just before serving.

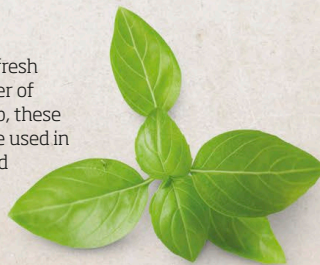


RADISH

Available with red or green leaves, radish microgreens are among the fastest seeds to germinate and mature. Sprinkle the spicy seedlings over any hot or cold dish.

BASIL

An easy way to enjoy fresh basil without the bother of growing a full-size crop, these young seedlings can be used in Mediterranean-inspired dishes.



'RED FRILL' MUSTARD

The pink-red leaves of this variety pack a punch by injecting mustard and horseradish flavors into salads, stir-fries, and sandwiches, or use them as a colorful garnish.



Little leafy dishes

Sprinkle basil or mizuna microgreen leaves over tomato soup before serving.

Add a few different microgreens to an open-face grilled cheese.

Increase the flavor of an omelet by scattering microgreens generously over the filling.

Blend mild microgreens with frozen peaches, ripe banana, spinach, and water for a healthy smoothie.

Make a salad of mixed microgreens, cubed blood orange, avocado slices, shredded carrot, and chopped walnuts.



Homemade tomato soup with basil



Set the shelves by a window or beneath a skylight so natural light can illuminate the top shelves.

Fix single fluorescent grow lights to the undersides of lower shelves to boost plant growth.

These wall shelves take up little space in a room yet provide a home for a wide selection of edibles growing under fluorescent lights.



Transform your shelves into a mini greenhouse

An ideal solution if your home does not offer much natural sunlight, **fluorescent grow lights** can be used to create a micro-indoor greenhouse to increase the **range of crops** you will be able to grow. The lights are surprisingly easy to attach to a set of ordinary **living room shelves** (see project overleaf).

What is a grow light?

Grow lights, or propagation lights as they are also known, imitate the sun's rays, which plants need to mature. They are used widely in the horticultural and agricultural industries to aid plant growth in winter, but smaller units are available for domestic use. These are easy to fit to shelving, or you can buy propagation units with integral lights to raise seeds and young plants.

Before buying grow lights, compare the running costs of different types and brands

Crops to try

You can grow almost any crop under a grow light, but if using lights fixed to shelves, you will be limited to small plants that can fit on them. Shelves are perfect for growing vegetable seeds, which need light to germinate, young seedlings, and other short-stemmed plants.

Salads & microgreens

Try growing microgreens and lettuces in long troughs that make the best use of the space on a shelf. The artificial light encourages seeds to germinate and enables you to grow these leafy crops all year round.



"Little Gem" lettuce is a compact variety of romaine.

Herbs

Many herbs, including basil, oregano, and thyme, will fit comfortably on a shelf and enjoy the brightness afforded by a grow light.



Radishes

The seeds of small, fast-growing crops such as radishes and spring onions can be sown every few weeks to give continuous crops from late spring to fall.



Quick growing guide



1-2 hours for various stages



Part sun for top shelves



Water every 2-3 days



Feeding depends on crops grown



Harvest lettuce and microgreens all year

Project >>



Create a mini greenhouse

Any set of **wooden shelves** can be used to create a **mini greenhouse** for growing plants (see also project overleaf), although the wider the shelves the better, as they will allow you to accommodate more plants. **Adjustable shelves** are a good idea if you want to grow taller crops.

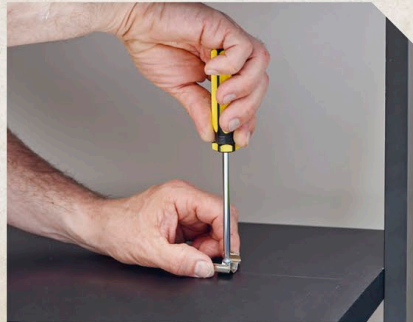
YOU WILL NEED • set of wooden shelves • paint (optional) • single strip fluorescent grow light for each “greenhouse” shelf • pencil • ruler • a few plastic-coated wire ties • screwdriver and small wood screws to attach shelves to wall (if necessary)

Check that all your plant containers are waterproof so they don't leak onto the shelves or into the grow lights

Grow lights may have different attachment systems, so read the instructions before you start.



1 Turn the shelves upside down and secure them so they don't fall over. Using a pencil and ruler, measure the width of the underside of one of the shelves and draw a line lengthways through the center.



2 Center the grow light unit along the pencil line marked on the shelf. Mark each end of the grow light with the pencil. Screw on the brackets supplied with the unit just inside these pencil marks.



3 Repeat steps 1–2 for each shelf that requires a grow light. Then clip the lights onto their brackets, ensuring that the plug sockets on all the lights are facing the same side of the shelving unit.



4 When you have secured all the grow lights to the shelves, turn the unit back up the right way, and position it against a wall. Some units will need to be fixed to the wall with screws. See the instructions before connecting power cables.



5 Secure the power cables to the back of the shelving unit using plastic-coated wire ties. These will keep the cords tidy and prevent anyone from tripping on them. Once you have plugged the unit into the wall outlet, you are ready to start growing crops.



Mimic natural light conditions by turning off your grow lights every night for 8-10 hours

6 You can display your shelves near an outlet in a dark corner of the house, but if you set them close to or under a window or skylight that offers some supplementary sunlight, you can also make use of the top shelves to grow more crops.

Arranging your edibles

To provide your crops with sufficient light, the tops of the plants should sit just an inch or two beneath the grow lights. If the plants are too far away, raise them up in their pots on glasses or other temporary supports. You can then remove the supports as the crops grow taller. Some grow lights are more powerful than others, so check first with your supplier to ensure you buy a product that is appropriate for your needs.



Raise up crops on upturned glasses.

Project continues >>



Raise lettuce from seed under grow lights

You can grow **lettuce** and similar leafy crops such as **mizuna** from seed in a long, **shallow container** that will fit neatly onto a shelf fitted with a grow light, or on a bright windowsill out of direct sun.

YOU WILL NEED long plastic container with drip tray • commercial potting mix • bamboo cane • lettuce seeds • vermiculite • plant labels • watering can fitted with rose head • a pair of sharp scissors

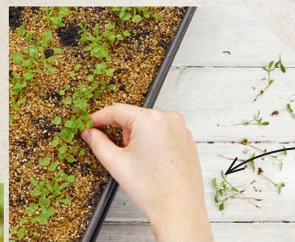
Lettuces grow quickly from seed, and most will be ready to eat just six to eight weeks after sowing



1 If your container has no drainage holes, make a few small holes in the base. Fill with potting mix and press down gently to firm. Make two depressions lengthwise in the mix with the bamboo cane.



2 Open the seed pack and pour some of the seeds into the palm of your hand. Using the forefinger and thumb of your other hand, sprinkle the seeds thinly along the two depressions. Cover the seeds with a thin layer of vermiculite. Place the container on its drip tray.



Thin crowded seedlings individually by hand.



3 Water the mix lightly and put the container on a shelf fitted with a grow light, placing it on supports if needed (p93). Keep the mix moist, but not wet. The seedlings will emerge within a week or two; once they are 2in (5cm) tall, thin them so they are about 1in (2cm) apart.

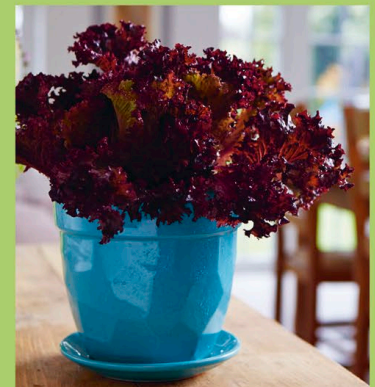


4 When the seedlings are 3in (7cm) tall, thin them again to about 3in (7cm) apart if you want full lettuce heads. Many potting mixes are enriched with fertilizer, so your lettuce will not need further feeding. If the mix you have used is not enriched, feed the plants when the leaves are 4in (10cm) tall with an all-purpose fertilizer for leafy crops.

start feeding the seedlings when the leaves are about 4in (10cm) tall.

Growing on a windowsill or under a skylight

You can also sow lettuce seeds in pots to grow on a windowsill or under a skylight. Sow seeds thinly in small plastic pots filled with potting mix, cover with vermiculite, and set in a bright place. Place the pots in pretty containers if you prefer an eye-catching display. Water the plants well, and thin the seedlings when they are 3in (7cm) tall, leaving 1-3 plants per pot (see steps 3 and 4) if you want full heads.



Lettuce under a skylight



5 If you are growing loose-leaf lettuce, also known as cut-and-come-again types, harvest all the leaves by cutting them down to 1½in (4cm) stumps when they reach 6in (15cm) in height. The stumps will then resprout to give a second crop.

If you have allowed your lettuce to develop into more fully formed heads, and harvest it leaf by leaf from each plant as you need it, the lettuce plants will then grow more leaves.



Use sharp scissors to harvest cut-and-come-again varieties.

Pick individual leaves from fully formed lettuce by hand.



Lettuce

Lactuca sativa

Lettuce is the mainstay of any fresh salad or sandwich. There is a wide choice of varieties, particularly if you grow from seed, ranging from bitter to sweet in flavor and soft or crisp in texture.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Lettuce seed is available throughout the year, or buy young seedlings in cell packs from a garden center from spring to early summer. If you have a grow light (p91), sow seed in trays or pots of multipurpose compost at any time of year. If not, sow every few weeks from early spring to early autumn. Lettuce germinates quickly and can be harvested within six to eight weeks of sowing.

Light & heat

Lettuce will not germinate above 77°F (25°C) and is most likely to succeed in cooler conditions, ideally below 70°F (21°C). Hot weather can also cause it to bolt (flower) early, which results in leaves with a bitter, unpleasant taste. Place your plants in a bright spot out of direct sunlight.

Watering

Ensure plants are kept moist, but avoid waterlogged conditions, which may cause them to rot. Growing lettuce in a container with drainage holes, set on a drip tray, is the best way to avoid overwatering.

Aftercare

Unless you are using a commercial potting mix with added timed-release fertilizer, feed lettuce seedlings when they have true leaves and every two weeks thereafter. Use a balanced liquid fertilizer according to the manufacturer's directions. (For harvesting lettuce leaves, see p95.)



Plant 1-3 lettuce plants in an 8 in (20cm) pot and harvest leaf by leaf.

'Green Oak-Leaf' lettuce

Best lettuce varieties

There are two main types of lettuce: those, such as romaine, that form a tight heart of closely packed leaves, and loose-leaf forms, often dubbed “cut-and-come-again” lettuce, because after cutting the leaf tops, the stubs regrow to offer a second harvest.



◀ ROMAINE LETTUCE

Romaine lettuces produce slender, oval heads of tightly packed crisp leaves. Leave plants to develop into full-headed lettuce or harvest individual leaves when they are mature.

Height & spread:

10 x 4in (25 x 10cm)

▶ 'LITTLE GEM' ▶

One of the earliest varieties to mature from a spring sowing, these small, compact romaine lettuces produce crisp, sweet hearts. Thin the seedlings to allow individual plants to develop into heads.

Height & spread:

8 x 8in (20 x 20cm)



▶ 'GREEN BATAVIAN' ▶

A frilly leaved form, batavia lettuce has a nutty flavor and crisp texture. Thin the seedlings so they have space to develop into a loose head and harvest the whole plant when mature.

Height & spread:

8 x 10in (20 x 25cm)



▶ 'GREEN OAK LEAF' ▶

The frilly green leaves of this loose-leaf lettuce are sweet and soft in texture. Use as a cut-and-come-again variety, or harvest leaf by leaf when mature. Seedlings can also be thinned to allow plants to develop a loose head.

Height & spread:

8 x 10in (20 x 25cm)



▶ 'LOLLO ROSSA' ▶

An Italian lettuce with a slightly bitter flavor, this decorative variety produces compact, loose heads of dark-red frilly leaves. It can be used as a cut-and-come-again variety.

Height & spread:

6 x 10in (15 x 25cm)



▶ 'RED OAK LEAF' ▶

The dark-red leaves of this loose-leaf variety have a slightly bitter flavor, ideal for spicing up salads. Use it as a cut-and-come-again type, or thin the seedlings and allow it to develop a frilly open head.

Height & spread:

8 x 10in (20 x 25cm)

Cook's tips

Serving salad greens

Wrap crispy duck or spiced chicken in crunchy batavia lettuce leaves to create Chinese-inspired wraps.

Toss some romaine lettuce leaves into a vegetable stir-fry flavored with chopped garlic and drizzled with sesame oil for a tasty dish.

Make a salsa verde using coarsely chopped loose-leaf lettuce combined with shallots, herbs, chiles, oil, and a pinch of citrus zest.

Add some sliced radishes and avocado to a bed of crisp lettuce leaves for a simple but refreshing side salad.

Serve a simple Caesar salad with a bed of fresh salad leaves topped with slices of chicken, cheese, and some croutons scattered on top.



Caesar salad

Cut out a segment of an old table and insert commercial metal serving containers, which can be purchased online, to house your potted leafy salad crops.

Bok choy needs plenty of water to prevent it from bolting (flowering).

Grow a few pots of mizuna to provide a continuous supply of fresh leaves.





Tabletop spicy greens

Try growing a range of **Asian-style leafy crops** inside metal serving containers **set into your tabletop** to create a strikingly different display that's guaranteed to impress your dinner guests (see project overleaf).

Salads from seed

Asian leafy greens, such as Japanese mizuna, can be bought as seedling plants from a garden center, but they are easy to grow from seed, too (see pp204-05). You will also find a wider choice of varieties if you buy from seed catalogs. These leafy greens will thrive in an area that is out of direct sunlight, so a dining room table can provide the ideal growing conditions.

Cool crops

Mizuna prefers a cool room and will need watering more frequently in hot weather.



Asian leafy crop options

You will find seeds for a wide range of nutrient-rich Asian greens from specialized seed companies. Most grow well indoors from spring to autumn, and the crops require very little aftercare apart from frequent watering and an occasional dose of liquid fertilizer for leafy crops.



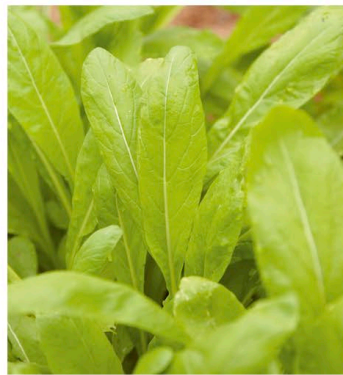
Bok choy

Choose from green- or purple-leaved varieties. Use the baby leaves in salads, or add full heads to stir-fries and soups.



Chrysanthemum greens

For a long harvest, sow in pots twice weekly from spring to summer. Enjoy the leaves in salads, soups, and stir-fries.



Mibuna

Like its cousin mizuna, mibuna has a spicy flavor and is easy to grow from seed. Add to salads or steam lightly.

Quick growing guide



4 hours for various stages



Part sun



Water every day or two



Feed with liquid fertilizer for leafy crops



Harvest leaves as required

Project >>



Create a tabletop for spicy Asian greens

You will need just a few carpentry tools to **adapt an old wooden table**, or a precut top mounted on trestle table legs, so you can **grow and display** a variety of **leafy greens** to pick as you need them for fresh salads, or to stir-fry.

YOU WILL NEED old wooden table or precut top • trestle table legs (if using top) • stainless steel catering containers • pencil • long ruler • electric screwdriver & bit • electric jigsaw • dust mask & safety glasses • sandpaper • plastic pots • gravel • potting mix • mizuna, mibuna, & bok choy seedlings

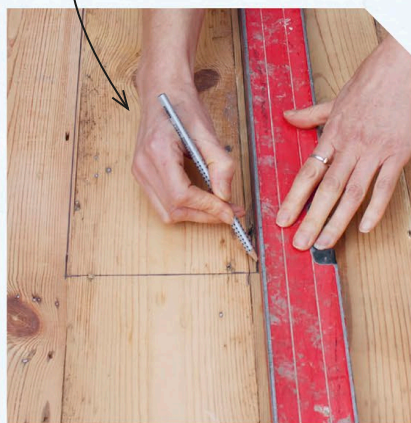
Look in your local secondhand and charity shops for an inexpensive wooden table to customize

1 Position the containers upside-down in a line in the middle of the table and measure their width and length. Subtract the figures from the width and length of the table, and divide by two. Use these final measurements to ensure the containers are positioned centrally. Draw around their outer edges.

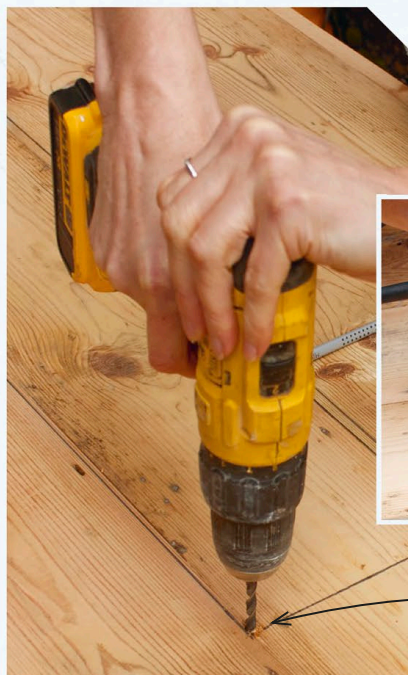


Draw around the edges of the containers with a pencil.

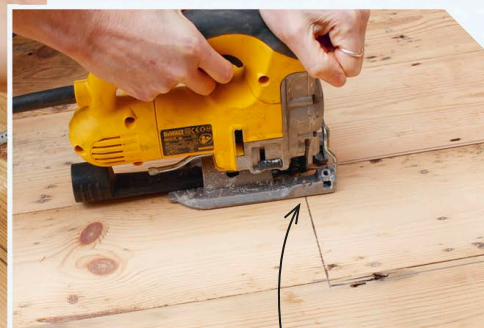
Make the rectangle slightly smaller than the trays.



2 Draw a rectangle $\frac{1}{4}$ in (5mm) inside the pencil marks you have made around the trays. Once cut out, this slightly smaller rectangle will allow the trays to sit snugly in the table without falling through.



3 Make a hole in a corner of the rectangle for the jigsaw blade using a wood drill bit. Wearing safety glasses and a dust mask, insert the blade and cut the wood.



Make an initial hole for the jigsaw blade.

Holding the jigsaw firmly, cut inside the pencil marks.



*Before
sawing, check
the width of the lip
on the containers to
ensure they won't
fall through the
table*

4 Check that the containers fit inside the hole. If the hole is too small, sand down the edges until the containers will fit. Use the sandpaper to also smooth the edges and remove any splinters.



5 Check that the plastic pots fit inside the containers, then plant them with mizuna, mibuna, and bok choy seedlings using potting mix. Add gravel to the bottom of the containers and put the pots inside.



6 These crops like cool conditions out of direct sunlight. However, they will suffer in a dark corner, so position the table near a window or under a skylight. Turn the pots every day or two to provide even growth, and water daily. Pick the leaves as required or leave the bok choy plants to develop full heads for frying or steaming.

Easy option

If you do not have a table to customize, grow some salad greens in a colander. Line a large colander with plastic and add a coir hanging basket liner. Fill with potting mix and plant your seedlings. Choose crops with different-colored leaves to make a decorative tabletop display. Water every day or two, and turn the colander regularly to promote even growth.



Colander-grown salad greens



Quick growing guide



10 minutes to prepare



Place in a sunny area
57-72°F
(14-22°C)



Replace the water every day or two



No need to feed



Harvest shoots when 8in (20cm) or taller



Tangy garlic shoots

Put some **garlic bulbs or cloves** in water, and in just a few weeks they will grow **delicious shoots** that you can snip off and add to savory dishes such as soups, stir-fries, salads, and sandwiches.




YOU WILL NEED: • garlic bulbs (preferably organic) • clear shot glasses or tealight holders
• scissors or sharp knife • chicken wire or similar if using individual cloves (optional)

1 Carefully peel off the papery outer layer of each garlic bulb to reveal the individual cloves, but do not separate them. Stand each bulb on top of a shot glass of water, flat side down. Within a few days, roots should start to appear at the base.

2 Keep the shot glasses and bulbs in a light area indoors, such as a kitchen windowsill or countertop. Replenish the water every day or two, and soon each garlic bulb will start to form a dense network of roots and green shoots.

3 When the shoots are about 8in (20cm) or more in height, snip them off 2in (5cm) from the base with scissors or a knife. The shoots will regrow from the stubs, and you may even get a third crop before the bulbs are exhausted.



A row of five glass cups, each containing a garlic bulb with several long, green sprouts growing from the top. The cups are filled with water, and the bulbs are partially submerged. The cups are arranged in a diagonal line on a light-colored wooden cutting board. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

You can grow garlic shoots in little cups on any bright windowsill. Just ensure that the water is always topped off so the roots never dry out.

A second crop of sprouts will grow if you snip them off 2in (5cm) from the top of the clove.



Chives & scallions

Allium species

These diminutive plants are members of the onion family, and will produce crops from spring to autumn. You can use their mild-flavored leaves and stems in many dishes.

How to grow

When to buy & sow

Scallions are annuals, so buy new plants or sow seeds every year; chives are perennials and regrow each spring. Sow scallion seeds in small pots using seed compost every few weeks from early spring to late summer for a continuous crop. If you buy scallion seedlings, pot them in standard potting mix. Sow chive seeds, or buy small pots of chives, in spring.

Light & heat

Both plants do well in pots on all windowsills except those that face north, which may not offer quite enough light. The plants are tolerant of cold conditions, and will also grow well in warm room temperatures.

Watering

Keep the potting mix moist, but don't allow it to become waterlogged. To prevent soggy, grow the plants in pots with drainage holes, and set these pots on saucers or inside waterproof containers.

Aftercare

Apply a liquid feed, such as diluted seaweed fertilizer, a couple of times during the plants' growing season to keep the leaves green.

Harvesting

Most scallions are ready to harvest 6–8 weeks after sowing the seed. Chives can be harvested as soon as you have a large enough clump, but take just a few at a time so the plant can regenerate itself.

You can harvest and eat the chive flowers as well as the leaves.



**Chives and
scallion 'Apache'**

Choosing chive varieties

There are two main types of chive, and both produce leaves from spring to late fall when grown indoors in pots. Keep the plants cool in summer to prevent them from wilting, and water consistently.

GARDEN CHIVES ▀

(*Allium schoenoprasum*)
These slim-stemmed leaves have a mild onion flavor and produce edible pink pom-pom flowers in late spring.

Height: 12in (30cm)



GARLIC CHIVES ▀

(*Allium tuberosum*)
The thicker leaves of this plant, sometimes known as Chinese chives, have a stronger taste than the common garden variety, and combine garlic and onion flavors. They can be eaten raw or cooked.

Height: 20in (50cm)



Choosing scallion varieties

Although there are a few varieties of scallion, they differ very little in taste. Avoid types that produce large bulbs, as they may not develop well indoors. Scallions may also be referred to in seed catalogs as "bunching onions" or "spring onions."



◀ 'WHITE LISBON'

(*Allium cepa* 'White Lisbon')
A popular and reliable variety, with long white stems and dark green, mild-flavored leaves.

Height: 10in (25cm)



◀ 'PARADE'

(*Allium cepa* 'Parade')
This cultivar has a longer white stem and fewer green leaves than other types. It has a mild flavor that can be used to gently spice up salads and stir-fries.

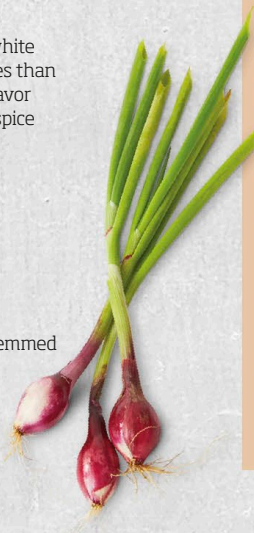
Height: 12in (30cm).



'APACHE' ▀

(*Allium cepa* 'Apache')
An attractive purple-red stemmed scallion with dark green leaves and a crisp texture. This variety is ideal for growing in containers.

Height : 10in (25cm)



Cooking with chives

Mash chopped chives into butter and use as a versatile accompaniment to steaks, fish, and vegetables.

Scatter chopped chives over braised scallions and serve as a side dish.

Using scallions

Chop scallions, fresh tomatoes, ripe avocados, and jalapeño peppers, and sprinkle with grated cheese over a plate of nachos.

Grill until the cheese melts.

Stir finely chopped scallions and cucumber into plain yogurt and cream cheese for a simple dip.

Embellish a simple miso soup with noodles and thinly sliced scallions, raw carrots, and red peppers.



Miso soup with scallions

Plant radishes and beets in pots with drainage holes set on trays or saucers. Place on a bench or tiled floor next to a large window or by a glass door.

You can eat the leaves of both radishes and beets; add to salads or steam them

A wooden bench can double up as a plant stand.

Radishes will produce crops within four to six weeks.





Pots of tasty roots

Crunchy, peppery **radishes** are **quick to crop** and **easy to grow** indoors in a pot near a window. **Beets** take **longer to mature**, and you will need to take care of the plants for **a few months** to enjoy their sweet, nutritious roots.



Choosing a container

To grow common round types of radish, you can opt for a shallow container just 6in (15cm) in depth, but choose a deeper pot if you are sowing 'French Breakfast' or the white daikon types (see p111). Beets require a container at least 10in (25cm) deep and wide. Set the plants where they will receive lots of sunlight (north-facing windows will not be bright enough).

'French Breakfast' radishes
in a deeper galvanized pot

Root choices

There are many types of radish to choose from, but the easiest and quickest to grow are small, round, red types (see pp110-11 for other varieties). The best beets for indoor pots are also those that produce small, round roots.

'Cherry Belle' radish

The globe-shaped roots of this variety have a bright red skin encasing crisp white, mild-flavored flesh.



*Try this golden beet
grated in a salad.*

'Chioggia' beet

This pretty variety of beet produces small, round roots that feature concentric pink and white rings within.

'Burpee's Golden' beet

With their orange skin and golden flesh, these beets look a little different; their golf ball-sized roots are also sweet and tasty.



'Babybeet' beet

Producing a crop up to 2 weeks earlier than others, this variety has round roots with a superb, sweet flavor and tender flesh.

Quick growing guide



2-3 hours for various stages



Full sun



Water every 2 days



Feed beets with a fertilizer for leafy crops 6-8 weeks after planting



For radishes, harvest approx 4-6 weeks from sowing; for beets, approx 10-12 weeks after planting

Project >>



Grow radishes & beets in pots

These delicious roots will grow indoors from **spring** to **autumn**. They can be raised either from **seed** or from young **seedlings**, known as “plugs,” which you can buy from the garden center in spring. If you have space, **sow pots of radish seed twice weekly** for a continuous supply of fresh roots.

Water radishes consistently every couple of days to prevent the roots from cracking.

YOU WILL NEED 2 pots, one at least 6in (15cm) deep for radishes, and one at least 10in (25cm) deep and wide for beets
• tray or saucer for each pot • radish seeds • beet “plugs” in cell trays • potting mix • watering can with rose head

Growing radishes from seed



1 Place the radish pot on its saucer or tray. Fill it up to $\frac{3}{4}$ in (2cm) from the rim with moist potting mix and firm it down gently with your hands. Use a blunt pencil to make two circular furrows about $\frac{1}{2}$ in (1cm) deep on the surface. Pour the radish seeds into the palm of one hand and use your other fingers to sprinkle them thinly into the furrows. Try to sow each seed about $\frac{1}{4}$ in (5mm) apart. Cover and water gently; then place near a bright window.



2 Keep the seedlings well watered, but ensure the potting mix doesn't become wet. After 10-12 days, when the seedlings have a few sets of leaves, thin them out so the remaining young plants are about 1in (2.5cm) apart.



3 Water every two days, and every day in hot weather, and turn the pot often so the stems don't stretch toward the light and become long and thin. After 4-6 weeks, the roots will poke out above the potting mix. Pull the roots out gently by their leaves and eat them immediately. Don't leave radishes for too long once mature, as they quickly become woody and inedible.

Growing beets from plugs



1 Fill the beet pot to about $\frac{3}{4}$ in (2cm) from the rim with potting mix and firm it down gently with your hands. Water the seedlings well and remove one set from the cell tray.

2 Gently pry apart the individual seedlings from the clump, and try not to tear their delicate young root systems.

Plant the seedlings as soon as possible, as they will suffer if left to grow together for too long.



3 Make a hole with a blunt pencil and carefully insert one seedling. Cover with potting mix. Repeat with the other seedlings, 3 in (8cm) apart.



4 Place the pot in a bright area. Keep the seedlings well watered, and turn the pot every week to ensure even growth. Harvest the beets when golf-ball sized and still tender.



Radishes

Raphanus sativus

The humble radish is a perfect crop for beginners to grow: it germinates quickly from seed, crops within a month of sowing, and is available in several jewel-like shades. Choose a few varieties to spice up your salads.

How to grow

When to buy & sow

Sow radish seed from early spring to summer in pots of commercial potting mix. You can also buy young seedlings at a garden center, but as the seeds germinate so quickly you may find it just as easy to sow them straight from seed. Long, white daikon radishes can also be sown in autumn in a pot at least 8in (20cm) deep.

Light & heat

Radishes are cool season crops, and will struggle to germinate in temperatures above 70°F (21°C). If you want to sow them in summer, start them off in a cool room, or set the air-conditioning to 64°F (18°C). Daikon types need even colder conditions, so grow them in an outdoor windowbox in autumn if your home is too warm.

Watering

Regular watering is essential, especially during hot weather; it keeps the roots from cracking and the plants from going to seed.

Aftercare

Thin the seedlings when they are 2-3in (5-7cm) tall and have a few sets of leaves about 1in (2.5cm) apart. Do not feed, as the potting mix contains sufficient nutrients.

Harvesting

Radishes are easy to harvest: simply pull out the plants individually by their leaf stems when you see their roots poking above the surface of the compost.

*Plants need cool
but bright
conditions in
order to thrive.*



Best indoor varieties

You can grow a whole range of radish varieties at home, choosing from hot and spicy or mild types. Also look out for unusual colors such as black, white, yellow, and purple.



'CHERRY BELLE' ▲

An award-winning variety that produces bright red, evenly shaped radish roots with crisp, tender flesh and a mild flavor.

Height & spread:

6 x 4in (15cm x 10cm)



'ZLATA' ▾

An unusual yellow-skinned variety that produces oval-shaped roots with a peppery flavored, crisp white flesh.

Height & spread:

6 x 4in (15cm x 10cm)



'SPARKLER'

These round, red-skinned roots have a white splash at one end. They are mild-flavored and make a decorative addition to salads.

Height & spread:

6 x 4in (15cm x 10cm)



'AMETHYST' ▾

The rich purple coloring of these roots makes a beautiful contrast with red radishes. They have a hot, peppery flavor that packs a punch in salads and side dishes.

Height & spread:

6 x 4in (15cm x 10cm)



'BLACK SPANISH'

These unusual radishes have black skins and clear white flesh. The roots can grow up to 2-3in (5-7cm) in diameter without becoming woody, and retain their flavor when stored.

Height & spread:

6 x 6in (15cm x 15cm)



'FRENCH BREAKFAST' ▲

A popular heritage variety, its cylindrical roots have a spicy flavor and a crisp, crunchy texture. 'French Breakfast 3' has white-tipped red roots.

Height & spread:

6 x 4in (15cm x 10cm)

◆ DAIKON

This large variety produces turnip-flavored roots that can be baked, boiled, shredded, or fried. They also store well. Sow from late summer to autumn.

Height & spread:

6 x 6in (15 x 15cm)

'French Breakfast' radishes



Radish recipes

Thinly slice radishes and cover with salsa verde and shredded mint for a colorful starter.

Cut off the tops of 'French Breakfast' radishes and reserve the tops. Scoop out the middle of each radish and fill with green or black olive tapenade. Replace the reserved lid and serve as an attractive appetizer.

Dip radishes in gently tempered butter, leave to set in the fridge, and serve with flaked sea salt.

Combine smoked salmon with chopped radishes and spring onions, add a yogurt and horseradish dressing, and serve as a starter.

Slice some radishes and add to a ham and cheese omelet just before serving.



Smoked salmon and radish



Pots of crunchy carrots

Carrots grown indoors are protected from carrot root fly, whose grubs eat the roots

Carrots can be grown **from seed** in pots indoors, and varieties are available **in a rainbow of colors**, as well as traditional orange (see project overleaf). The roots will grow best in a **cool** room with lots of **bright light**.

Slow but steady growth

Growing carrots is not for the impatient gardener, as most varieties take at least eight weeks to mature from sown seed. However, by sowing a few pots in early spring, and more later in the summer, you can enjoy crops in summer and autumn. Grow carrots in a bright, cool room in a pot that allows for plenty of drainage (see project overleaf), as these vegetables will rot if left to sit in waterlogged soil.



Save small carrot "thinnings" to eat as microgreens.



Choose seeds that produce a visually diverse crop.

Colorful roots

Standard-sized orange carrots are widely available and not expensive to buy, so if you are growing carrots yourself, try a more unusual variety. Carrot seed is available for crops in a wide range of colors, including purple, yellow, red, and even white, or choose tiny round varieties, which will fit into shallow containers. You can grow the different-colored varieties in the same pot, but check the seed packets to ensure they need the same growing conditions and are about the same length, as this may affect the rate at which they mature. Galvanized buckets, colorful plastic bins, and wide, deep pots make good homes for a crop of carrots.





Choose bite-sized round carrots for shallow containers.

Fermy carrot leaves make a decorative addition to your home.

Create a display of carrot pots and herbs such as thyme, which will grow happily together in the same sunny place. Keep the growing mix damp at all times, but make sure it never becomes waterlogged.

Quick growing guide



1-2 hours for various stages



Full sun



Every 2-3 days



Balanced liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks



8-20 weeks after sowing seeds

Project >>



Grow carrots in pots

Growing carrots in a **plastic pot** with **drainage holes**, which is slipped inside a **waterproof container**, provides the **right** growing conditions for your crop while making a decorative feature for your home.

YOU WILL NEED galvanized bucket or similar deep container • plastic pot to fit inside your container • hand drill with drill bit • potting mix • seed • watering can fitted with rose head • balanced liquid fertilizer



Open the windows whenever possible to provide your carrot crops with good ventilation

1 Choose a large watertight outer container that is at least 8in (20cm) deep for average-sized carrots, or 6in (15cm) for small, round types. Then find a lightweight plastic pot to fit snugly inside the container. Turn the pot upside down and, using an electric drill, make five or so drainage holes in the base.



2 Fill the plastic pot with commercial growing mix to about 3in (6cm) below the rim. You can also add a ½in (1cm) layer of seed-starting mix on top to provide the optimum conditions for germination. Sow the carrot seeds thinly on top of the seed-starting mix, and cover with another ½in (1cm) of seed-starting mix. Firm the mix lightly with your fingers.



3 Place the plastic pot inside the waterproof outer container. Water the seeds gently with a watering can fitted with a fine rose head, or spray the surface of the soil mix well with a mister. Set the container in a cool room where it will get enough bright light. The seeds take a few weeks to germinate.



4 Keep the mix moist but not wet at all times; carrots dislike wet soil. If you overwater by mistake, remove the plastic pot and leave it to drain over a sink or in a shower, and pour out the excess water from the outer container.



5 When the carrots are between 4-5in (10-12cm) tall, thin any crowded roots so that the remaining carrot seedlings are roughly 1in (2.5cm) apart. You can eat the tiny carrots you pull out raw and add their ferny leaves to salads and sandwiches.



6 The foliage will continue to grow as the roots develop. You will then see the tops of the roots starting to poke up above the surface. After 8-14 weeks (though some carrots will take longer), they will be ready to harvest.

Cool crops

Carrot seeds germinate best at a temperature between 59-70°F (15-21°C), and the roots will grow well in a room no warmer than 68°F (20°C). When growing carrots next to a window, turn the container every day or two to prevent the leaves from becoming tall and leggy.

Feed your carrots every two weeks with a balanced liquid fertilizer, and make sure the growing mix never dries out, especially during hot weather (see also step 4).



Harvested carrots



Carrots

Daucus carota subsp. sativus

These **sweet roots** are fun to grow indoors in large containers, and although this method will only deliver a small crop, the **flavor of homegrown carrots** makes them well worth the effort.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Sow seeds from early spring to midsummer for a harvest through summer and autumn (see pp112-15). Raise the carrots in pots at least 8in (20cm) deep for average-sized carrots, or 6in (15cm) for shorter types.

Light & heat

Carrots germinate more quickly in warm conditions, so place your pots in a room at 70°F (21°C); the seedlings should emerge within a week or two. They can then be moved to a slightly cooler, but bright, area to grow.

Watering

Use a watering can with a fine rose head and water when the top of the soil feels dry; carrots will withstand some drought, but won't tolerate waterlogging.

Aftercare

When the seedlings are 4-5in (10-12cm) tall, thin them so those left are about 1in (2.5cm) apart. About four weeks later you can thin them further if you spot any that are still too crowded. Feed with an all-purpose fertilizer for root crops 6-8 weeks after sowing.

Harvesting

Harvest the roots while they are young and sweet—about 12-16 weeks after sowing. Check whether they are ready by initially removing one carefully.



Best indoor varieties

There are hundreds of varieties of carrots available. You can either opt for reliable and smaller types, or be adventurous and try the more unusual purple and white varieties.

'NANTES' ▶

This fast-maturing carrot produces blunt-tipped, almost coreless roots with a sweet, crunchy taste. Sow in early spring or even late winter to harvest your first crops from late spring to early summer.

Root length: up to 6in (15cm)

◀ 'SUGARSNAX'

This variety produces long, tapering carrots that will be ready to harvest in late summer or early autumn. They take a few months to mature from a spring sowing, but your reward is sweet, crunchy roots.

Root length: up to 8in (20cm)

'WHITE SATIN' ▶

The vibrant white roots of this variety have a smooth texture and sweet flavor, similar to their more conventional cousins. These carrots retain their pale color once cooked and make a pretty side dish when mixed with orange types. They are also delicious raw.

Root length: up to 8in (20cm)

'PURPLE HAZE' ▶

A beautiful, colorful variety that is packed with antioxidants and vitamin A. Although this carrot loses its intense flavor and color when cooked, the purple skin and bright orange flesh make an eye-catching dish when cut and served raw.

Root length: up to 10in (25cm)

'ROYAL CHANTENAY' ▲

The squat, finger-length roots of this variety have almost no core and are perfect for growing in containers. Sow a few pots every 2-3 weeks from early spring to summer for a continuous harvest.

Root length: 4in (10cm)

Cook's tips

Cooking with carrots

Slice raw carrots and serve with a hummus of canned chickpeas, lemon juice, garlic, salt, cumin, tahini, and a little water blended in a food processor.

Substitute carrot-top greens for basil to make a mild-tasting pesto.

Mix coarsely grated purple and white carrots with berries, cilantro, mint, and parsley, and top with crumbled feta for a visually dramatic salad.

Serve a striking canapé of thinly sliced raw purple carrots topped with crushed avocado, goat cheese, and a roasted hazelnut on each.



Raw carrots with hummus



Quick growing guide



13 hours for various stages



Bright but not direct sunlight



Mist twice a day



No feeding required



Harvest within 2-3 weeks



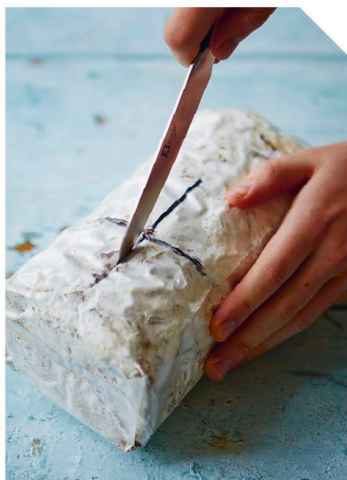
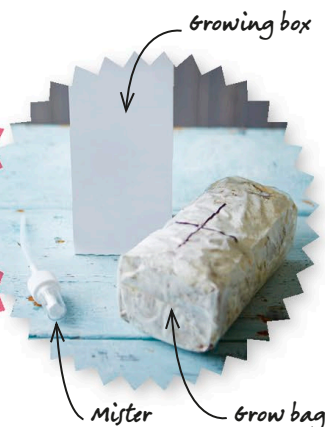
Oyster mushrooms in 14 days

Watching fresh mushrooms grow **day by day** is fun and fascinating. You can choose to grow a wide variety of different types, including exotic **oyster mushrooms**, shiitake, and enoki.

YOU WILL NEED

- oyster mushroom kit
- sharp knife
- large bucket or bowl
- clean brick or similar heavy object
- mister

Choose a kit with a "substrate" that has been precolonized with mushroom spawn. This kit uses spent coffee grounds (a waste product from the coffee industry) as its substrate



1 You can open a kit immediately or store it for up to a month in a dry, dark place. Remove the grow bag from the box and cut along the cross marked on the plastic.



2 Submerge the grow bag, cross side up, in a bowl of water and weigh it down with a clean brick or another bowl of water. Soak for 12 hours; then leave it to drain.



3 Squeeze out any excess water and air from the plastic bag; then slot it back into the box. Peel off the front of the box along the perforations to reveal a window.



The mushrooms are ready to harvest when their smooth caps start to turn up to reveal the serrated undersides. Repeat steps 1-4 for a second harvest.

4 Mist the open section of the bag with water twice a day until the mushrooms are ready to harvest. Nothing will happen for about a week, but you will then see tiny mushrooms starting to form. They will grow rapidly, often doubling in size day by day.



5 To harvest your mushrooms, gently grasp the whole bouquet at its base with one hand. Then twist and pull, and the mushrooms should simply pull away from the bag, ready for use.





Mushrooms

Various species

You can grow a range of exotic and unusual mushrooms in your home, thanks to some ingenious kits that provide you with everything you need, including the spores that develop into these tasty fungi.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Most mushroom kits produce crops whatever the season. Some include a separate substrate (growing medium), also known as fruiting cakes, inoculated with mushroom “spawn”; others include pre-inoculated substrate and offer the best options for beginners. The substrate in your kit may be manure, sawdust, vermiculite, wood chips, or coffee grounds.

Light & heat

Mushrooms do not need light to grow—they are a separate category of living organisms—but most need a temperature of about 70°F (21°C) for the spawn to form the white mycelium from which the mushrooms develop.

Watering

Mushrooms need plenty of moisture to grow. Ensure the substrate and mycelium are always damp by spraying with water twice a day.

Aftercare

You can keep mushrooms in a bright room, but not in direct sunlight, as they will quickly dry out. Kits from specialized suppliers will specify the conditions required for their particular mushrooms.

Harvesting

To harvest your mushrooms, gently grasp the whole bouquet at the base. Then twist and pull, and the mushrooms should simply pull away, ready for use.

Best indoor varieties

Some of the most unusual and beautiful mushrooms are the easiest to grow from a kit, while the button types—most widely available to buy in the supermarket—are among the most difficult. Check with specialized suppliers that the kits you intend to buy are suitable for growing mushrooms indoors.

SHIITAKE

(*Lentinula edodes*)

Grown widely in the Far East, these mushrooms have a deep, meaty flavor when cooked. They are a vital ingredient in miso soup, stir-fry dishes, and a range of sauces.

Mushroom length:

2–4in (5–10cm)



ENOKI

(*Flammulina velutipes*)

These slim-stemmed, cream-colored mushrooms have a mild, delicate flavor and a slightly crunchy texture. Eat raw or cooked in a variety of dishes, including salads, sandwiches, soups, and pasta and noodle sauces.

Mushroom length:

6in (15cm)



KING OYSTER ▀*(Pleurotus eryngii)*

The cartoon-like appearance of this thick-stemmed, brown-capped variety belies its sweet gourmet flavor, which is very different from that of regular oyster mushrooms. Try sautéing, stir-frying, or grilling this regal mushroom.

Mushroom length: 6in (15cm)

These beautiful fungi develop from tiny buds to form large, handsome mushrooms in a few days.

**White oyster mushroom****◀ OYSTER***(Pleurotus ostreatus)*

Easy to grow, the large, dramatic pinky-red, blue, or white caps have a nutty flavor, and are perfect for soups and stir-fries.

Mushroom length: 4-10in (10-25cm)**Red oyster mushrooms****Mushroom-inspired menus**

Cut off and discard the lower half of a bouquet of enoki mushrooms and add the remaining caps and stems to a fresh salad.

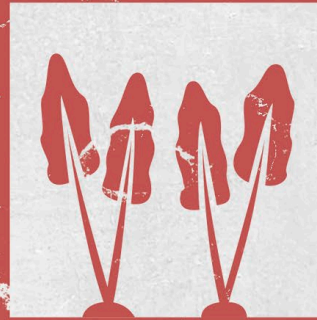
Make garlic mushrooms by sautéing king oysters in butter and chopped garlic, then adding a handful of fresh chives on top before serving with garlic bread.

For a simple miso soup, add sliced shiitake mushrooms to a broth made from miso paste, sweet peppers, spring onions, and cubes of tofu.

Stir-fry some oyster mushrooms, spring onions, and bok choy; then flavor with sweet chili and soy sauce before adding cooked soba noodles and serving.

**Stir-fried oyster mushrooms**





Fruiting vegetables

Tomatoes, eggplants, cucumbers, and peppers are types of fruiting vegetables that can be grown indoors. They require a bright, sunny location, so if you have a light-filled room, try growing a few of these jewel-colored crops.

Introducing fruiting vegetables

When is a vegetable not a vegetable? The answer is when it's a **not-sweet fruit**, such as a **tomato, cucumber, or pepper**, with its seeds wrapped in a nutritious, fleshy case.

Sparkling showstoppers

These wonderful fruit-vegetables are fun to grow, and while they take a little longer to mature than most leafy edibles, they are beautiful plants in their own right and make decorative displays on windowsills and in sunny rooms. They are covered with pretty flowers in spring and summer, which then go on to form the fruits. They all require regular feeding, too, but by doing so, you will ensure the heaviest crops. Check that you have space for larger plants, such as cucumbers or tamarillo tree tomatoes, before you start growing them.

Healthy treats

Aside from the superior taste of homegrown crops, fresh fruiting vegetables are worth growing for their many health benefits. Tomatoes, for example, contain many minerals and vitamins, including A, C, and E. They are also

rich in the natural "phytochemical" lycopene, which is responsible for their red color; research has shown that this nutrient and antioxidant helps to support bone health and protects against diseases such as cancer. Cucumbers are a good source of vitamin K, which keeps the blood healthy, while peppers contain more vitamin C weight for weight than oranges. All fruiting vegetables are low in calories and contain fiber, and a diet rich in these foods will promote all-around good health and vitality.

Their versatility in the kitchen, and the fact that their vitamin and mineral content is highest when they are eaten fresh, makes these vegetables a highly desirable addition to your indoor edible garden. All the

plants included in this chapter require lots of sun for their fruits to ripen, so give them a try if your home receives plenty of bright sunlight.



Best zones for fruiting vegetables

Like the majority of fruiting crops, these vegetables are sun-lovers and will thrive in the light and warmth of zones 1, 2, and 3. Cucamelons, chiles, sweet peppers, and bush, or compact, tomatoes will also grow well outside in summer.

Zone 1

South-facing windows

These plants will relish the sun and heat beside a south-facing window. Try bush tomatoes, chiles, and peppers on a sill; set larger plants next to glass doors or large windows.

Zone 2

East- and west-facing windows

Most fruiting vegetables will bear in a location close to a large east- or west-facing window, as long as the window is not shaded by trees or buildings.

Zone 3

Beneath a skylight

These plants will perform well under a skylight, especially if there is some supplementary sunlight pouring in from a vertical window. If the room is very hot, water plants daily.

Zone 4

Walls

Unless a wall receives full sunlight for most of the day in summer, the fruit on these plants may not develop well or ripen. Choose another location to be on the safe side.

Zone 5

Dark corners

You can only raise these plants in a dark corner if you have grow lights. Choose compact tomatoes, chiles, and peppers that will fit beneath a domestic grow light.

Zone 6

Center of a room

Larger crops, such as indeterminate tomatoes and cucumbers, will fruit in the center of a sun-filled, south-facing room, but not in any other location.

Zone 7

Cool (unheated) south-facing room

These crops will struggle in an unheated room in a cool climate in early spring. However, from late spring, the bright conditions will promote good fruit production.

Zone 8

Outside windowsill

All these plants are tender, which means they will die if temperatures plummet, so plant outside only after all risk of frost has passed in late spring or early summer.



Carefully take down the display every week or so and pour out excess water in the bowl to prevent any spillages



Suspend the display from a secure hook in the ceiling. Choose a sunny spot for it to hang, and ensure you can reach it easily to water and feed the plants.

'chilly chili' is a small, bushy variety that is covered with red and orange fruits in summer.



Chile & herb ball

Suspended over a dining table, this hanging display of chile and bush basil plants, with their sparkling jewel-like fruits and emerald leaves, is the perfect crop to grow if you have an apartment with limited floor space.

Bowls as baskets

Metal or plastic mixing bowls make inexpensive and practical indoor planters, but you can use any lightweight, watertight vessel as long as it is large and sturdy enough to accommodate your plants. Suspend the bowl using metal chains (used for traditional hanging baskets—see overleaf), or try jute macramé basket holders.

Chile & herb choices

Some chile plants grow tall and shrub-like, so choose a dwarf or compact type for this project (below). Bush basil and thyme are the best choices of herbs, as both are compact and easy to grow.



Picking ripe chiles regularly stimulates the plants to produce more flowers and fruits.



Chile 'Apache'

This variety produces fiery green chiles that turn red when ripe. Trim off stem tips while young to keep the plant small and productive.

Bush basil

Although it has smaller leaves than the common type of basil, bush basil plants are easier to care for.



Thyme

You can use thyme instead of basil; snip off the stem tips regularly to encourage new leaf growth.



Chile 'Prairie Fire'

A compact variety, this plant will be smothered in hundreds of small, colorful, very hot chiles throughout the summer.

Quick growing guide



3-4 hours for various stages



Full sun



Every 1-2 days



Weekly with tomato fertilizer when chile flowers appear



When chiles are ripe; snip off basil leaves as required

Project >>

Make a chile & herb ball

Start this project in **late spring** or **early summer** when the chile and herb plants are **young** and **small** enough to plant through the **holes in the basket**. If you accidentally damage any **leaves** or **stems** in the process, simply snip them off with a sharp pair of scissors and the plant should quickly recover.

Feed the plants weekly with tomato fertilizer when the chile flowers appear

YOU WILL NEED

- metal hanging basket, coir liner, and basket clips
- small plastic bottle
- sharp scissors
- metal skewer
- approx 5 dwarf chile plants and 5 bush basil plants
- paper towel
- bowl or large jar for support
- potting mix enriched with fertilizer and mixed with vermiculite
- mixing bowl the same diameter as the hanging basket
- plastic bowl that fits inside the mixing bowl
- polystyrene pieces
- chopping board or scrap wood
- 10 short lengths of galvanized wire
- 3 x galvanized chains approx 3ft (1m) depending on how far the ball will drop from the ceiling, and large curtain ring
- S-hook and sturdy ceiling hook

1 Cut the base off a small plastic water bottle that will fit through the holes in the basket. Keep the lid screwed on. Heat the end of a metal skewer, make a few holes in the sides of the plastic bottle, and insert it through a gap in the base of the upturned basket.



2 Using scissors, cut 10 evenly spaced large crosses in the coir liner, and a hole in its base for the bottle. Fit the liner inside the basket. Wrap the stems of a chile plant in a paper towel. Push the stems through a cross in the base, leaving the rootball inside.



3 Gently remove the paper towel and set the basket, with the chile plant hanging from its base, over a bowl or a large jar to support the basket without damaging the plant's stems. Then work your way around the basket, inserting more chile and herb plants alternately in the same way.



4 Fill in around the rootballs of the plants with a mix of potting mix (enriched with fertilizer) and vermiculite. Fill right to the top of the basket; then press the mix down gently to ensure there are no air gaps.



5 Make 4-6 drainage holes in the base of the plastic bowl, then 8-10 more holes just below its rim, with the heated skewer. Half-fill the bowl with small polystyrene pieces and then the vermiculite and multipurpose potting mix, firming it down well. Add a little more potting mix on top to make a slight mound.



6 Place a large chopping board or piece of scrap wood over the top of the basket and invert it. Sit the board on the bowl; then carefully slide it out so the basket sits directly on top of the bowl. Push the water bottle down into the soil if it protrudes.



7 Thread one short length of wire through a hole below the bowl's rim. Bend the wire around so it loops over the rim of the basket to make a ring and binds the basket to the bowl. Secure the wire firmly. Repeat with the remaining holes.

Hang the basket under a skylight or close to a sunny window and turn it every week.



8 Fix a hanging basket clip onto one end of each galvanized chain; then clip it onto a curtain ring. Place the chile and herb ball inside the metal mixing bowl and then sit it on the bowl or jar support.



9 Position the curtain ring at the base of the ball. Arrange the chains evenly around the sides of the ball and gather them together above it. Attach the chains to an S-hook and hang from a hook fixed to a ceiling beam. Water the ball every day or so through the bottle in the basket.



Chile peppers

Capsicum species

The bright fruits that adorn these pretty plants in late summer and fall provide essential ingredients for a whole host of spicy dishes, from Mexican dinners to Asian stir-fries.

The small chile fruits ripen from purple to red.



'Loco' chile

Chile heat ratings

Chiles contain capsaicin, a chemical that stimulates the nerve endings in the mouth that respond to heat. The strength of a chile is measured by a scale known as Scoville Heat Units (SHU):

- Mild: up to 5,000 SHU
- Medium: 5,000 - 35,000 SHU
- Hot: 35,000 - 100,000 SHU
- Very hot: 100,000 - 500,000 SHU
- Sizzling: 500,000 SHU +

How to grow

When to buy & sow

As chiles have a very long growing period, sow the seeds in a heated cell tray in late winter to guarantee fruiting crops; a grow light will help to ensure success. An easier option is to buy plants in spring, but the choice of varieties will be limited. Pot the plants in commercial potting mix.

Light & heat

Chile seeds need heat to germinate—ideally 77–86°F (25–30°C) during the day and a warm room no lower than 59°F (15°C) at night. The hotter types, such as Habanero, may take a few weeks to emerge, and all chile plants demand full sun in order for the fruits to develop.

Watering

Water your chiles little and often so that the compost is moist at all times, but take care to avoid waterlogging the plants.

Aftercare

Keep the plants warm and pot in increasingly larger containers as they grow. You may need to stake taller varieties. Feed weekly with a high-potash fertilizer as soon as the flowers appear.

Harvesting

Cut off the chiles with sharp pruners. Eat them fresh, freeze them whole, or string them up and air-dry them gradually in a warm room.

Best indoor varieties

There are a number of different chile species, including the fiery Habanero types (*Capsicum chinense*), the equally hot Aji chiles (*Capsicum baccatum*), and those related to the sweet chile, which range from mild to hot (*Capsicum annuum*). Wear plastic gloves and protect your eyes when preparing hot chiles.



'JALAPEÑO' ▲

(*Capsicum annuum* 'Jalapeño') Bullet-shaped and not too hot, these Mexican green chiles can be left to ripen to red. Ideal for pizzas and Mexican dishes, the fruits have a rating of 2,500–8,000 SHU.

Height & spread: 30 x 20in (75 x 50cm)



'LOCO' ▲

(*Capsicum annuum* 'Loco') This compact plant produces small, oval-shaped purple fruits that ripen to red. It is ideal for growing on a sunny windowsill. The fruits have a moderately hot 24,000 SHU rating.

Height & spread: 12 x 16in (30 x 40cm)



▲ 'LEMON DROP'

(*Capsicum baccatum* 'Lemon Drop') A hot (30,000–50,000 SHU) lemon-flavored chile pepper, with small, green, slender fruits that ripen to yellow.

Height & spread: 24 x 20in (60 x 50cm)

'CAYENNE' ▾

(*Capsicum annuum* 'Cayenne') A classic medium-to-hot chile (30,000–50,000 SHU) with long, pencil-thick, wrinkled fruits that mature from green to red on tall plants. They can be eaten fresh or cooked.

Height & spread: 36 x 24in (90 x 60cm)



◆ 'DORSET NAGA'

(*Capsicum chinense* 'Dorset Naga') One of the hottest chile peppers (just over a million SHU), this Habanero chile produces pale green, puckered, rounded fruits that mature to red.

Height & spread: 30 x 20in (75 x 50cm)

'AJI AMARILLO' ▾

(*Capsicum baccatum* 'Aji Amarillo') This Peruvian native produces green, bullet-shaped fruits that turn orangey-yellow and have a smoky-fruity flavor. Produced on compact plants, the hot chiles have a Scoville rating of 30,000–50,000 SHU.

Height & spread: 24 x 20in (60 x 50cm)



'CHILLY CHILI' ▾

(*Capsicum annuum* 'Chilly Chili') The small green fruits, which ripen to yellow, orange, then dark red, are mild with a 2,000–5,000 SHU rating, and perfect for those who like just a little heat.

Height & spread: 12 x 14in (30 x 35cm)



Cook's tips

Turning up the heat

Stuff seeded mild-to-hot chiles with a mix of cream cheese, grated Cheddar cheese, and chopped herbs. Drizzle with oil and grill until soft and lightly browned.


Finely chop tomatoes, seeded chiles, onions, and fresh cilantro, transfer to a bowl, add the juice of a lime and olive oil, and mix well for a spicy salsa.



Chile and tomato salsa

Marinate seeded large chiles in rum, and then fill with a chocolate ganache and coat with melted dark chocolate for a fiery dessert.

Sauté whole chile peppers until tender and golden, sprinkle with coarse sea salt, and serve as a tapas dish.



A **galvanized tub** is a great choice for large fruiting vegetables, providing plenty of space for plants and handles to make it easier to move around so all your crops receive sufficient light.

Ensure your container is watertight before adding any plants.



Mediterranean mix

Group a range of vegetable plants that enjoy the same **growing conditions** and **ripen** at more or less the **same time** to produce a large, colorful display of edible crops for your home (see project overleaf). You will need to care for the plants until the fruits are ready to harvest, but the results are well worth the effort.

Life in the sun

Not surprisingly, vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet peppers, and eggplants—which are grown in abundance in Mediterranean regions and are essential ingredients in many of the local dishes—all need plenty of heat and sun to thrive. Choose an area in your home that is close to a large south-facing window or beneath a skylight, and a container that affords plenty of drainage, to provide the perfect growing conditions for this mix. And if you don't have sufficient space for the whole group, you can simply grow one or two of these plants in large pots on a sunny windowsill—just follow the same growing tips described on the next page.

After the flowers appear, feed your plants weekly with a tomato fertilizer

Choosing your plants

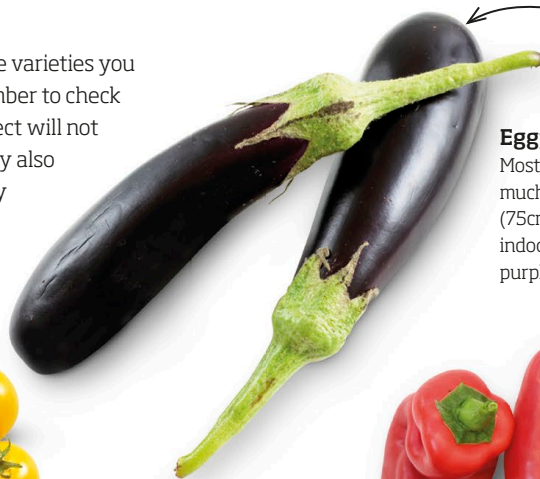
There is a wealth of fruiting vegetable varieties you can choose for this display, but remember to check before buying that the plants you select will not outgrow your allocated space. You may also like to add a pot of chiles because they require the same growing conditions.



Patio cherry tomatoes produce abundant crops.

Tomatoes

Small bush varieties of tomatoes—often used in hanging baskets—or determinate “patio” types will be perfect for this project.



Grafted eggplants are disease-resistant.

Eggplants

Most eggplants do not grow much taller than 30in (75cm), and will thrive indoors. Choose from white, purple, or striped varieties.



Try growing some long Italian-type sweet peppers.

Sweet peppers

Peppers come in a range of sizes, colors, and shapes, and you can even buy two types grafted onto one plant. Taller varieties may need staking as they grow.

Quick growing guide



4-6 hours for the various stages



Full sun



Water every 2-3 days



Fertilize weekly



Harvest 12-16 weeks after planting

Project >>

Planting a Mediterranean mix

The fruiting vegetables here have all been planted in **separate containers**, which have then been grouped inside a large galvanized tub. This technique ensures that each plant has **sufficient potting mix to thrive**. Individual plants can be removed once their fruits have been harvested.

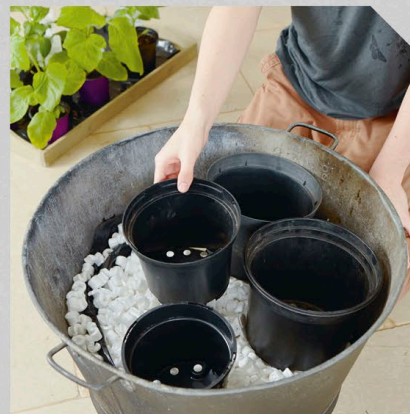
All of these vegetables require bright light to thrive

YOU WILL NEED

- large container such as a galvanized tub, plus enough plastic (such as a large trash can liner) to line the base if it isn't watertight
- small bag of gravel
- large bag of polystyrene pieces and polystyrene chips
- several plastic pots, about 8in (20cm) in diameter, for the plants
- commercial potting mix
- enough tomato, eggplant, and pepper plants to fill the plastic pots inside the container
- decorative plant stakes, such as spiral supports, which come in a variety of lengths, or bamboo stakes (one per pot)
- long length of soft twine
- watering can fitted with rose head
- pruners or sharp scissors



1 If your tub is not waterproof, line it with a plastic trash can liner, and add a layer of gravel on top to keep the plastic in place. Then include a layer of broken polystyrene pieces and chips on top of the gravel to create a reservoir area.



2 Set out the plastic pots inside the tub to determine how many plants will fit your display. Buy young tomato, eggplant, and pepper plants; you need one for each pot. If growing from seeds, start them off about six weeks earlier (see pp204-205).



3 Fill one of the pots with commercial potting mix up to about 2in (5cm) below the rim. Carefully plant an eggplant in the center of the pot, adding more potting mix if needed. Firm the mix with your fingers to remove any air pockets.



4 Repeat step 3 with the other plants. Water them gently with a watering can fitted with a rose head. If growing grafted plants, ensure the graft (bump on lower stem) is above the compost.

5 Insert a stake to one side of each pot, carefully avoiding the plant rootball in the center; decorative spiral supports are effective. As the plants grow, tie them to the stakes with twine.



6 Place the tub in a bright spot by a large sunny window or under a skylight. Turn it daily and swap the plants around occasionally so those in the center are on the outside and all receive sufficient light.



7 Once the flowers appear, cease feeding the plants. Use a small fan to provide adequate ventilation. To harvest, cut off the ripe fruits with scissors or pruners.

Pinch perfect

If you are growing determinate tomatoes, pinch out any suckers that grow between the main stem and leaves. This ensures that the plant puts its energy into making fruit rather than new green growth.



Pinch out any extra suckers



Eggplants

Solanum melongena

Remove a few leaves if they are shading the ripening fruits.

Delicious in Mediterranean dishes such as moussaka and ratatouille, eggplants come in a variety of colors and shapes, and the plants will grow successfully on a sunny windowsill.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

If you have space for only one or two—eggplants can grow up to 39in (1m) tall—buy young plants in spring from a garden center or online. If sowing from seed, start them off in late winter (see pp204–05 for sowing tips). Choose a deep pot at least 8in (20cm) in diameter, and plant one eggplant per pot. Use any good commercial growing mix.

Light & heat

Eggplants need plenty of direct sunlight in summer for the fruits to ripen, so position near a south- or west-facing window. The plants also require a minimum temperature of 61–64°F (16–18°C); higher daytime temperatures will help the fruits to ripen.

Watering

Water the plants regularly, but ensure the growing mix is never soggy; planting in a pot with drainage holes set on a saucer helps to prevent waterlogging. Mist the foliage every day with tepid water to discourage red spider mite and to help the fruits to set.

Aftercare

Apply a liquid tomato fertilizer every two weeks once the first fruit has formed. For larger plants, remove any remaining flowers and cut off any unproductive side stems after five or six eggplant fruits have set. Stake plants when they are 8in (20cm) tall and tie in the stems regularly.



These long, thin Asian eggplants are sweet and do not need salting before cooking.

Asian eggplant

Best indoor varieties

The most widely available eggplants are dark purple and blimp-shaped, but there is a much greater choice of sizes and colors available for more adventurous gardeners. You may only find a limited selection for sale as young plants, but seed companies offer a broad range of varieties.



THAI EGGPLANTS ▲

These golf ball-sized eggplants are white, green, or striped, but are also available in red and purple. Often used in Thai curries, the fruits are crunchy and slightly bitter. Because they are small, you can leave several fruits on the plant to mature. **Size of fruit:** approx 1–2in (2–5cm)



▲ 'PINSTRIPE'

The oval, striped fruits appear from summer to autumn.

Compact and sturdy, the plants are ideal for windowsills. Leave three or four eggplants on each plant if you want them to grow to full size.

Size of fruit: approx 3–4in (8–10cm)



'BLACK BEAUTY' ♥

A popular variety, 'Black Beauty' produces large, glossy, dark-purple fruits. The tall, sturdy plants yield six or more large fruits, which mature early and have soft, edible skins and seeds. Two plants will keep you in eggplants from summer until late fall.

Size of fruit: approx 4–6in (10–15cm)

'RAJA' ♥

Eggplants were originally white and looked like eggs, which is why they are known as eggplants. This sturdy variety produces an early crop of small, white fruits. Fruity and mild in flavor, these have tough skins, which should be removed prior to eating.

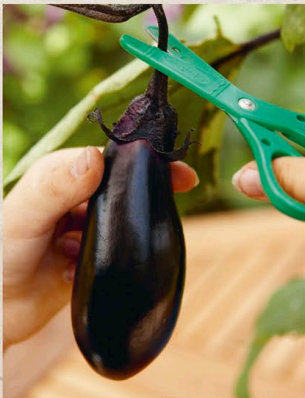
Size of fruit: approx 3in (7cm)



Cooking eggplants

The easiest way to cook eggplant is to brush some slices of eggplant with oil and bake them in a hot oven for 15 minutes or fry them on a hot pan, turning them every so often until cooked through.

To make a simple vegetable ratatouille, heat a little oil in a large pan, and add some chopped eggplant, zucchini, sweet peppers, onions, and garlic. Stir for 3 minutes until the vegetables are soft. Reduce the heat and add a can of tomatoes and a tablespoon or two of tomato paste. Simmer for 15 minutes, then stir in some fresh basil before serving.



Cut the stalk just above the eggplant's cap, or calyx.

When to harvest

Eggplants have a long growing season, and if you buy a young plant it may take up to five months to produce mature fruits. Harvest the fruits from midsummer to fall: cut them from the plant using a pair of sharp scissors or shears when they are glossy, plump, and a good size.

Storage and preserving

Most eggplants develop at slightly different rates, which means you will rarely have a glut and can enjoy them fresh, especially if you are growing just a few plants. You can store the fresh fruits for up to two weeks in the fridge, or you can cook and then freeze them.

For the fruits to ripen, set your eggplants in a warm room with plenty of direct sunlight.

All parts of a tomato plant are poisonous except for the delicious, nutrient-packed fruits



Choose a large colander for your bush tomatoes. Leave it unpainted for a chic metallic look, or apply a nontoxic metal paint. It also needs a plastic liner and pot to make it waterproof.

Plant the tomatoes in a plastic bowl that fits inside the colander.



Tiny tomatoes in a colander

Bush tomatoes are the perfect crop for a **large colander**, which you can transform into a **hanging basket** (see project overleaf) or simply set on a table near a sunny window. The small, sweet tomatoes tumbling from the plants in **late summer** will make a healthy snack or fresh salad ingredient.

Locating the right spot

Tomatoes are sun-loving crops and need a bright, sunny location to thrive in your home. An area under a skylight or close to a south-facing window will be most suitable. Turn the crops every day or two to make sure all sides of the plants and their developing fruits receive sufficient sunlight, and use a small fan to increase the air circulation around the plants. This promotes healthy growth and encourages the fruits to set.



Tabletop display beneath a skylight

Choosing tomatoes

Look for "bush" tomato varieties, which have a cascading habit and, unlike the tall, upright varieties, need no training or pinching out of side shoots. Good varieties include 'Balconi', 'Tumbling Tom', and 'Hundreds and Thousands'.

'Tumbling Tom'

This variety is one of the best choices for a hanging container, and forms a compact plant covered with a heavy crop of sweet, juicy red or yellow cherry tomatoes.



'Balconi'

Choose from the red or yellow variety of this compact, exceptionally sweet cherry tomato; its cascading habit suits a colander basket.

Choose a yellow- or red-fruited form of this reliable variety.

Quick growing guide



1-2 hours for various stages



Full sun



Water every 2 days



Feed with a fertilizer recommended for tomatoes



Harvest mid- to late summer

Project >>



Planting tomatoes in a colander

This large **colander hanging basket** is quick and easy to make and will provide a home for **three to four tomato plants**. You can also add an olla (ceramic jar) in the center, which gradually releases moisture to the thirsty tomato plants, saving you the time and effort of watering them every day.

A smaller colander can be used for this project, with just one tomato planted in the center

YOU WILL NEED • large colander • nontoxic metal paint (optional) • bubble wrap or heavy-duty trash can liner • mixing bowl or similar vessel to fit into the colander • screwdriver or drill • potting mix • 3-4 bush tomato plants • watering can fitted with a rose head • olla (optional) • chains from a wire hanging basket • sturdy hook



1 Paint or spray the outside of the colander with a nontoxic metal paint, if required, and allow to dry thoroughly. Line the colander with a plastic material, such as plastic bubble wrap or a heavy-duty trash can liner, to make it watertight.



2 Buy or upcycle a plastic mixing bowl that will fit snugly inside the plastic-lined colander and poke several drainage holes in the bottom of it with a screwdriver, or use a drill. Set the bowl on top of the lined colander ready for planting.



3 Fill the bowl with potting mix to about 1in (3cm) below the rim. Water your tomato plants and gently remove one plant from its pot. Make a hole in the potting mix and plant the tomato, ensuring its rootball is completely covered.



4 Firm the potting mix around the rootball. Repeat the process with the remaining tomato plants, leaving a space of at least 6in (15cm) between each central stem. Water gently with a watering can fitted with a rose head to settle the mix around the roots.



The olla has a dipstick that shows you when it is empty.



5 Fill the olla with water and half bury it in the center of the bowl. If hanging the colander, attach the chains by clipping them into some colander holes and hang from a sturdy hook fixed to the ceiling.

Caring for tomatoes

An olla (below) will continually release moisture into the soil, but check the potting mix every few days—especially if you have planted three or four tomato plants—and if it feels dry, add more water directly onto the surface. If you do not have an olla, water your tomato plants every day or two, but ensure the potting mix never becomes waterlogged. Erratic or irregular watering can cause the tomato fruits to split.

If your potting mix does not contain added fertilizer, apply a balanced feed until the plants flower, after which apply a weekly dose of high-potash tomato fertilizer. Tomato plant flowers are self-pollinating and the fruits should set indoors, but by using a small fan to create a breeze or shaking the plants gently every two to three days, you will help to release the pollen that ensures the blooms will go on to produce tomatoes.



If using an olla, add extra water if the potting mix feels dry.



Tomatoes

Solanum lycopersicum

*if the leaves
start to turn
yellow, apply
a magnesium
feed to green
them up again.*

Nothing comes close to the taste of sweet, juicy homegrown tomatoes. Despite their outdoor looks, they are deceptively easy to grow indoors as long as you have the bright, sunny conditions the fruits need to ripen.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Grow from seed from early spring (pp204-05), or buy young plants later. Some plants reach up to 3ft (1m) or more in height; if space is tight, opt for a compact patio, or bush, variety. Grow in pots of standard potting mix. Except for patio tomatoes, each plant requires a pot at least 8in (20cm) in diameter and depth.

Light & heat

Tomatoes require plenty of sunlight—a shaded spot will result in few, if any, ripe fruits—and temperatures of between 70–75°F (21–24°C). The plants perform poorly below 61°F (16°C) or above 81°F (27°C).

Watering

Water consistently and never allow the leaves to wilt, particularly after the fruits have formed, as this can lead to split fruits. Prevent waterlogged soil by planting in pots with lots of drainage.

Aftercare

Tie plants to tall supports (p144) and remove any shoots between the main stem and side shoots (except on bush and patio varieties). Feed weekly with a tomato fertilizer when the flowers appear.

Harvesting

In summer and early autumn, when the fruits turn the right color and size, cut off the long stems (trusses) with pruners or a sharp knife.

◀ TOMATO 'TOTEM'

Perfect for a windowsill, this F1 bush variety produces big crops of sweet medium-sized red fruits. **Height & spread:** 24 x 12in (60 x 30cm)

Choosing tomato varieties

Tomatoes come in many sizes, shapes, and colors, and there are both tall and compact (bush or patio) types to suit your space, including the old-fashioned heirloom tomatoes and sweet cherry varieties.



◀ 'TIGERELLA'

This tall heirloom variety produces high yields of medium-sized pretty red and yellow striped fruits. It grows very tall if planted in a large pot.

Height & spread: up to 79 x 20in (200 x 50cm)

▲ 'BIG BOY'

A reliable beefsteak variety, which produces large meaty fruits—ideal for cooking or eating fresh. Stake well to prevent stems from snapping under the weight of the fruit. **Height & spread:** up to 79 x 20in (200 x 50cm)

▶ 'BLACK CHERRY'

The heavy crops of beautiful dark brown-red sweet cherry tomatoes produced by this heirloom cordon variety make a real conversation piece.

Height & spread: up to 79 x 20in (200 x 50cm)



▶ 'BABY BOOMER HYBRID'

Specially bred for growing in containers, this compact bush variety produces a heavy crop of sweet and juicy cherry tomatoes over a long period.

Height & spread: 24in (60cm)

▶ 'SUNGOLD'

An outstanding tall cherry tomato with golden-orange sweet and juicy, thin-skinned fruits.

Height & spread: up to 79 x 20in (200 x 50cm)



▶ 'LITTLE MAMA'

A tall variety that produces medium-sized plum tomatoes. These are sweet enough to eat fresh, but are also ideal for adding to stews and sauces.

Height & spread: up to 72 x 20in (180 x 50cm)



▲ 'SUPER TASTY'

This reliable tall tomato produces bumper crops of smooth, medium-sized red fruits renowned for their exceptional flavor. **Height & spread:** up to 79 x 20in (200 x 50cm)

Cook's tips

Essential ingredient

Mix halved tomatoes with sliced strawberries and peaches, dress with olive oil and balsamic vinegar, and top with shredded mint for a zingy fruit salad.

Make a light salad dressing, blending the seeds of a juicy tomato with olive oil, vinegar, and seasoning.

Halve large tomatoes and sprinkle with a mixture of breadcrumbs, herbs, oil, and garlic. Bake until crunchy.

For a panade, cut the crusts from 16 slices of bread, cut each slice into 4, and place alternately with large sliced tomatoes, sliced onions, and fresh basil in a baking dish. Drizzle with vegetable stock, top with Parmesan cheese, bake in a medium oven for 45 minutes, and serve.



Panade with sliced tomatoes



Quick growing guide



2 hours for various stages



Full sun



Water every day or two



Feed with tomato fertilizer when flowers appear



Harvest when tomatoes are ripe



Tomato towers

Determinate tomatoes are **tall plants** that produce heavy **crops of sweet, juicy fruits**. If you have a skylight or large south-facing window, plant them in deep containers placed on either side of a doorway or window to make **eye-catching sentries**.

YOU WILL NEED • 2 young tomato plants • 2 plastic pots 8-10in (20-25cm) in diameter • potting mix • 2 tall, watertight containers to accommodate the plastic pots • bricks to support the plastic pots • 2 decorative trellis supports • garden twine • watering can • tomato fertilizer



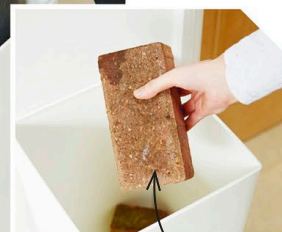
1 Grow the tomato plants from seed on a sunny windowsill, removing any extra shoots as they appear (see p135). Transplant them into 8-10in (20-25cm) pots when they reach about 18in (45cm).



3 Insert a trellis support at the edge of each tomato pot, and tie in the main and side stems with soft twine as shown.



2 Place a couple of bricks in the base of each tall container and place a potted tomato plant on top so the lowest leaves sit above the rim of the container.



Use bricks or polystyrene trays to raise up the tomato plants.



4 Place the tomato containers under a skylight or close to a large, sunny window. Water every day or two, and feed weekly with a tomato fertilizer when the flowers appear.



*Remove the tip
of the main stem
when it reaches
the top of the
support*

*Water consistently to
prevent the tomatoes
from splitting.*

Use tall decorative trellis supports for your tomatoes and tie the main and side stems carefully to them to make sure none snap under the weight of the fruits.



Tamarillo tree tomatoes

Solanum betaceum

How to grow

When to buy

Young tamarillo plants are available to buy all year round, but to ensure the plants are healthy they are best purchased in spring as new leaf growth is emerging (the plants are deciduous). Tamarillos grow rapidly, so ensure you can accommodate a large spreading plant that grows up to 7ft (2m) in height and almost as wide. Pot the shrub in a large container filled with well-drained commercial growing mix.

Light & heat

This subtropical plant will thrive in the warmth of a centrally heated home, especially one where winter nighttime temperatures do not dip much below 59°F (15°C). It is heat-tolerant and fruits best by a window or under a skylight in full sun.

Watering

Water your tamarillo tree every day or two from spring to fall, as it needs plenty of moisture to sustain its huge, soft leaves. Plant in a deep pot with good drainage, as it will suffer if it sits in waterlogged soil.

Although the tamarillo is native to the Andes, most commercially grown trees are now cultivated in New Zealand

Tamarillo trees

live for many years and need plenty of space and a bright, sunny location indoors to thrive.

The huge leaves, which can grow to the size of two dinner plates, resemble those of a rubber tree plant.



Aftercare

A balanced, all-purpose granular fertilizer should be added to the growing mix once a year in spring. Also apply three doses of specialized fruit tree fertilizer each summer at monthly intervals after the clusters of white flowers appear. Don't worry if some of the lower leaves turn yellow and fall off; this is a normal process and does not mean the plant is diseased.

Harvesting

Tamarillos may not produce fruits in their first year but, in the right conditions, most will crop in the second year. Harvest the fruits with sharp pruners when they are a rich red or yellow color and are firm to the touch. Remove the skin and most or all of the seeds before eating.

Pruning a tamarillo

Once your plant reaches 3ft (1m) tall, cut off the top stem tip. This will encourage it to branch out and prevent it from growing too tall. As the plant matures, prune the branches to create an open framework, and remove those branches growing from the base of the main stem. The fruit is produced on new growth, so each year in early spring cut back all the old stems that produced fruit the previous year.

The flowers are small and white.

Water well when the fruits appear.



Flowers & fruit

The self-pollinating white flowers appear in spring, and later develop into the fruits. You can shake the tree gently or mist the flowers with water every few days to encourage the fruits to set.

Sharp fruits

Red- or pink-fruited varieties have a slightly sharper taste than yellow forms, and are delicious in salads.



Remove the seeds before eating.



Sprinkle halved tamarillos with sugar, pour over some red wine, roast until soft, and serve with Greek yogurt.

Peel and dice blanched tamarillos, mix with chopped green chile, diced onion, and cilantro, and stir in a teaspoon of maple syrup and some olive oil for a salsa to serve with corn chips.


Try peeled tamarillo slices as a sweet and tangy alternative to tomatoes in salads.

Top your toast with slices of tamarillo sprinkled with salt.

Replace tomatoes with tamarillos in a salsa recipe and serve with tortillas stuffed with beans, rice, and cheese.



Tamarillo salsa with filled tortillas



The cucumbers in this unit are growing in plastic pots with drainage holes, which are set inside waterproof containers to create the perfect environment for the thirsty cucumber plants.

Tie the twining stems to the support as they grow.

Containers on wheels allow you to move your plants around so they receive sun on all sides.



Cucumbers on wheels

You can make a beautiful, leafy **fruiting screen** in your home with a few **cucumber plants**, which will grow well and produce an abundance of tasty fruits in a **bright, sunny location** (see project overleaf).

Bring in the light

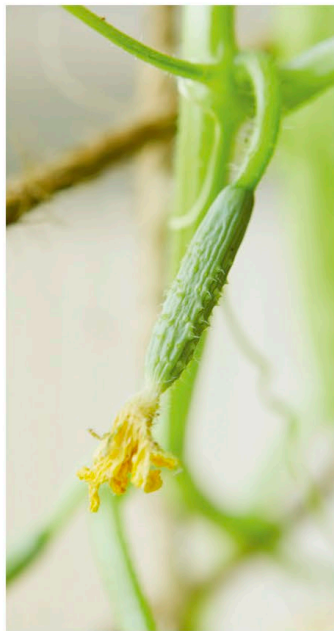
Cucumbers require plenty of light for the fruits to ripen, so you will need a large south-facing window or skylight for the plants to succeed. It is best to select a greenhouse variety of cucumber, and opt for an all-female type. This will mean that every flower will produce a fruit. Outdoor varieties can be grown indoors, too, but they also produce non-fruiting male flowers that are needed to pollinate their female flowers (see p155).



Cucumber flower

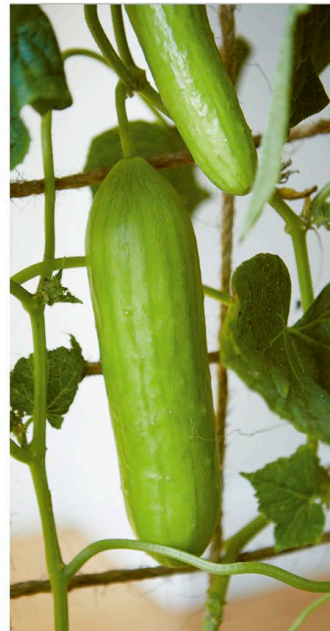
Big and beautiful

Home-grown cucumbers tend to be more flavorful than store-bought varieties and are well worth a try if you have the right growing conditions. Before choosing to grow cucumbers indoors, check that you will be able to accommodate the large climbing plants, which can reach up to 5ft (1.5m) in height and spread—although raising them in these planters (see overleaf) will help keep them in check.



Developing fruits

As each flower starts to fade, you will notice a baby cucumber growing just behind it. The fruits will then take a few more weeks to mature.



Young & sweet

Harvest your cucumbers with a sharp knife when they reach the length indicated on the seed package or plant label (if you bought seedlings).

Harvesting your cucumbers regularly encourages the plants to produce more flowers and fruits

Quick growing guide



4-5 hours for various stages



Full sun



Water every 2 days



Feed weekly when flowers appear with high-potash fertilizer



Harvest about 12-14 weeks after sowing

Project >>

YOU WILL NEED

- large, sturdy vegetable crate
- plywood, $\frac{1}{4}$ in (18mm) thick, cut to fit the bottom of the crate
- pencil
- tape measure
- handsaw
- electric screwdriver
- 20 x 1in (20mm) wood screws
- 4 x $1\frac{1}{4}$ x 1in (25mm x 20mm) treated wooden slats for the frame, cut to length (see steps 3-5)
- 8 x $1\frac{1}{4}$ in (25mm) wood screws for attaching slats to crate in steps 4 and 5
- 4 nonmarking swivel caster wheels
- thick garden twine or rope

Make a cucumber unit on wheels

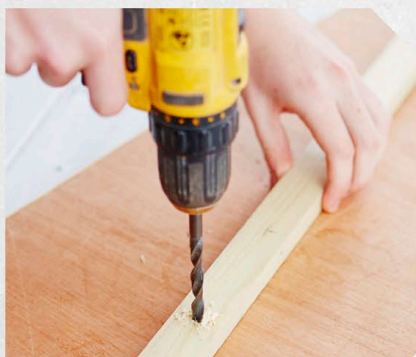
This **custom container on wheels** with a string support is ideal for **growing cucumbers indoors**, as it allows you to move them around so that all sides receive sunlight, and you can store the unit out of the way at night.



1 Place the crate on the plywood and draw around it with a pencil. Set the plywood on the edge of an old table—use a clamp if you have one to hold the wood—and cut along the markings with a handsaw.



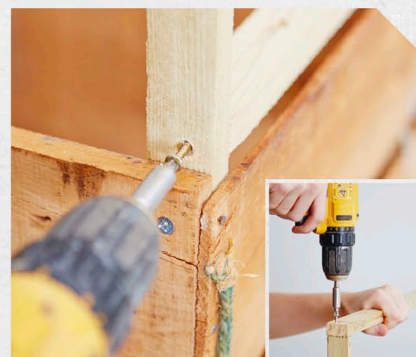
2 Using 1in (20mm) wood screws and an electric screwdriver, attach the plywood piece to the base of the crate at the four corners, making a small pilot hole first to prevent the wood from splitting.



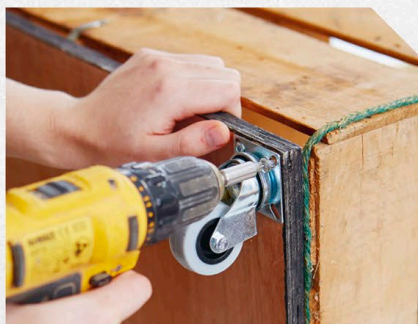
3 Cut four wooden slats to make a frame about 3ft (1m) tall and the width of your crate. Drill holes on the wide edge of each one at 4in (10cm) intervals; the first hole should be 4in (10cm) from one end.



4 Attach the two slats that will form the vertical sides of the frame at the back of the unit to the side edges of the crate, using two of the $1\frac{1}{4}$ in (25mm) wood screws, one above the other.



5 To complete the frame, measure and cut one slat to fit between the uprights and another, slightly longer one, to fit on top of the uprights. Screw in place with $1\frac{1}{4}$ in (25mm) wood screws.



6 Turn the unit on its side. Attach a wheel at each crate corner using 1in (20mm) wood screws. The thread size of the screws depends on the wheel plate's holes.

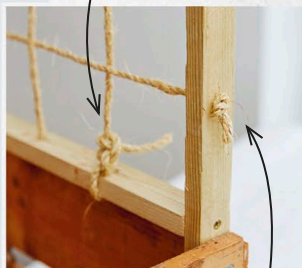


7 Starting at the bottom-left hole, thread the twine up, over, and down through all the holes in the horizontal slats, then through the holes in the vertical slats.

To make the unit stronger and more rigid, fix a galvanized steel angle plate to the top and bottom corners of the frame, as shown



Tie a knot in the end of the twine before you start threading it.



Secure the twine lattice in place with another firm knot.

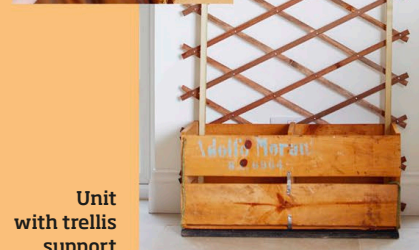
8 Pull the twine tight so that all the strings are taut. Then secure firmly at the end with a knot and cut off any excess string. The unit is now ready to plant in (see overleaf).

Easy trellis option

Instead of threading twine through a frame, opt for a quicker method and fix a ready-made wooden trellis in place. Follow steps 1-4, then screw the trellis onto the upright slats using 1½in (25mm) wood screws. You can also paint the trellis and slats to match your decor.



Trellis fixed in place with screws



Unit with trellis support

Project continues >>



Grow cucumbers for a crate on wheels

You can grow **cucumbers from seed**, or buy some young plants from a garden center, and transplant them into the unit to create an **impressive display** of leaves, flowers, and full-flavored fruits.

Cucumbers will thrive in a warm, bright room at a temperature of between 71-75°F (21-24°C)

YOU WILL NEED • small coir or plastic pots • cucumber seeds • seed-starting mix • potting mix • watering can • 2 large plastic pots with drainage holes, plus 2 large plastic pots without drainage holes that fit inside the crate • garden twine • pruners

Make sure the plastic pot with drainage holes fits easily inside the waterproof container.



1 Fill small coir or plastic pots with seed-starting mix. Sow 2-3 seeds per pot and cover with $\frac{1}{2}$ in (1cm) of mix. Water well and set the pots on a tray in a warm, bright area such as on a windowsill. The seedlings should emerge within a week or two. When they have 2-3 sets of "true" leaves (rather than seed leaves), transfer each young plant into its own pot filled with potting mix (pp200-01) and grow until 8in (20cm) in height.



2 Set two waterproof containers in the cucumber crate and slip plastic pots with drainage holes inside them. Fill these pots with potting mix to about 1in (3cm) below the rim.



3 Transplant one or two young plants into each pot, firming them in gently to remove any air pockets. If you added a small stake to support the young stems as they grew, transplant that, too. Water well.



4 Place the cucumber unit in a bright, sunny location; cucumbers will not flower and fruit well in low-light conditions. As the plants grow, gently tie the stems to the twine lattice with some garden twine so the plants' leafy stems cover the support evenly.



5 Turn the unit every few days so the plants get adequate light front and back. As soon as flowers start to form, feed the plants with a high-potash fertilizer every two weeks. If you are growing a female-only variety, remove any male flowers if they appear (p155).

Growing tips

For a good crop of cucumbers, pinch out the growing tip of the main stem as it reaches the top of the support. This encourages the plant to produce more fruiting sideshoots. Look out for flowering sideshoots and shorten these stems so that each has just two leaves beyond a female flower, which will have a tiny fruit growing behind it. Also pinch out the tips of nonflowering sideshoots once they have grown to about 24in (60cm) in length.



Main cucumber stem



6 Remove any large leaves that shade the developing fruits and continue to water the plants well, making sure they don't become waterlogged. Harvest with a sharp knife when cucumbers reach the length indicated on the seed pack or label.



Cucumbers

Cucumis sativus

Sweet and juicy, the flavor and crisp texture of homegrown cucumbers is far superior to most store-bought types. The large leafy climbing plants also make a decorative feature.

How to grow

When to buy

Sow from seed in spring (see p152 for details) or buy young plants from a garden center and pot each one individually into a large container of all-purpose potting mix. When planting, insert a trellis or similar support at the edge of the container for the plant to climb up.

Light & heat

Cucumber seeds require a minimum temperature of 68°F (20°C) to germinate. Greenhouse cucumbers can be grown in a warm room with a minimum nighttime temperature of 59°F (15°C), but outdoor types will survive at lower temperatures. Set your cucumber plants in a bright, sunny spot by a large window.

Watering

These thirsty plants require consistently moist, but not wet, soil. Plant them in pots with drainage holes and set the potted plants on saucers or inside waterproof containers. Mist the plants a few times a week to create the humid atmosphere they enjoy.

Aftercare

Take out the uppermost stem tip when each plant reaches the top of its support. Feed with tomato fertilizer twice weekly when the flowers appear. The flowers of outdoor cucumber varieties also need to be hand-pollinated every day or two; see p207 for details.

Harvesting

Cut the fruits off with sharp pruners when they are firm to the touch and the size indicated on the seed pack or plant label. Fresh cucumbers will keep for a week to 10 days in the fridge.

Hand-pollinate the flowers of outdoor-type cucumbers.



Best varieties

There are two main groups: indoor greenhouse types, and smaller outdoor "ridge" varieties. Both can be grown indoors, but the outdoor types must be hand-pollinated and shouldn't be grown near indoor cucumbers: if the male flowers (those without tiny fruit behind them) of outdoor varieties pollinate indoor cucumbers, the latter's fruits taste bitter. Many greenhouse types are "all-female," producing only fruit-bearing female flowers that don't need pollinating, but they may produce male flowers, which must be removed.



◀ 'IZNIK'

The diminutive sweet, juicy cucumbers of this greenhouse variety can be eaten without having to be peeled. The fruits are crisp and have a sweet, juicy flavor. This is an all-female variety, so remove any male flowers if they appear.

Height & spread:

9ft x 18in (3m x 45cm)

▶ 'DIVA'

This disease-resistant greenhouse type produces slightly ribbed small fruits with thin, almost translucent skins that do not require peeling. Remove any male flowers if they appear.

Height & spread:

9ft x 18in (3m x 45cm)

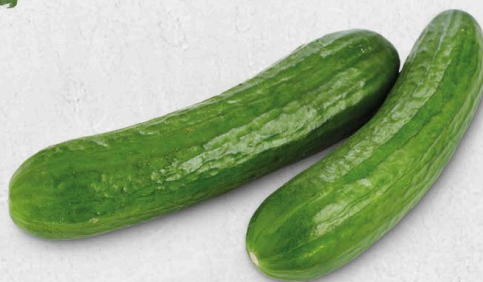


◀ 'AMIGA'

Very disease resistant, this all-female greenhouse variety produces an abundance of dark green-skinned fruits with a sweet flavor and crunchy texture. Remove any male flowers as soon as you see them.

Height & spread:

9ft x 18in (3m x 45cm)



▶ 'BUSH CHAMPION'

An outdoor, compact variety that produces heavy crops of large, crisp, bright green cucumbers. Ideal for a small space, these plants can be trained up a couple of bamboo canes in a pot. Hand-pollinate the flowers (p207) to guarantee a good crop.

Height & spread:

24 x 8in (60 x 20cm)



'Bush Champion'



Cucumber delights

Make a quick Salade Niçoise of sliced cucumber, lettuce, ripe tomatoes, steamed whole green beans, boiled eggs, and flaked tuna.


Seed and finely chop a cucumber and fresh mint. Mix with crushed garlic and Greek yogurt to make a tzatziki-style dip.

Combine sliced cucumber, some sun-dried tomatoes, fresh basil, and halved falafels in a wrap for a healthy lunchtime snack.

Slice a cucumber and a bulb of fennel. Add them to a salad containing some mixed lettuce leaves, sliced celery, and chopped spring onions, and serve as a refreshing side dish.



Cucumber & fennel salad



Untangle the twining stems every few days to make sure they don't become too twisted.

The cucamelon's ivy-like foliage and striped baby fruits make a striking feature trailing from a wooden crate suspended beneath a skylight.



Cucamelons in hanging crates

Pretty **cucamelon fruits**, which hang like little green striped baubles from long, trailing stems, taste like **cucumber** with a hint of **lime**. These sun-loving plants are perfect for growing in an indoor hanging basket or **wooden crate** (see project overleaf).

Refreshing fruits

You can buy young plants from online nurseries, but they are very easy to grow from seeds that cost a fraction of the price. Sow in pots in early spring, and you will have a crop of juicy fruits through the summer. Try the fruits, which look like baby watermelons and are also known as Mexican gherkins, sliced and mixed into salads, salsas, and vegetable side dishes, or eat them whole as a healthy snack.

Cucamelon fruits



Flowing stems

Cucamelon plants are vines and, as such, produce long stems and curly tendrils that cling to supports to help them climb. You can either allow the stems to trail over the sides of a hanging basket or crate, as shown here, or plant them in a large pot with a trellis attached to the back and leave them to scramble up, like a baby cucumber. These native Mexican plants require plenty of sunlight, and are best grown near a south-facing window or under a skylight.

The plant's trailing stems can grow up to 4ft (1.2m) in length.



Cucamelons hanging by a sunny window

Cucamelons do not need peeling and make a great snack for a child's lunchbox

Quick growing guide



3-4 hours for various stages



Full sun



Water every 2-3 days



Feed weekly with tomato fertilizer when flowers appear



Harvest when fruits are grape-sized and firm

Project >>

Grow cucamelons in hanging crates

Sow these tiny fruity treasures **from seed** and make a home for them in a lined wooden crate suspended from the ceiling. Growing the plants in this way makes the fruits **easy to harvest** when they are the size of large grapes.

YOU WILL NEED

- 3in (7cm) plastic pots
- cucamelon seeds
- seed starting mix
- vermiculite
- wooden crate
- rope or thick twine
- large plastic pots to fit into crate
- potting mix
- waterproof canvas (or a heavy-duty black plastic bag) and a binder clip
- polystyrene pieces
- sphagnum moss (optional)
- large hook for ceiling
- watering can with rose head
- scissors

Cucamelon flowers must be hand-pollinated to produce fruits - see p207 for instructions



2 When the seedlings are about 3in (8cm) tall and have a few sets of leaves, transplant each into a small plastic pot of its own. To do this, hold the seedling gently by a leaf, remove the rootball with a spoon or fork, and transfer to the pot.

1 Fill a few small pots with seed starting mix. Sow 2-3 cucamelon seeds in each pot, and cover with a layer of vermiculite. Water and set on a sunny windowsill. The seeds may take a few weeks to germinate.

Plant the seedlings in larger pots of potting mix.



3 Keep the seedlings well watered. A few weeks after transplanting them, buy two large plastic pots that will fit snugly inside your wooden crate. Plant two young cucamelons in each large pot, and water them well.

Take care not to damage the stems when placing the pots inside the crate.

4 Line the crate with canvas or heavy-duty black plastic. Push it into all four corners; then fold over the top and tuck it inside the crate rim. Use a clip to keep the fabric in place while you do this.



5 Set the two large pots of cucamelons inside the crate. If required, add some polystyrene pieces to the bottom of the crate to raise up the pots to the right level so they sit just below the rim.

Growing tips

Water cucamelon plants every two to three days, but ensure the crates do not fill up with water. Turn the crate around every week or two, if suspended by a window, for even growth. Feed weekly with a high-potash fertilizer, such as tomato food, when the flowers appear. Pollinate the flowers by hand (p207).

Water the plants regularly



6 Cover the pots with moss to help retain moisture. Hang the crate from a hook fixed into a cross beam in the ceiling with securely tied rope. Cut off all straggly stems just below a leaf to encourage more stems to form.

Quick
growing
guide1-2 hours for
various stages

Full sun

Water every
2 daysFeed weekly
with tomato
fertilizer when
flowers appearHarvest when
the peppers are
fully formed
and the right
colorRaise sweet peppers
in colorful pots

These handsome **exotic plants**, which hail from **Mexico** and **South America**, produce many colorful fruits from **mid- to late summer** or **early fall** if you keep them in a sunny, warm room and feed them regularly.

YOU WILL NEED • plastic or ceramic pot at least 12in (30cm) in diameter and depth • drip tray
• potting mix enriched with fertilizer • 3 bell pepper plants • 3-4 creeping thyme plants (*Thymus serpyllum*)
• watering can fitted with a rose head • 3 stakes • soft twine or plastic-coated plant ties • mister



1 Place the plastic pot on a drip tray if it has drainage holes, or choose a container with an integral watering system (p28). Fill to 2in (5cm) below the rim with potting mix. Plant the three pepper plants, spacing them evenly.



2 Add the thyme plants around the edge of the pot between the peppers. Firm the mix around the roots of all the plants to eliminate any air gaps. Water the plants, and add more mix if their roots become exposed.

3 Insert wooden stakes next to the inside edge of the rootball of each pepper plant. Using soft twine or plastic-coated plant ties, fix the main stem of each plant carefully to a stake. Continue to tie in the stems as the plants grow.



Tie the twine in a figure eight.

When the flowers appear, mist them every day or two to encourage them to develop into fruits

When ripe, harvest the peppers by cutting them off close to the stem with sharp pruners

You may need to add more stakes as the heavy fruits develop.

Set the pot in a bright, sunny spot.

Protect your floor with a watertight drip tray.

Set your pot of peppers close to a south-facing window or directly below a bright skylight in a warm room to mimic the plants' native growing conditions.



Sweet peppers

Capsicum annuum

These vibrant fruiting vegetables are packed with antioxidants and vitamins, and are at their sweetest and crispest when picked straight from the plant. Eat raw or use to add color to baked Mediterranean dishes or Asian-inspired stir-fries.

How to grow

When to buy

Sow the seed in early spring (see pp204–05) in pots of seed starting mix, or buy young plants from a garden center later in the season. Repot into progressively larger containers of potting mix as the plants grow.

Light & heat

These Mexican natives like warm conditions; the seed will need a temperature of between 64–77°F (18–25°C) to germinate. The plants will grow happily in a warm, sun-filled room close to a window or below a skylight.

Watering

Ensure you water every day or two, especially during hot weather. Avoid waterlogged roots by using pots with good drainage.

Aftercare

Stake tall plants (p160). When flowers appear, feed weekly with a tomato fertilizer. Mist the flowers every few days to encourage the fruits to set, and open the windows to increase ventilation whenever possible.

Harvesting

Ripe peppers are firm to the touch and approximately the size indicated on the plant label or seed pack. Remove regularly with pruners to encourage more fruits to form.

Best indoor varieties

Sweet peppers come in a range of colors, although most green types will eventually ripen to yellow, orange, or red, and will sweeten as they mature.

‘MOHAWK’ ▶

These compact semitrailing plants are perfect for pots on a sunny windowsill and produce heavy crops of small, block-shaped sweet peppers that mature to bright orange.

Height & spread:

20 x 16in (50 x 40cm)



‘LUNCHBOX MIX’ ▲

The small fruits produced by this medium-sized plant start off green and change to a mix of yellow, red, and orange. The small sweet peppers are ideal for a lunchbox.

Height & spread:

36 x 18in (90 x 45cm)



‘TEQUILA’ ▲

The dark purple skins and contrasting white flesh of these medium-sized peppers make a dramatic contrast with red or yellow types. The fruits eventually mature to red.

Height & spread:

36 x 18in (90 x 45cm)



‘PLANET’

Tall and elegant, this plant produces long, red peppers that have a sweet flavor and crisp texture. Ideal for slicing into salads, or for grilling or barbecuing.

Height & spread:

up to 59 x 24in (150 x 60cm)



‘LUTEUS’

These bright yellow sweet fruits, which mature from green, are produced on a compact plant that is ideal for growing in a pot on a windowsill or sunny kitchen counter.

Height & spread:

24 x 16in (60 x 40cm)



◀ 'BONETA'

This mini-fruited pepper has lush, dark green foliage and is covered with small, pale green fruits that ripen to bright red in late summer.

Height & spread:
20 x 16in (50 x 40cm)*



Sweet pepper dishes

Grill some halved, seeded red peppers, broccoli florets, and sliced red onions and serve as a colorful side dish with a main dish of sweet and sour shrimp or beef.



Grilled sweet pepper dish

Cut the tops off some peppers and seed them; then stuff with a mix of cooked couscous, pine nuts, olives, feta cheese, sun-dried tomatoes, and basil. Cover with foil and bake in a hot oven for 20 minutes.

Add roasted red and yellow peppers to fried onions, canned plum tomatoes, crushed garlic, and vegetable stock and heat through to make a richly flavored pasta sauce.





Fruit

A sunny room will provide the ideal growing conditions for a variety of fruits such as figs, oranges, and peaches. If you can make space for these handsome plants, they will reward you with fruit and flowers year after year.

Introducing fruit

Grow a **confection of fruits**—strawberries, nectarines, peaches, and exotic and citrus fruits—to bring **summer flavors** and a taste of the **tropics** to your indoor garden.

Exotic flavors

An indoor garden offers you a great opportunity to grow the exotic fruits that struggle to survive outside in harsh winters. Cape gooseberries, for example, are easy to grow on an indoor windowsill, and with daily watering will produce their exotic-tasting golden berries with very little fuss. The Brazilian pineapple guava, or feijoa, plant will also grow indoors, producing delicious edible flowers and fruits in warm conditions.

Fresh & fruity

Citrus fruits are not always easy to grow indoors because they require cool temperatures in winter, but if you can provide the right conditions year-round, they make wonderful houseplants. Their sweetly fragrant flowers and brightly colored fruits boost both mind and body: rich in minerals and vitamins, most notably C, they can be

used in a wide range of sweet and savory dishes and drinks. You could also try growing a Kaffir lime, which is valued in Asian countries for its spicy leaves—typically used in curries and stir-fries—as well as for its knobby, green, tangy fruits.

A taste of summer

Soft fruits such as strawberries, and tree fruits such as peaches and nectarines, thrive in a warm, sunny environment. Just remember to hand-pollinate the flowers if you want to enjoy the delicious summery flavors of the fruits, which develop from the blooms. Like citrus, these plants need cool conditions in winter—strawberries will sail through most cold

winters on an outside windowsill if you have space.

Packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, the health benefits of these fruits are greatest when eaten fresh from the plant.





Best zones for fruit

All indoor fruit crops require lots of light and heat to produce their sweet delights, so the best locations to grow them are zones 1, 2, and 3. Most fruit trees also require a cool area in which to overwinter.

Zone 1

South-facing windows

Fruit will ripen well in the hot, sunny conditions close to a south-facing window. Just remember to turn the plants regularly so that all sides receive a good dose of sunlight.

Zone 2

East- and west-facing windows

You should get a good crop of fruit if you locate your fruit plants close to a large east- or west-facing window—as long as it is not shaded by trees or buildings.

Zone 3

Beneath a skylight

These plants will perform well under a skylight, especially if there is some supplementary sunlight from a vertical window. The room may be too hot for Alpine strawberries.

Zone 4

Walls

Strawberries, especially the Alpine varieties, will do well on a bright wall out of direct sunlight. The other fruit trees are too large for a wall.

Zone 5

Dark corners

You can try raising strawberries under grow lights. The other, larger fruit trees are not suitable for domestic grow lights and will suffer in a dark corner.

Zone 6

Center of a room

Strawberries will perform well here. You may also get fruit from trees in the center of a sunny, south-facing room, but they will generally fail in other rooms.

Zone 7

Cool (unheated) south-facing room

To produce their fruits each year, citrus trees, figs, peaches, and nectarines must be overwintered in cool or cold conditions such as an unheated room.

Zone 8

Outside windowsill

Strawberries will grow well on outside windowsills, as will cape gooseberries after all risk of frost has passed. Fruit trees will perform well in summer on a balcony.





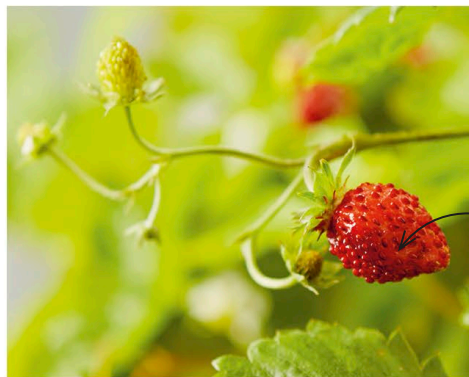
Alpine strawberry shelves

Diminutive **Alpine strawberry** plants will grow **happily** in a bright area out of direct sunlight, making them **ideal** for rooms that don't have south-facing windows or a skylight. A shelving unit will **display** them beautifully (see project overleaf).

To overwinter Alpine strawberry plants, keep them in a cool room or on a sheltered balcony

Growing Alpine strawberries

These fruiting plants, with sweet berries that are smaller than regular strawberries, are also referred to as woodland strawberries, where they may often be found growing wild. To ensure your plants produce plenty of fruit indoors, keep them in a bright room that does not get too hot—a temperature of between 61°F and 70°F (16°C and 21°C) is ideal. Relatively trouble-free, they will produce a crop of small, sweet fruits intermittently from early summer—although any strawberry plants grown indoors will need to be hand-pollinated, as explained below.



The small, sweet fruits make a healthy snack for children.

Fruiting Alpine strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*)



Hand-pollinating strawberry plants

Strawberry care

When the flowers appear, feed the plants twice weekly with tomato fertilizer. In the absence of pollinating insects, you will need to do this job instead. Dust each flower with a clean, soft paint- or make-up brush, transferring pollen from plant to plant so the flowers develop into fruits. For the best crops, do this every few days to ensure all the flowers have been pollinated.

Tickle each little flower with a clean, soft paintbrush every day or two.



Alpine strawberry 'Scarlet Beauty'



The small strawberries will appear over many weeks through summer and fall.



These attractive shelves are made from old wooden fruit or wine crates and provide just enough space for a few diminutive Alpine strawberry plants to flourish and produce a crop of small but succulent berries.

Quick growing guide



3-4 hours for various stages



Shade for part of the day



Water every 2-3 days



Feed with tomato fertilizer twice weekly once the flowers appear



Harvest from early summer

Project >>



YOU WILL NEED

- length of $\frac{3}{4}$ in (18mm) plywood measuring approximately 30 x 22in (75 x 55cm)
- chalkboard paint or latex paint
- hand saw
- flat surface such as an old table to work on
- pencil
- wooden slat, 1 x 1.5in (25mm x 38mm); length dependent on crate size
- compass for measuring 45° angle
- 1 wooden wine or shipping crate
- electric drill & drill bit
- 16 x M8 Phillips screws $1\frac{1}{4}$ in (30mm) long for the slats and crate
- 4 x M10 Phillips screws 3in (80mm) long for attaching the display to the wall
- 2 heavy-duty black plastic trash can liners or waterproof sealant
- 2 coir hanging basket liners
- 8-10 Alpine strawberry plants

Water your strawberries every couple of days so the soil is always moist, but not wet

Make a strawberry display

You will need just a few basic carpentry skills and tools to transform an **old wooden** wine or shipping **crate** into this **decorative wall display** that will house a collection of Alpine strawberry plants.



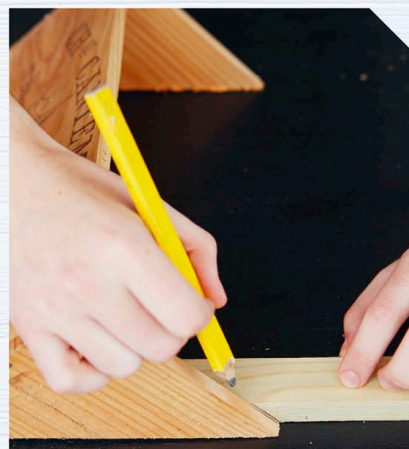
1 With a hand saw, cut the plywood to fit your allocated wall space, while also ensuring that it will accommodate at least two wooden shelves. Apply two coats of chalkboard or latex paint.



2 Using a pencil and a compass, mark a 45° angle at the bottom front corner of one side of the crate. Using the side of the slat, draw a straight line up to the top edge of the crate. Repeat on the other side.



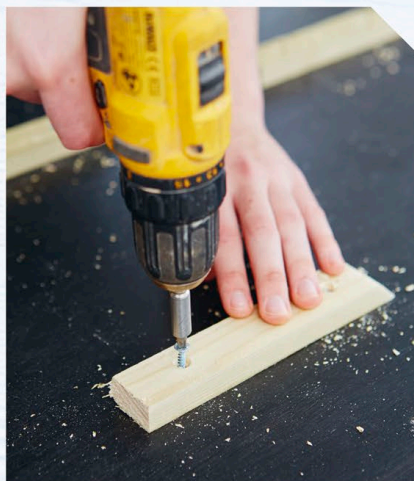
3 Saw along the line on one side of the crate, and then the other. Pry off this sawn-off section, removing any nails. Repeat at the other end of the crate to create two identical wedge shapes.



4 Lay the back board flat. Center the two crate ends, one under the other, on the board. Set the slat against the inside edge of one crate end and mark the height of its rim with a pencil.



5 Cut the slat at a 45° angle along the pencil line. Repeat to make four slat supports that will butt up against each inside edge of the crate ends, as shown above. Mark the positions of the crate ends on the board with the pencil.



6 Using the electric drill, make pilot holes at both ends of each slat. Remove the crate ends from the board. Referring to the marked positions, fix the two slats to the board; check that each one is correctly positioned before screwing it in.



7 Repeat with the remaining two slats, then reposition the crate ends over the fixed slats. Using the electric screwdriver, screw the sides of the crate ends, both top and bottom, to the slats with more screws.



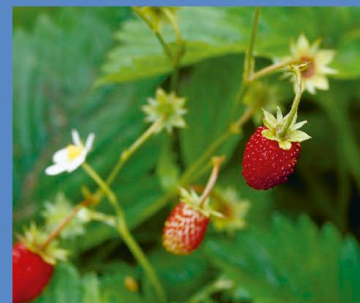
8 Secure the back board to the wall with screws at each corner. Line the crate ends—now plant holders—with heavy-duty trash can liners, or paint on a waterproof sealant. Check for leaks.



9 Either drop the strawberry plants in their plastic pots inside the plant holders, or line the plant holders with coir basket liner, fill with potting mix, and plant the strawberries.

Strawberry care

When the flowers appear, feed the plants every two weeks with high-potash fertilizer. Plants grown indoors require hand pollinating. Dust each flower with a soft paint- or makeup brush, transferring pollen from plant to plant so they develop into fruits.



Hand-pollinated strawberry plants

Strawberries

Fragaria species

One of the best-loved fruits, strawberries can be grown successfully indoors with a little care and attention. You need to pollinate the plants yourself, unless you can set them on an outside window ledge or balcony where insects can reach them.

Strawberry plants will produce crops for two or three years.



'Tribute' everbearing strawberry

How to grow

When to buy

Most strawberry plants are available to buy in spring as bare-root or potted plants. You can try raising small Alpine types by sowing seeds in small pots of seed starting mix (they may take a few weeks to germinate).

Light & heat

Woodland or Alpine berries grow happily in part-shade, such as an east- or west-facing wall or windowsill. Garden strawberries (*Fragaria x ananassa*) also grow in low light conditions, but produce more fruits in full sun. The plants enjoy temperatures of 55-70°F (13-21°C).

Watering

Keep well watered. Plant in pots with drainage holes to ensure the soil is never waterlogged, which will cause the plants to rot. Reduce watering in winter.

Aftercare

Feed with high potash fertilizer every week or two as flowers appear. If growing indoors, hand-pollinate the flowers every day or so (p168). If growing outside on a windowsill, cover berries with netting to prevent birds from eating them. Remove old stems and withered leaves in winter; plants will send out new growth the next spring.

Harvesting

Pick strawberries when they are red, soft, and sweet. Harvesting the fruits frequently encourages a plant to produce more flowers and fruits.



Firming the potting mix

Planting bare-root strawberry plants

Once you get the plants (also known as runners) home, soak for 10 minutes; then transplant into a pot with drainage holes filled with good-quality commercial potting mix. Choose a deep pot so the base of the crown (where the stems meet the roots) is at soil level and the roots extend down without curling upward; trim to 4in (10cm) if necessary to fit. If the crown is buried or the roots are exposed, the plants will not thrive. Water over a sink after planting.

Best indoor varieties

There are three strawberry types: Alpine, June-bearing, and everbearing. Alpine plants have small fruits but are tolerant of shade; June-bearing types produce heavy crops from early to mid summer; and everbearing varieties produce berries from summer to fall.



'TRIBUTE' ▲

(*Fragaria x ananassa* 'Albion') Pick the berries of this everbearing variety from summer until mid autumn. It produces dark red fruits with a delicious, rich, sweet flavor, and is disease-resistant.

Height & spread: 8 x 12in (20 x 30cm)



'JEWEL' ▲

(*Fragaria x ananassa* 'Jewel') The bright red berries of this June-bearing variety have a delicious flavor and a firm but juicy texture.

Height & spread: 8 x 12in (20 x 30cm)

ALPINE STRAWBERRY ▀

(*Fragaria vesca*)

Fruiting from summer to early autumn, these disease-resistant plants are ideal for growing in pots and hanging baskets.

Height & spread: 8 x 12in (20 x 30cm)



▲ 'EARLIGLOW'

(*Fragaria x ananassa* 'Earliglow') This variety produces a good crop of sweet, exceptional-tasting fruits from early to mid summer.

Height & spread: 12 x 16in (30 x 40cm)



'PINEBERRY' ▲

(*Fragaria x ananassa* 'Pineberry')

Grown in the same ways as ordinary strawberries, the fruits of this unusual white variety with red seeds have a pineapple aroma. If grown outside, the berries are invisible to birds.

Height & spread: 16 x 20in (40 x 50cm)



'ROMAN' ▲

(*Fragaria x ananassa* 'Roman')

Chefs love the superb flavor of the berries of this everbearing variety. Bred specifically for container growing, the plants bear attractive pink flowers.

Height & spread: 8 x 12in (20 x 30cm)



Sweet & savory

For a summery afternoon treat, sandwich a layer of sliced strawberries and thick clotted cream between freshly baked butter shortcakes, top with a couple of strawberry slices, and serve with tea.

Toss sliced strawberries with fresh spinach leaves and almond slivers for a colorful salad.

For fruity popsicles, process strawberries, plain yogurt, and honey in a food processor, and then pour into molds and freeze.

Pour strawberry liqueur over Alpine strawberries, chill overnight, and serve topped with cream.



Strawberries and cream shortcakes



Quick growing guide



2 hours for various stages



Full sun



Water every day or two



Feed weekly with tomato fertilizer when flowers appear



Harvest when strawberries are ripe and flowers appear

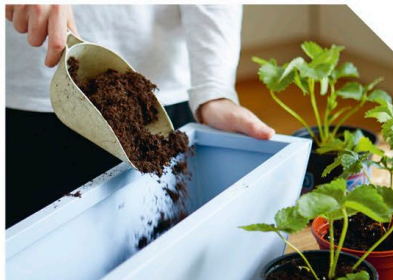


Fruit & flower windowbox

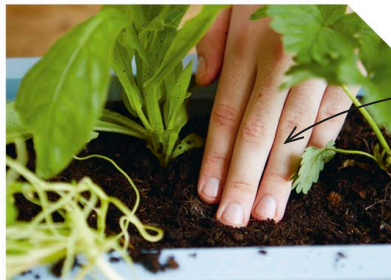
Pack an **outside windowsill** with a box of **strawberry plants**, peppery **nasturtium flowers** and leaves, and the spicy blooms of **calendula** to use in sweet and savory salads.

YOU WILL NEED windowbox • potting mix • 3 everbearing strawberry plants (see p173 for varieties) • 3 calendula plants (*Calendula officinalis*) • 2 nasturtium plants (*Tropaeolum majus*) • sand, gravel, or crushed seashell mulching material • Watering can fitted with a rose head

Strawberry flowers are pollinated by insects, which is why they will produce fruit more easily on an outside windowsill



1 Choose a windowbox with drainage holes, or drill several holes in the base. Fill to about 2in (5cm) from the top with commercial potting soil. Water all the plants well and allow to drain on a draining board.




2 Plant the strawberries and nasturtiums alternately at the front of the windowbox. Add the marigolds at the back in between these plants—as they will grow the tallest—and ensure all the roots are covered.

Firm the mix down gently between all the plants to remove any air gaps.



3 Place the windowbox on a draining board, and water the plants to settle the potting mix around the roots. Add a layer of sand, gravel, or crushed seashells to help lock the moisture in the potting mix (see also p201), and set the box on an outdoor windowsill.





*Pick the blooms from the
nasturtiums and calendula
regularly to encourage the
plants to produce more flowers.*

Create a mix of fruits and flowers in a windowbox for a summer-long display. Keep all the plants in the windowbox well watered, even during wet weather.

*Apply a
weekly dose
of tomato
fertilizer as soon
as the flowers
appear*



Quick growing guide



10 minutes to pot



Full sun 64-75°F (18-24°C) in summer; 46-54°F (8-12°C) in winter



Water every few days in summer; more sparingly in winter



Feed weekly in summer; once a month in winter



Snip mature leaves as needed



Grow your own kaffir lime leaves



Kaffir lime leaves

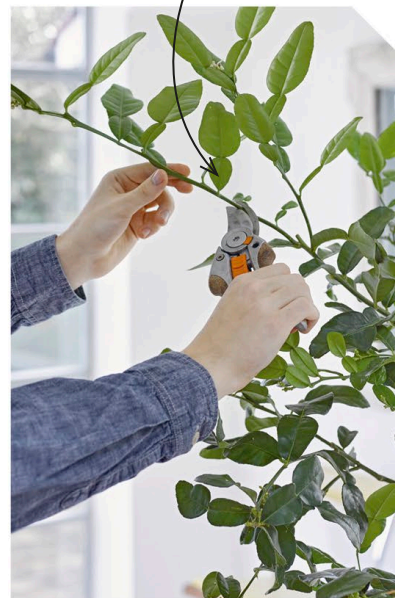
Spice up your Thai curries and fish dishes with home-grown **kaffir lime leaves**. You can use the richly flavored leaves **fresh or dried** in cooking, and the plant itself will add a touch of visual drama to your interior decor.

YOU WILL NEED: • kaffir (or makrut) lime plant • large decorative container, at least 12in (30cm) deep and 7in (18cm) wide • citrus fertilizers • watering can

Snip off the fresh double-lobed leaves as you need them, or cut off a stem and air-dry the leaves.




1 Tip the plant gently out of its pot, and if the roots are very congested around the sides, repot it in a slightly larger plastic container using citrus mix (see pp182-83 for repotting tips). Water well and place the potted lime plant in a decorative container. Feed as shown on p178 and p180, or use a slow-release fertilizer (left).



2 A kaffir lime plant needs a bright, sunny spot in summer. In winter, keep it in a cool but bright room. Maintain a humid atmosphere by placing the plant pot on a saucer of gravel or pebbles filled with water, and add some moss over the top of the growing mix to help lock in moisture.



3 Harvest the leaves when the plant is in full growth from spring to autumn, but leave the plant in winter when growth will be slow. Use the foliage fresh or hang the leaves upside down to dry and then store in an airtight container. You can also freeze the fresh leaves.

A large, bushy kaffir lime tree with glossy green leaves is the central focus, growing in a large orange pot. Beside it in a smaller, textured orange pot is a chili plant with red and green peppers. The plants are on a white dining table with colorful chairs (red, orange, teal) in the background. A window with a view of trees is on the left. Several text callouts provide care tips for the plants.

Kaffir lime trees grow into large plants, so be sure that you have enough space in a bright room before buying one.

*Grow a
chile plant with
your lime as two
spicy ingredients;
both like bright
sunlight*

*Only remove a
stem, or a few
mature leaves
from the tips of
the stems, at
any one time.*

*Overwatering can kill a lime plant.
If the growing mix feels wet, drain
out any excess water and leave
the plant to dry off.*



Lemons & limes

Citrus species

Zesty lemons and limes are versatile fruits and the key ingredients in many drinks, desserts, and savory dishes. To grow them at home, try to mimic their native Mediterranean conditions.



Lemon trees need at least six hours of direct sunlight for the fruits to ripen.

Meyer lemon

How to grow

When to buy or sow

You can buy lemon and lime trees at any time of year, but by purchasing those with some fruit already developing on the stems, you can be sure the plant will be productive. Citrus plants like slightly acidic soil—use special citrus growing mix. The pot size depends on the size of the plant, but most plants need a container that is at least 12in (30cm) deep and 7in (18cm) wide.

Light & heat

Both lemon and lime trees need plenty of sunlight in summer and winter, and will thrive in a bright, south-facing room. They require cool winter temperatures—a bright but unheated spare room or sunroom is ideal—and may not fruit until they have undergone this colder period. They will enjoy being outside on a balcony or roof terrace in summer, if you have one.

Watering

Keep the growing mix moist, but not wet. Set the pot on a saucer of gravel filled with water to maintain a moist atmosphere, and mist the plant with rain- or filtered water every few days from spring to fall.

Aftercare

Feed once a month from mid-fall to mid-spring with a diluted winter citrus granular fertilizer, and every week thereafter with a summer citrus fertilizer. See p206 for advice on pruning.

Best indoor varieties

There are several varieties of lemon and lime you can try at home. The best for growing indoors all year round are compact types, which are grafted on a dwarf rootstock. A specialized nursery can advise you on those that are suitable for your space. Here are some recommended varieties.



TAHITI LIME ▲

Citrus x latifolia

Sometimes called the Persian or Bearss lime, the fruits are like those you buy in the store and are ideal for adding to drinks and desserts. The plants produce seedless fruits throughout the year. Look for a lime tree grafted on a dwarf stock such as 'PS'.

Size of fruit: approx 2-2½in (5-6cm)



▲ KEY LIME

Citrus x aurantiifolia

Compact enough for a small apartment, even a relatively young plant produces juicy limes. Key limes are more tender than lemon plants.

Size of fruit: approx 2in (5cm)

KAFFIR (MAKRUT) LIME ▀

Citrus hystrix

Both the leaves and fruits are used in many Asian dishes. The plants are fairly easy to grow, and tolerate slightly higher winter temperatures. **Size of fruit:** approx 3-4in (8-10cm)



MEYER LEMON ▲

Citrus x limon 'Meyer'

A compact lemon tree rarely growing to more than 6ft (180cm) in height. The plants produce thick-skinned fruits with a classic lemon flavor.

Size of fruit: approx 3-4in (8-10cm)



Citrus suggestions

Rich in vitamin C, lemons and limes make fresh-tasting accompaniments to many drinks and cocktails.

Try squeezing the juice of several lemons and limes and adding water and sugar to taste for a zingy cordial.

Or mix the zest of a lemon with some butter and chopped fresh rosemary and push it beneath the skin of a chicken. Place the lemon inside the chicken cavity and roast for the recommended time.

Wash the salty preserved lemons before using in dishes.



When to harvest

Lemons and limes produce flowers in late spring, and the fruits then develop over the next 6 to 12 months. This means that there are often fragrant flowers on the plant at the same time as mature fruits. Lemon fruits are ripe as soon as they turn yellow and have a glossy appearance. Limes turn yellow when ripe, but should be picked when still green and firm.

Picking and storing

The fruits often mature at different rates over a month or two, rather than all at once, which means you will rarely have a glut, particularly on a small tree.

Snip off the fruits with sharp scissors or shears, or cup the fruit in your hand and twist it gently until it breaks off the tree. Once harvested, use them fresh, store for up to two weeks in the fridge, or cut into slices and freeze—an ideal way to preserve them for summery drinks.

Preserving in jars

Try storing a few small lemons in a large sterilized canning jar filled with herbs and spices, and covered with salted lemon juice. Allow to cure for a few weeks and top off with more lemon juice if needed. Use in tagines and other chicken dishes.



Oranges in pots for a sunny room

Little **calamondin oranges** and **kumquats** fruit well when grown indoors in a bright sunlit room (see project overleaf). Calamondins are perfect for **making marmalade**, and you can **eat** both the skin and flesh of kumquat fruits.

YOU WILL NEED tray • pebbles • citrus growing mix • summer and winter citrus fertilizers • Epsom salts • chelated iron • mist sprayer

Watering and feeding

Citrus plants prefer acidic soil conditions, so if your water is “hard” and contains alkaline calcium, you should ideally water the plants with rain- or filtered water. Allow the plants to almost dry out in winter, but keep the compost moist at all times from spring to autumn. They also need to be fed regularly with citrus fertilizers designed for summer and winter growth (see overleaf). Misting them weekly with a 50:50 mix of Epsom salts and chelated iron diluted in water will also keep the plants in good health.

The fruits take almost a year to mature, so the plant often fruits and flowers at the same time

Creating an ideal environment

To maintain a humid atmosphere around your plant during the warmer seasons, plant it in a pot with a drainage hole and set it on a tray filled with pebbles and water. Calamondins and kumquats both enjoy bright sunlight and warmth in summer, but need a cool area in winter, such as an unheated spare room, sunroom, or porch.

Pebbles

Placing the pot on a tray of pebbles and water will help create a humid atmosphere around your plant.



Display your kumquat and calamondin plants next to a bright, sunny window or under a skylight, away from radiators or heat registers.



Ripe kumquat fruits can be harvested from the plants over many weeks from late winter.



Quick growing guide



30 minutes to repot



Full sun
64-75°F
(18-24°C)
in summer;
46-54°F (8-12°C)
in winter



Water every few days in summer; more sparingly in winter



Feed weekly in summer; once a month in winter



Harvest the fruits when ripe

Calamondins are one of the easiest orange plants to grow indoors, and often produce a heavy crop of fruits.

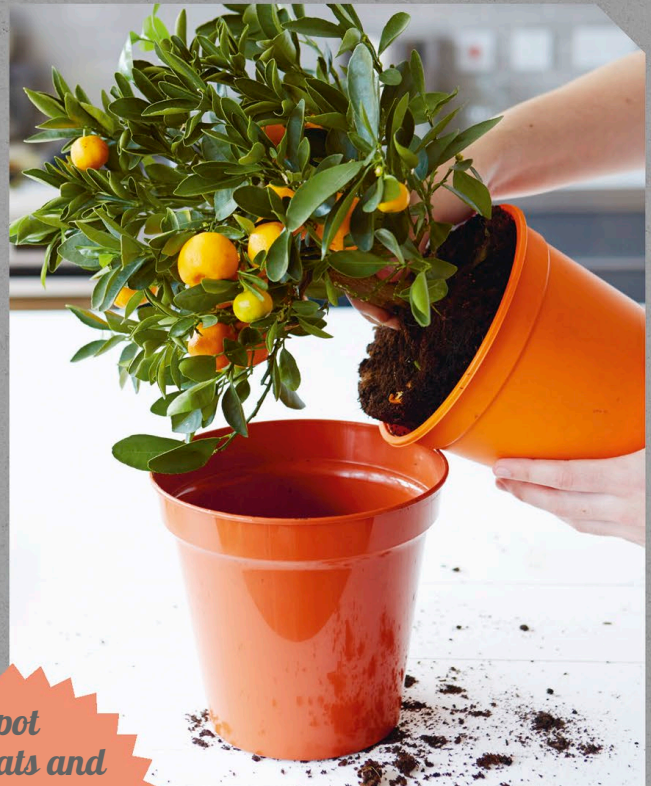


Repotting a calamondin orange

Container-grown calamondins can grow up to 6 feet (1.8m) or more in height and will need **repotting** in spring **every year or two** as they mature to keep them healthy. Do this very carefully if the plant is still in fruit, or harvest the little oranges before you begin.

YOU WILL NEED plastic pot one size bigger than the original pot • citrus growing mix • citrus summer fertilizer • watering can or jug

Oranges are greedy fruits and need feeding every week from spring to autumn, and once every four weeks during the winter months.



Repot kumquats and other orange plants in spring using this same method

1 Water your calamondin well and leave it to drain in the kitchen sink an hour or two before repotting it. Cover the base of the larger plastic pot with a thin layer of citrus growing mix.

2 Carefully tip the calamondin out of its pot, holding it gently by its central stem. Place the plant in the new pot and check that the top of the rootball is sitting just below the rim.



3 Add or remove growing mix from the bottom to achieve the right level. Then fill in around the sides of the plant with more growing mix, firming it with your fingers to remove any air gaps.



4 After repotting, feed the calamondin using a summer citrus fertilizer, taking care to measure the powder out carefully before diluting to ensure you apply the correct dosage.



5 Place the plastic pot in a decorative container, and mist the plant every couple of days in summer. Reduce the frequency of watering to once a week in the winter months, allowing the top of the growing mix to dry out before watering again.

Oranges

Citrus species

Their colorful fruits and perfumed flowers make oranges popular indoor plants; most produce a crop in late winter or early spring, when few other home-grown crops are ready.

How to grow

When to buy or sow

Orange trees are available to buy at any time of year. If the roots are crowded, repot in citrus growing mix, as described on pp182–83.

Light & heat

As well as requiring natural sunlight, oranges also need cool indoor temperatures in winter (similar to their native Mediterranean climate), to ensure the fruits set. A sunny, unheated, bright spare room or sunroom is ideal during the winter months. In summer, keep your orange plants in a warm, sunny, breezy area, or move them outdoors.

Watering

Keep the growing mix moist, but not wet, and reduce watering in winter. Set your potted orange on a saucer of gravel or pebbles and water to maintain a humid atmosphere.

Aftercare

Feed an orange plant once a month from fall to mid-spring with a winter citrus fertilizer, and weekly for the rest of the year with a summer citrus fertilizer.

Harvesting

The ripe fruits can be left on the plant for a few weeks until you're ready. Snip off each fruit carefully with a sharp knife or shears.

Best indoor varieties

Buy naturally small trees, such as mandarins and kumquats, or oranges grown on dwarf rooting stocks, but remember that even these will grow to 6ft (2m) in height or more over time.



◀ SWEET ORANGE

(*Citrus sinensis*)

Buy a plant on a dwarf rooting stock, and enjoy the large, sweet fruits, which are similar to those you buy in the grocery.

Size of fruit: approx 4in (10cm)

MANDARIN ORANGE ▶

(*Citrus reticulata*)

These small trees produce crops of pebble-skinned, easy-to-peel sweet fruits.

Size of fruit: approx 2½in (6cm)



◀ KUMQUAT

(*Citrus japonica*)

Both the flesh and skin of the oval fruits can be eaten; the skin is, in fact, sweeter than the flesh.

Size of fruit: approx 2½in (6cm)



CALAMONDIN ▶

(x *Citrofortunella microcarpa*)

One of the easiest oranges to grow indoors; even young plants will produce a bumper crop of small, bitter fruits, ideal for making marmalade.

Size of fruit: 2–2½in (5–6cm)



Oranges need plenty of natural sunlight all year round and good ventilation in summer



Sweet & savory

Drizzle peeled orange slices with rosewater and honey.

Top with cinnamon, pomegranate seeds, pistachios, and mint leaves.

Make a salad of mandarin segments tossed with toasted almonds, mixed salad greens, and crumbled Gorgonzola cheese.

Wrap marinated jumbo shrimp around whole kumquats, thread onto skewers, then grill.

Create a refreshing tropical fruit salad by combining bite-sized pieces of orange, grapefruit, melon, and pineapple with black grapes and pomegranate seeds.



Fresh fruit salad

Ripe fruits will remain on the plant for many weeks without rotting.

Calamondin orange

Set your fig on a table or stool—or the floor if the plant is big—near either a patio door or a full-length window so that it receives the maximum amount of light.

The figs ripen to a rich purple or brown color from late summer to early fall.

Plants fruit best in pots that restrict their root growth.





Fruity fig tree

A fig tree makes a **dramatic houseplant** with its handsome, sculptural leaves and elegant shape, but if you can encourage yours to produce a crop of deliciously **sweet fruits**, too, this decorative tree will really **earn its keep** in your home.

Making space for figs

Figs (*Ficus carica*) naturally grow into large shrubs or trees, but by restricting their roots in a pot, you can keep them much smaller, although a mature plant may still reach 5ft (1.2m) in height and 3ft (1m) in diameter, or more. Like citrus plants, figs prefer a warm, bright, sunny location in summer, and a cooler, unheated room in winter, when the plant will shed its leaves (and can then tolerate shadier conditions, too).

Figs are not actually fruits, but a hollow stem that contains many flowers and seeds

Choosing a fig for your home

Select a fig from a garden center that has been raised in a pot and already has a few fruit buds or more mature figs developing on the stems. You can buy plants pretrained into a vase shape or a standard with a clear lower stem and ball-shaped upper growth. Alternatively, buy a cheaper plant and train it yourself (p207).



'Violette de Solliès' fruits have a scented flesh.

'Violette de Solliès'

The large, dark-purple fruits of this variety are almost black in color when fully ripe, while the unusual leaves have fine serrated edges. The figs are ready to harvest from late summer to fall.

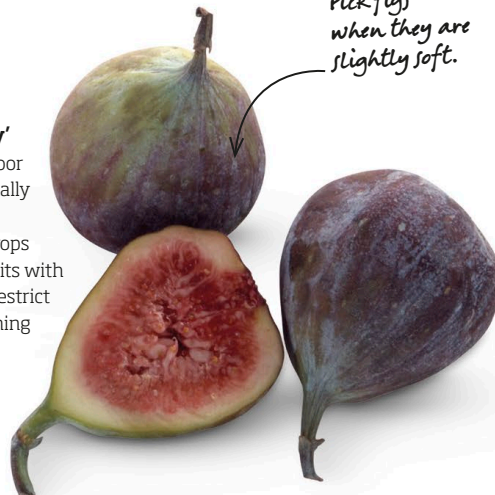


'Brunswick'

The large, green-skinned fruits ripen early and have a rich, sweet flavor. This variety survives on a balcony outside all year in mild climates.

'Brown Turkey'

This popular outdoor variety grows equally well indoors and produces heavy crops of large brown fruits with sweet red flesh. Restrict its growth by pruning back long stems.



Pick figs when they are slightly soft.

Quick growing guide



2-3 hours for various stages



Full sun/part shade



Water every 1-3 days from spring to fall; once a week in winter



Feed weekly with tomato fertilizer when fruits appear



Harvest when fruits are ripe in late summer

Project >>



Grow a fig for your home

Most fig trees produce a crop of **ripe fruits** from **late summer** to **mid fall**, and require a little care throughout the year to produce this sweet harvest. Repotting them into increasingly larger pots encourages **optimum growth**, while selective **pruning** will increase their **productivity**.

YOU WILL NEED decorative container with drainage holes • drip tray • commercial potting mix • horticultural sand • slow-release all-purpose pelleted fertilizer • seaweed foliar fertilizer • watering can • potting cart (optional) • pruners

In spring, cut out spindly stems to leave only the thick stems that produce the fruits



1 Fig trees produce their best crops of fruit when their roots are restricted, but they still need to be repotted into larger containers every year in spring. Choose a pot 2-3in (5-8cm) wider and 1-2in (2.5-5cm) deeper than the original.



2 Add a layer of soil-based potting mix with a handful of horticultural sand mixed into the larger container. Remove the fig from its pot and gently tease out any tightly packed roots, which will encourage them to grow.

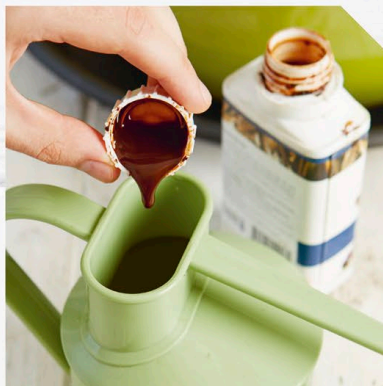


Leave a 1in (3cm) gap between the potting mix and the pot rim to allow space for watering.

3 Place the plant in the container and fill in around the rootball with potting mix. Mix slow-release all-purpose pelleted fertilizer into the top layer of potting mix, cover any exposed granules, and firm down with your fingers to remove air gaps.



Reduce watering to once a week in the winter.



4 Place the pot on a waterproof tray close to a sunny window or under a bright skylight. Water every few days from spring to fall when the plant is in full growth so that the potting mix is always damp, but never wet.

5 Six to eight weeks after planting, feed the fig every two weeks with a foliar seaweed fertilizer, which helps to strengthen the leaves and protect the plant against pests and diseases. Apply a high-potash feed when fruits form.



6 Turn the fig around every week or two if it is growing next to a window to ensure all sides receive adequate sunlight. Water your fig every day when the temperatures rise in summer and the fruits are setting.

Set your fig on a plant cart to make it easier to move around.

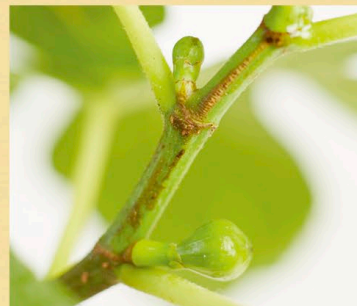
Pruning

Regular pruning keeps a fig healthy. In winter, remove dead and diseased stems (these look darker and may be brittle) down to clean white wood. Remove any wayward growth that spoils the plant's shape. In late spring, cut off the growing tips of the new season's growth to leave stems with 4-5 leaves. In mid-autumn, remove green figs larger than a pea in size, but leave smaller fruitlets, produced in late summer, which will survive winter and become mature fruits the following summer. Fruitlets that grow in spring may also ripen in fall.



Late-spring pruning

Remove the growing tips of each branch in late spring to encourage fruit to grow. Cut just above a leaf stem or fruitlet.



Fall pruning

After the fig loses its leaves, remove all unripe fruits from the tree apart from those that are about the size of a pea.



Peaches & nectarines

Prunus persica

These fruit trees will grow successfully indoors if you have a warm, sunny area for them to bask in during the summer, and a cooler room to overwinter them.

These closely related species are grown in the same way.



'Bonanza'
peach

Maintain an open vase-like shape by pruning out wayward and crossing stems in late winter.

How to grow

When to buy

Buy a self-fertile tree in early to mid-spring, either already potted or as a bare-root specimen. Check that the one you buy is grafted on a dwarf rootstock; ask the nursery for advice if you are unsure. If you buy a bare-root tree, soak the roots for 10 minutes when you get the tree home and pot it in a container at least 18in (45 cm) in diameter filled with commercial growing mix. Ensure the container has drainage holes and a saucer or tray underneath it, or set it in a slightly larger, waterproof pot. Don't add fertilizer at this stage.

Light & heat

Peach and nectarine trees need lots of light from spring to early autumn, and require a spot close to a large south-facing window or under a bright skylight. If you grow them next to a window, turn the pot every week or two to promote even growth.

In winter, keep these deciduous plants cool in an unheated room or on a sheltered balcony. They won't require as much light at this time of year.

Watering

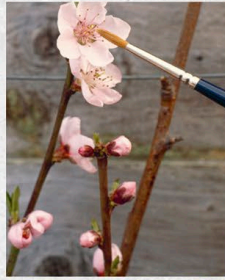
Keep the growing mix moist at all times during the growing season from spring to early autumn. Try to water your peach or nectarine consistently, as irregular watering when the fruits are ripening can result in split skins. Reduce watering in winter; once a week should be fine in a cool room.

Aftercare

When peaches flower, pollinate them by dabbing the bristles of a small, clean paintbrush into each bloom every day or two. Misting the blooms also helps the fruit to set. Feed the plants every two weeks with a high-potash fertilizer when the flowers appear. When the fruits are the size of a hazelnut, thin them to one every 4in (10cm), and again to one every 8-10in (20-25cm) when walnut-sized. When the fruits are about the size of a small cherry tomato, remove any that are misshapen or showing signs of disease. Each spring, mix a pelleted all-purpose fertilizer into the compost, and repot plants with compacted roots every 2-3 years in a slightly larger container filled with potting mix.

Harvesting

Pick peach and nectarine fruits only when they're fully ripe: cup each fruit lightly in your hand and gently lift to release it from the stem.



Hand-pollinate flowers

Replicate the process of pollination by using a paintbrush to hand-pollinate your indoor blooms (p207).

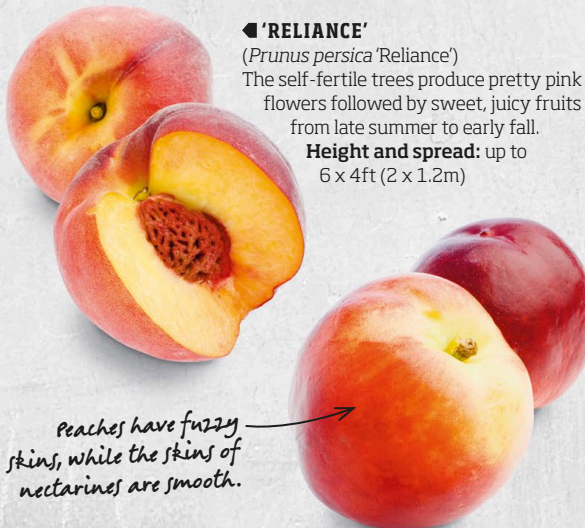


Fruit ripening on branch

Check ripening fruit regularly and remove any that show signs of disease.

Best varieties

Choose a naturally dwarf peach or nectarine plant variety, or one grafted on a dwarf rootstock; a specialized nursery will be able to advise you.



◀ 'RELIANCE'

(*Prunus persica* 'Reliance')

The self-fertile trees produce pretty pink flowers followed by sweet, juicy fruits from late summer to early fall.

Height and spread: up to 6 x 4ft (2 x 1.2m)

'BONANZA' ▲

(*Prunus persica* 'Bonanza')

This self-fertile patio peach tree is naturally dwarf, yet it produces full-sized, juicy fruits. It requires little or no pruning to keep its compact shape.

Height & spread: 28-32in (70-80cm)

◀ 'SUNGLO'

(*Prunus persica* var. *nectarina* 'SunGlo')

This dwarf, self-fertile nectarine tree produces yellow flesh with an excellent, sweet flavor in late summer.

Height & spread: 6 x 4ft (2 x 1.2m)

peaches have fuzzy skins, while the skins of nectarines are smooth.



Peachy delights

Toss stoned peach halves with salad greens, crispy prosciutto, feta cheese, and toasted walnuts for a simple summer salad.

Thread cubes of peach and pork onto skewers, drizzle with lemon juice and honey, and grill until cooked.

Top rectangles of puff pastry with crème pâtissière and halved stoned peaches. Bake in a hot oven for 10-15 minutes for an easy tart.

Serve sliced nectarines with ricotta and goat cheese topped with toasted almonds and honey.

Bake peach slices until soft, drizzle with honey, sprinkle with pistachios, and grill until browned on top.



Peach & nectarine puff pastry tart



Pineapple guava

Acca sellowiana

This small evergreen shrub produces exotic-looking edible flowers and green oval fruits, sometimes known as feijoas, which are sweet and aromatic, and taste a little like kiwifruit. The plants like warm conditions for most of the year.

When to buy or sow

You can buy the plants from specialized nurseries any time of year, but you are more likely to reap a crop of fruits if you buy a plant in flower in late spring. You also need two plants to cross-pollinate if you want fruits. Plant in pots with drainage holes in the bottom and filled with commercial potting mix with added sand to ensure good drainage. Set the pots on saucers or place inside a decorative, watertight container.

Light & heat

Although these plants are from Brazil and require a bright spot and heat to produce their green fruits, they need a cooler environment, such as an unheated spare room, for a few weeks in winter. (The plants are, in fact, hardy down to 10°F/-12°C and can be set on a roof terrace or balcony, if you have one, in winter.)

Watering

Pineapple guavas are drought-tolerant plants and will suffer if overwatered, so check that the potting mix never becomes too wet. However, they need constant moisture, especially when the flowers appear and the fruits are developing.

Aftercare

Apply a high-potash fertilizer every week once the flowers appear and until all the fruits have ripened in late summer or early autumn. You may also have to hand-pollinate the flowers to ensure they produce fruits.

Harvesting

The fruits will fall off the plant when ripe, although to prevent any bruising you can gently squeeze them to check if they are soft, and cut them from the plant just before they fall. You can also harvest the edible flowers to use as a garnish (see right).

Hand-pollinate the flowers by dabbing a clean paintbrush onto the stamens (the red stalks in the center of the flower) every few days, ensuring you have tickled them all

Flower
stamens

Pineapple
guava in
flower



EXOTIC FRUITS

Pineapple guava fruits can be sliced and included in fruit salads, or scoop out the pulp and use it in smoothies or as a fruity topping on yogurt.



The plant flowers in early summer and produces exotic-looking white and pink flowers with fleshy edible petals.

Pineapple guava plant

Cook's tips

Exotic touches

Add the flowers, which have a sweet, fruity flavor, to an iced cake as a stunning floral decoration.

For an exotic fruit salad, slice the guavas, with or without the skin, and add to the fruity confection.

Make a salsa with chopped pineapple guava fruit, onions, fresh cilantro, brown sugar, and a sprinkling of black pepper.

Scoop out the flesh of some pineapple guava fruits and whip it up in a blender with some fresh strawberries, apples, and apple juice to make a delicious smoothie.



Fruit smoothie



Cape gooseberries

Physalis peruviana

The velvety leaves and custard-yellow lanterns that encase the sweet golden "gooseberries" make these indoor edible plants stand out from the crowd. Easy to care for, they will thrive in a warm, sunlit room.

How to grow

When to buy

These plants need a long growing period to produce fruits. If growing from seed, sow in late winter in pots of good-quality seed starting mix and cover them lightly with vermiculite (p201). Alternatively, buy young plants from a garden center in the spring and plant in commercial potting mix.

Light & heat

Cape gooseberry seeds need a temperature of 64–70°F (18–21°C) to germinate. Place the seedlings and plants in a sunny spot, such as on a south-facing windowsill. The mature plants will tolerate a minimum temperature of 59°F (15°C) or a little lower at night.

Watering

These plants need plenty of moisture; water them every day to prevent them from wilting, especially after the flowers form. However, make sure the potting mix never becomes waterlogged by planting the gooseberries in pots with drainage holes.

Aftercare

Continue to pot the plants into increasingly larger containers as they grow, and feed them twice weekly with tomato fertilizer when the flowers appear. The stems may require staking, too. The plants will overwinter in a cool room.

Harvesting

Cut off the lanterns in fall when they are brittle and pale brown in color and the fruits inside are golden orange. Store the fruits in their husks for up to a month at room temperature.

FLOWERS ►

The pretty yellow flowers with maroon blotches in the center don't need to be hand-pollinated, but you can spray the blooms every few days with a water mister to encourage the fruits to set.

The pretty blooms are self-fertilizing.

The nutritious sweet berries are rich in vitamins A and C and iron.



Ripe fruit

FABULOUS FRUITS ►

After the flowers appear, tiny green "lanterns" start to develop. These gradually turn yellow and then become crisp and brittle, indicating that the berries inside are ripe.



The dainty yellow lanterns look like Christmas tree decorations when they color in late summer and fall.

◆ LITTLE LANTERNS

For indoor displays, choose a compact variety such as 'Little Lanterns', which will grow to around 3ft (90cm) in height.



Sweet treats

Dip cape gooseberries and strawberries in melted chocolate, allow to cool and set, and serve as an after-dinner sweet.

Mix a few berries with apples to inject a flavor bomb into a crisp.

Blend cape gooseberries with honey and water until smooth, strain, then freeze in an ice cube tray. Add the frozen cubes to tall glasses of coconut milk and serve.

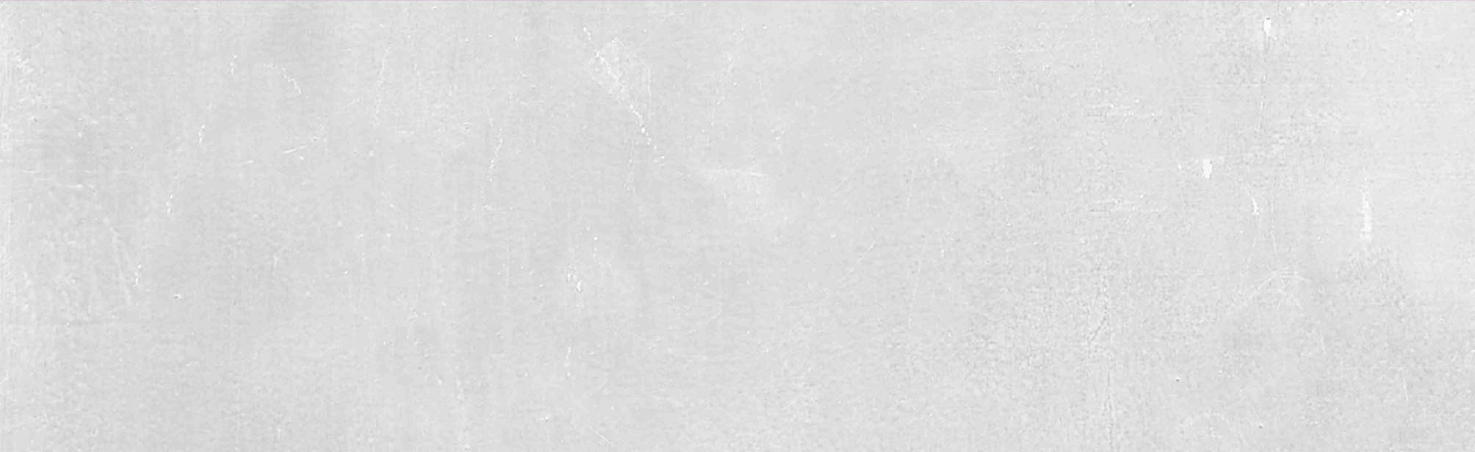
Make a salad from halved gooseberries, chopped cucumber, chopped fresh cilantro, grilled corn, and toasted sesame seeds.



Chocolate-covered cape gooseberries and strawberries

Water every day to prevent leaves from wilting and flowers and lanterns dropping off







Experts' tips

The advice in this chapter on basic plant care, such as watering, feeding, and pruning, will help you keep your indoor crops healthy and productive, while preserving tips offer great ways to make the most of your indoor edibles.



Plan your indoor edible gardening year

Harvesting symbols

- ✱ harvest flowers
- 🍷 harvest fruits
- 🌿 harvest leaves
- 🌱 harvest shoots
- 🌱 harvest bulbs
- ✱ harvest roots

This planner will help you to **produce** a **year-round** indoor edible garden, showing what to **sow** and **plant** through the **seasons**, and when you can expect a **harvest** from the crops in this book. Although most plants grow from **spring to autumn** when conditions are optimum, remember that you can still enjoy fresh salad leaves, sprouts, and fruits (such as citrus), in **winter** when light levels and temperatures are lower.

EARLY TO MID-SPRING

Sow seed

Basil	Cucamelon	Parsley
Beet	Cucumber	Radish
Bok choy	Eggplant	Scallion
Calendula	Garlic greens	Sprouts
Carrot	Lettuce	Sweet pepper
Chile pepper	Microgreens	Tomato
Chive	Mizuna & mibuna	Viola

Plant young plants/bulbs

Bok choy	Lemon & lime	Primrose
Calamondin	Lettuce	Radish
Cape gooseberry	Mint	Rosemary
Chive	Mizuna & mibuna	Sage
English daisy	Orange	Scallion
Fig	Orchid (Dendrobium)	Strawberry
Garlic greens	Parsley	Thyme
Kumquat	Peach & nectarine	Tulip
Lavender	Pineapple guava	Viola

Harvest

Bok choy 🌿	Mint 🌿	Rosemary 🌿
Calamondin 🍷	Mizuna & mibuna 🌿	Sage 🌿
Chive 🌿	Mushroom	Sprouts 🌱
English daisy ✱	Orange 🍷	Thyme 🌿
Kumquat 🍷	Orchid:	Tulip ✱
Lemon & lime 🍷	Dendrobium ✱	Viola ✱
Lettuce 🌿	Parsley 🌿	
Microgreens 🌿	Primrose ✱	

LATE SPRING

Sow seed

Basil	Cucamelon	Parsley
Beet	Cucumber	Radish
Bok choy	Lettuce	Scallion
Calendula	Microgreens	Sprouts
Carrot	Mizuna & mibuna	Tomato
Chive	Nasturtium	

Plant young plants/bulbs

Basil	Garlic greens	Primrose
Beet	Kumquat	Radish
Bok choy	Lavender	Rosemary
Calamondin	Lemon & lime	Sage
Calendula	Lemon verbena	Scallion
Cape gooseberry	Lettuce	Stevia
Carrot	Mint	Strawberry
Chile pepper	Mizuna & mibuna	Sweet pepper
Chive	Nasturtium	Thyme
Cucamelon	Orange	Tomato
Cucumber	Orchid (Dendrobium)	Tulip
Eggplant	Parsley	Viola
English daisy	Peach & nectarine	
Fig	Pineapple guava	

Harvest

Calamondin 🍷	Mint 🌿	Sage 🌿
Chive 🌿	Mushroom	Sprouts 🌱
English daisy ✱	Orange 🍷	Stevia 🌿
Kumquat 🍷	Orchid: Dendrobium ✱	Thyme 🌿
Lemon verbena 🌿	Parsley 🌿	Tulip ✱
Lemon & lime 🍷	Primrose ✱	Viola ✱
Microgreens 🌿	Rosemary 🌿	



EARLY SUMMER

Sow seed

Basil	Chive	Parsley
Bok choy	Lettuce	Radish
Calendula	Microgreens	Scallion
Carrot	Mizuna & mibuna	Sprouts

Plant young plants/bulbs

Basil	Garlic greens	Pineapple guava
Beet	Kumquat	Radish
Bok choy	Lavender	Rosemary
Calamondin	Lemon & lime	Sage
Calendula	Lemon verbena	Scallion
Cape gooseberry	Lettuce	Stevia
Carrot	Mint	Strawberry
Chile pepper	Mizuna & mibuna	Sweet pepper
Chive	Nasturtium	Tomato
Cucamelon	Orange	Thyme
Cucumber	Orchid: Dendrobium	Viola
Eggplant	Parsley	
Fig	Peach & nectarine	

Harvest

Basil	Mint	Sage
Bok choy	Mizuna & mibuna	Scallion
Carrot	Mushroom	Sprouts
Chive	Nasturtium	Stevia
Garlic greens	Orchid: Dendrobium	Strawberry
Lemon verbena	Parsley	Thyme
Lettuce	Radish	Tulip
Microgreens	Rosemary	Viola

MID- to LATE SUMMER

Sow seed

Bok choy	Microgreens	Sprouts
Lettuce	Radish	

Plant young plants/bulbs

Basil	Lemon verbena	Pineapple guava
Calamondin	Lettuce	Radish
Calendula	Mint	Rosemary
Chive	Mizuna & mibuna	Sage
Garlic greens	Nasturtium	Scallion
Kumquat	Orange	Stevia
Lavender	Parsley	Thyme
Lemon & lime	Peach & nectarine	

Harvest

Basil	Garlic greens	Pineapple guava
Beet	Lavender	Radish
Bok choy	Lemon verbena	Rosemary
Calendula	Lettuce	Sage
Cape gooseberry	Microgreens	Scallion
Carrot	Mint	Sprouts
Chile pepper	Mizuna & mibuna	Stevia
Chive	Mushroom	Strawberry
Cucamelon	Nasturtium	Sweet pepper
Cucumber	Parsley	Thyme
Eggplant	Peach & nectarine	Tomato
Fig		Viola

FALL

Sow seed

Bok choy	Pineapple guava
Lettuce	Rosemary
Microgreens	Sage
Mizuna & mibuna	Stevia
Sprouts	Thyme
Viola	

Plant

Calamondin
Garlic greens
Kumquat
Lavender
Lemon & lime
Orange
Peach & nectarine

Harvest

Basil	Lemon verbena
Beet	Lettuce
Bok choy	Microgreens
Cape gooseberry	Mint
Carrot	Mizuna & mibuna
Chile pepper	Mushroom
Chive	Nasturtium
Cucamelon	Parsley
Cucumber	Pineapple guava
Eggplant	Radish
Garlic greens	Rosemary
	Sage
	Sprouts
	Stevia
	Sweet pepper
	Thyme
	Tomato
	Viola

WINTER

Sow seed

Bok choy
Cape gooseberry
Lettuce
Microgreens
Mizuna & mibuna
Sprouts
Viola

Plant

Calamondin
Kumquat
Lemon & lime
Orange
Peach & nectarine
Pineapple guava
Rosemary
Sage
Thyme

Harvest

Bok choy
Calamondin
Kumquat
Lemon & lime
Lettuce
Microgreens
Mizuna & mibuna
Mushroom
Orange
Sprouts
Viola



Choosing a potting mix

With such a vast array of growing media available, choosing the right potting mix for a particular crop can be confusing. This guide explains which **plants grow best** in the **different types of growing media** that you will find at your local garden center.

Bagged products are sterilized to kill weed seeds and pests.



Multipurpose potting mix

Also known as all-purpose potting mix, this lightweight type is available to buy with or without peat. You can also buy organic multipurpose mixes, which contain plant or tree derivatives that have been certified organic. Most of these mixes are made from natural materials, such as coir, bark, and composted wood fiber. Many also contain added fertilizers, which will feed the crops for the first few weeks after you have planted them.

Best for: annual crops that will not be in a pot for more than a year; hanging baskets.

Seed-starting mix

As the name suggests, this is the best choice for growing crops from seed. It has a finer texture than other types, which means that even tiny seeds will be in contact with the mix, thereby aiding germination. It is also free-draining, but low in nutrients (the formula is not rich enough to sustain mature plants). Most seed-starting mixes contain a mixture of peat, loam (soil), and sand.

Best for: sowing seeds in pots and trays; potting cuttings and young seedlings.

"Garden soil"

This product contains sterilized soil, with amendments, which is intended to mimic garden soil. Take care when carrying bags of this product since it contains grit and sand, which makes it very heavy. Many such products also contain timed-release fertilizers.

Best for: perennial crops, such as fruit trees and shrubs, which will remain in the same pot for more than one year.

Some mixes are designed specifically for vegetables or certain types of plants, such as citrus



Acidic potting mix

This type of medium is similar to multipurpose mix, but is designed for plants such as oranges, lemons, and limes that require acidic soil conditions. Although typically such potting mixes contain added fertilizer, you will need to replenish the nutrients with a fertilizer for acid-loving plants when those in the potting mix are depleted.

Best for: lemon, lime, kumquat, calamondin, and orange plants.

Perlite, like vermiculite, releases water into the compost.

Aggregates and other materials

You will also find a range of other products for sale that can help your plants to thrive. These include decorative mulching materials, which can be added as a layer on top of potting mix to help retain moisture, and sand and gravel, which aid drainage when mixed with potting mix or added to the bottom of a pot.

Mulches

This material is spread in a layer over the top of potting mix to retain essential moisture available to plants' roots. Mulches can be made of organic material, such as wood chips, or aggregates—gravel, crushed seashells, glass chips, and other recycled products.

Some mulches are designed to also look decorative.



Vermiculite & perlite

Vermiculite is a mineral heated to produce lightweight, spongy grains, while perlite is a volcanic rock, also heated to form similar white-gray absorbent grains. Both hold onto moisture, then release it slowly. They can be mixed with potting mix or used to cover small seeds, keeping them moist while allowing light through to aid germination.



Horticultural gravel & sand

A layer of gravel in the base of a waterproof pot creates a reservoir for water to drain into, supports the plant roots and media above, and helps to prevent waterlogging. Sand mixed with compost increases drainage and provides good growing conditions for drought-loving plants such as Mediterranean herbs.

These aggregates are prewashed and safe to use for indoor projects.





Watering from below

One way to ensure you don't flood a plant with too much water and cause spillages is to pour the water into the saucer beneath the pot. The potting mix then draws the moisture up through the drainage holes to the plant's roots.

Watering & feeding indoor edibles

Healthy plants produce the best crops, so it pays to **water** and **feed** them **well**. To do this effectively, you need to give the plants **just the right amount** of each. To ensure your crops **thrive indoors**, follow these tips to provide them with the **perfect levels** of food and water.

Watering know-how

All crops need the right amount of moisture to feed their roots to produce a good crop of leaves, fruits, or flowers. The trick to growing indoor crops successfully is to supply them with plenty of water while avoiding soggy soil, which may cause stems to rot and encourage some fungal diseases. To do this, ensure your crops are planted in pots with drainage holes in the base (or with an integral

drainage system, below), and set these pots inside waterproof containers or on saucers. To test the moisture level, feel the surface and poke your finger about $\frac{3}{4}$ in (2cm) down into the soil. If it feels dry, pour on some water. If the top of the potting mix is wet and glistening with moisture, it may be waterlogged. Drain any excess from the waterproof pot, and don't water the plant again for a day or two until the surface feels dry.



Prevent waterlogging

Some containers for indoor use may incorporate a plastic plate on supports that creates a well in the base to minimize the risk of waterlogging.



Avoid fungal infection

Water the potting mix only, not the plant's foliage, as it can encourage diseases such as gray mold and downy mildew (p209).



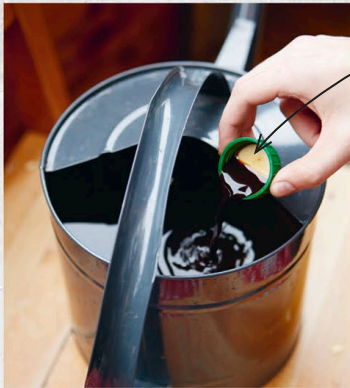
Use a rose head

Use a watering can fitted with a rose head to water all seedlings and young plants, which may otherwise be dislodged by a stream of water.

Food for thought

Edible plants need a range of nutrients to keep them healthy; the most important are nitrogen (N), potassium (K)—or potash, as it is often called—and phosphorous (P). These nutrients promote the health and development of different parts of a plant: nitrogen encourages healthy leaf growth; potash stimulates a plant to flower and fruit; and phosphorous helps it develop strong roots. Most all-purpose fertilizers contain a balance of the key nutrients as well as essential micronutrients, but others, such as those for leafy or fruit crops, contain a concentration of nitrogen or potash.

Take care not to overfertilize your crops, as this can cause more damage than underfeeding them. Fertilizer packs will also specify whether they are suitable for organically grown crops.



Follow the recommended dosages on fertilizer packages.

Preparing fertilizer

Many liquid fertilizers and powders will need to be diluted before you apply them to your crops. Check a package carefully for instructions on how to do this, and do not be tempted to give more than is required.

Fertilizers for long-term crops

Slow-release pelleted fertilizers that release nutrients over a number of months can be added to growing mix when planting. They contain all the vital nutrients needed for healthy plant growth and can be used for crops, such as fruit trees, that will grow in their pots from year to year. For established plants, remove the top layer of potting mix each spring and replace with some slow-release fertilizer mixed with fresh mix.



Feeding fruit trees

Trees such as figs and peaches benefit from an annual dose of all-purpose slow-release fertilizer to keep them in good health all year. Apply pellets as directed on the package in early spring.

Easy hydroponics

Many commercial crops are now grown without soil using a system known as "hydroponics." This term simply means growing plants in water. The growing mix is replaced by materials such as coconut husks or pumice stones, which accommodate the roots. Most of the hydroponic systems available require you to have an understanding of the specific nutrient needs of your chosen crop, which you then apply carefully to the plants to ensure good growth (nutrients are naturally present in soils and are added to many growing mixes). Many also include grow lights.

If you are new to hydroponics, look out for complete units that provide everything you need, including the growing unit, seeds, medium, nutrients, and a grow light. You can then experiment with more sophisticated systems once you feel confident.



Salad greens growing in a hydroponic unit

growing medium

water-depth indicator



Sowing from seed

The **choice of seeds** for indoor edible crops is much **wider** than the selection of young plants available to buy, so it is well worth giving them a try. **Many plants**, such as **lettuce, cucumbers**, and **tomatoes**, **sprout quickly**, too, so you will soon see some results.

Remove any covers as soon as the seeds germinate to prevent damping-off disease, which kills young seedlings

YOU WILL NEED

- seed trays with plastic lids
- seed starting mix
- vermiculite
- waterproof tray
- watering can with rose head
- potting mix
- small plastic pots
- Larger plastic pots



1 Select seeds to grow, and sow one type in each seed tray (do not mix the varieties). Place the trays in a waterproof container and fill them almost to the top with good-quality seed starting mix.



2 Place a spare clean seed tray on top of the mix in the container and press it down gently to create a level surface. Using your fingers, press the mix down around the edges, too.



3 Lightly water the tray, just enough to dampen the surface, using a watering can with a fine rose head. Open the seed package and sow the seeds thinly and evenly in rows.



A covering of vermiculite is ideal for seeds that need light to germinate.

4 Check the package for the required planting depth for each type of seed. Either cover them to this depth with more mix or with a layer of vermiculite, which helps to keep the seeds moist while allowing light through for germination. Label each tray.





5 Place plastic lids over the trays of seeds and set in a warm place such as a sunny windowsill. (Some seeds germinate faster if placed in a closed case.) Keep the seeds moist by watering into the waterproof container beneath; the starting mix will draw up the moisture, and when the surface is wet, drain off any excess water.

Lift up the seedlings by their small round seed leaves, which will appear before any other leaves.



6 Keep the seeds moist at all times, but never allow the starting mix to become waterlogged. When the seedlings appear, remove the plastic lids to prevent fungal diseases. When the seedlings have a few sets of leaves, transplant them to small pots of potting mix. Use a fork to scoop them out.



7 Seedlings such as mizuna (above) can initially be potted close together to grow. Set 3-4 seedlings in 3½-in (9cm) pots, taking care to gently firm the growing medium around them. Plant them so the lower stems are covered.



8 Keep the pots of seedlings well watered and let them grow for a few weeks in a bright area until they are ready to harvest. If you want your crops to grow into mature plants, repot them again into a larger container and continue to grow.

Pot method

You can sow seeds directly into 3½-in (9cm) plastic pots filled with seed starting mix to save you from transplanting large numbers of young seedlings later. This is also best for planting large seeds, such as cucumbers, or where you just want to grow a few plants, such as peppers and tomatoes.



Sow

Sow 1-3 seeds per pot and cover them with the appropriate depth of vermiculite as described on the package. Label the pots.



Transplant

If more than one seed germinates, transplant the others into their own container filled with potting mix (steps 6-7, left), and move them into larger pots as they grow.



Pruning, training, & pollinating fruit crops

To keep your fruit trees **productive**, you may need to **trim their stems** or cut out **old growth** from time to time. Follow these guidelines for the **best results** when pruning and training your plants.

Cutting back the growing tip stimulates more side stems to form, resulting in a bushier, more productive plant.

Why prune?

There are a few good reasons to prune a woody-stemmed plant such as a fruit tree. The first is to remove any dead or diseased growth, which should be cut out as soon as you see it. Pruning also rejuvenates the plant and encourages it to throw out new stems. If you remove the tip of the main stem, the plant will then grow more side shoots and become bushier, which in the case of fruit trees means more fruit, too. You can also prune your plant to reduce any congested growth, to give it a better shape, and to ensure that all the developing fruits receive sufficient light.



Use only sharp tools that will produce clean cuts, and prune just above a bud or leaf stem.

Remove stems

Cut the longer stems from fruit crops such as kaffir lime trees to create an evenly balanced shape and stimulate the growth of more fruiting side stems.

How to prune

When pruning, use a sharp pair of pruners and make a clean cut just above a leaf or stem bud, above a leaf stem, or at the juncture of a main stem and a side stem. You can also cut out whole stems close to the base of the plant. Use a pruning saw or loppers for stems that are wider than a pencil, and wear leather gloves when using this type of cutting tool. More specific pruning instructions are given for individual plants in Chapter 5.



Removing the top bud encourages more side stems to grow.

Cut just above a leaf bud or stem, or above a side stem.

Keep plants healthy

Remove old, diseased, or wayward stems that may affect the plant's health or are spoiling its shape at the base.

Training

Some fruit trees, such as figs, can be trained into beautiful vase-like shapes, which not only look great but will produce more fruits, as each stem is evenly spaced to allow maximum light onto the branches. Training trees is best undertaken when the plants are young and their stems are flexible. As new growth emerges on the plant in spring, remove any stems that are spoiling the shape or crossing each other, as well as any suckers. Attach one end of a length of twine to a young stem at the edge of the plant and wrap the other end around a large pebble. Repeat with other stems. The pebbles will gradually pull the stems down gently to create a vase shape. Leave the stones in place for a season or two until the fig wood hardens. When you cut the stems free they should remain in that position. Continue to prune the plant annually, as described on p189.

Ensure the twine does not cut into the stems when tied on.



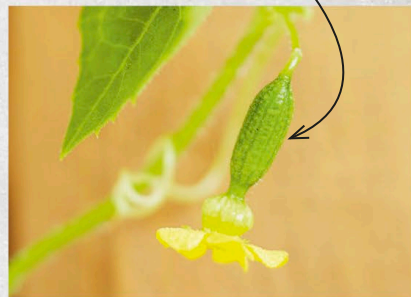
Training a fig to grow horizontal arms

In spring, tie the outer stems of a fig tree to pebbles with soft twine to coax them to grow horizontally and form an open, vase-like shape.

Pollination

The key to fruit production is in a plant's flowers. Most flowers have the potential to produce a fruit or seedhead, but many need to be pollinated to fulfil their potential. Use the techniques below to encourage effective pollination for a bumper crop. Some plants, such as cape gooseberries (physalis) and figs, are self-pollinating, meaning the pollen is transferred to the stigma (female organ) of the same flower, so the fruits will form without any help from you.

After fertilization, the flowers become the fruits.



Cucamelon flower with emerging fruit

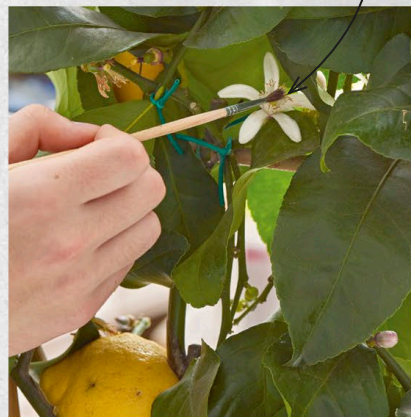
Using a paintbrush

The crops below require the pollen from one flower to be transferred to the stigma of another flower. Insects do this job outdoors, but you need to perform the task for plants growing indoors.

- citrus fruits
- strawberries
- pineapple guava
- cucamelons
- cucumbers
- eggplants
- peaches
- nectarines

Use a clean, soft paintbrush to gently dust each flower, going from bloom to bloom to ensure all the pollen is transferred. Do this every day or two once the flowers appear to ensure they are all pollinated.

Lemons and other citrus fruits will need to be pollinated by hand.



Dusting a citrus flower

Shaking or spraying

Even if you are growing self-pollinating plants, you can encourage more fruits to form by gently shaking their stems to help distribute their pollen, or spraying their flowers with a water mister a few times a week. Try these techniques with the following crops:

- cape gooseberry
- tomatoes
- sweet & chile peppers



Misting a sweet pepper flower



Common pests & diseases

One of the huge benefits of growing crops indoors is that you can more easily **protect your plants** from **flying** and **crawling insect pests** and some **airborne diseases**. However, a few problems may still occur, so be on your guard.

Protecting your plants

Your crops are less likely to suffer attacks from pests and diseases if they are healthy. Protect plants by cleaning all pots and containers with detergent and hot water before planting, and use fresh growing mix for each project—buying smaller bags will ensure it doesn't sit around for long. Keep plants well watered (avoid waterlogging), and feed them regularly, but do not overfeed, which can also cause poor growth.



Keep watering

Water plants regularly to keep them healthy so they are better equipped to fight off diseases.

Deficiencies & disorders

Not all symptoms of poor health are due to pests and diseases. Some, such as wilting, may simply be caused by a lack of water, while others can be the result of nutrient deficiency. However, most problems are easily rectified.

BLOSSOM-END ROT

This occurs in tomatoes that are suffering from a calcium deficiency. It occurs when plants are not watered frequently, since calcium is taken up by the roots in a solution. Remove affected fruits, and water the plants well.



NUTRIENT DEFICIENCY

Leaves that look pale and yellow between their veins is often a sign that the plant is suffering from an iron or nitrogen deficiency. Apply a liquid fertilizer for leafy crops—or, in the case of citrus fruits, for acid-loving crops—which should resolve the discoloration.

Pest-eating insects (biological controls) are useful in the garden, but in a home environment they may become a nuisance



Tomatoes with blossom-end rot.



SPLIT FRUITS

Tomatoes and peppers are susceptible to splitting if the plants are not watered consistently, although they will still be edible. Try to keep the growing mix moist at all times, and avoid overwatering or allowing plants to dry out.

Identifying pests & diseases

Many people like to grow their own fruit and vegetables without using chemicals or pesticides. If you want to do this, check your plants regularly for any signs of pests and diseases, as they can usually be kept in check if caught early.

A fuzzy fungal growth is a sign of gray mold disease.



GRAY MOLD

This is a common disease of soft fruits and vegetables that are grown in humid indoor conditions and results in a fuzzy gray mold on buds, leaves, flowers, or fruit. To prevent it, remove dead or dying leaves, flowers, and fruits promptly, and increase the ventilation around plants by opening windows or using a fan. Do not overcrowd plants, as this also raises the humidity.



MEALYBUG

These little sap-feeding pests attack a range of edible plants such as citrus and peaches, reducing their vigor. They look like tiny flattened woodlice, and excrete a fluffy white wax and sticky substance, which may become infected by sooty molds. Remove and discard affected plant parts. There are biological controls, but they are not always appropriate for a home environment.

Destroy adult vine weevils whenever you see them.



WHITEFLY

A common sap-feeding pest that weakens many crop plants, these tiny flies also excrete a sticky substance (honeydew), which then encourages black sooty molds to develop. Hang flypaper among your plants to trap the flies, or use an insecticide that is safe for crops. Setting the plants on a balcony may help too, as beneficial predators can then eat the flies.



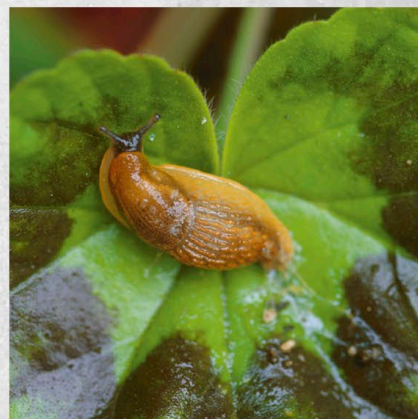
VINE WEEVIL

Often brought in on crop plants as young adults, the grubs of these pests do the most damage, eating entire root systems and causing plants to suddenly collapse. Check all new plants you buy and pick off and destroy the slow-moving, about $\frac{5}{16}$ in. (9mm-) long adults. The only effective controls are biological methods, which may not be appropriate for your home.



DOWNY MILDEW

Lettuces and some flowers may be attacked by this fungal disease, which causes white, gray, or purple mold on the undersides of the leaves. Downy mildew is an airborne disease and affects plants growing in wet soil. Remove and discard any affected parts, ensure the growing mix is not waterlogged, avoid watering the leaves, and increase the air circulation in the room.



SLUGS & SNAILS

These molluscs tend not to enter a house, but they will scale walls to get to crops on windowsills and balconies, and may be present in the containers of bought edible plants. Look under pots during the day and dispatch any pests you find hiding there. You can also try fixing a band of copper tape around an outside windowbox; the copper gives them a slight electrical shock, which deters them.



Preserving your harvests

Although growing your own crops indoors rarely results in a glut and you will probably eat most of your produce fresh from the plant, these **recipes and ideas** offer you **easy ways to enjoy** some of your crops long after the **harvest period is over**.

Choose your method

These effective preserving methods will extend the life of your produce, with all their delicious flavors and colors, for several months. For successful preservation, ensure your kitchen surfaces and equipment are absolutely clean.

Cooking

You can turn most of the fruits, root crops (such as beets), and fruiting vegetables in this book into chutneys and jams. Look online for simple jam recipes—most require equal amounts of fruit and jelly sugar, although some soft-set jams require less sugar—and boil together to reach a setting point. Ensure that you carefully sterilize all jars and lids before filling (see chutney recipe, opposite), and seal the jars properly.



Jam wrinkles when it reaches the set point.

Cooking jam

To test if your jam is cooked, place a spoonful of jam on a cold plate and leave to cool for a few minutes. Push your finger through the jam. If it wrinkles, it has set and is ready to be canned.

Freezing

An effective preservation method, freezing is quick and convenient (see recipe, right). Freeze herbs and flowers as ice cubes; you can then add herb cubes to a recipe, or drop a flower ice cube into a drink. Fill an ice tray with chopped herbs and add approximately 1 tbsp of water to each module (to reach the rim of the tray) and freeze. For flowers, add one bloom to each module and fill with water. Use within two months.



Preserving herbs

If you have lots of herbs to preserve, follow the method above to make herb ice cubes; then transfer to a plastic freezer bag, label with the date, and return to the freezer until needed.

Drying

Leave chiles on a sunny windowsill or hang in a warm, dry, airy place for 2 weeks or so until shrivelled. To air-dry tomatoes in hot (90°F/32°C), dry, breezy, weather, slice in half, remove the seeds, brush with olive oil, and leave, covered with cheesecloth, on a wire tray for 2–4 days—or oven-dry them instead in a low oven at 250°F (120°C) for 2–3 hours. To store, place in sterilized jars (right), cover with olive oil, and seal.



Dry the tomato halves on wire racks

Oven-drying tomatoes

Score a cross shape in the center of each tomato with a sharp knife to expose more of its flesh and sprinkle with a little salt before oven-drying.

To air-dry chiles, wrap strong thread around each stem and hang them up.





Freezer pickles

This recipe is quick and easy to make, and retains the crunchy bite of fresh cucumbers. Try the pickles in salads and sandwiches, as a relish with grilled food, or as a condiment for savory dishes. The pickles will keep well in the freezer for up to six months. To use, thaw overnight in the fridge and consume within one week.

Ingredients

2 large cucumbers, thinly sliced
1 medium onion or 2 shallots, very thinly sliced
2 tsp sea salt
approx. 4fl oz (120ml) cider or wine vinegar
approx. 1-2oz (30-60g) superfine sugar
¼ tsp celery or dill seeds
¼ tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp whole-grain mustard seeds
¼ tsp chile flakes (optional)

1 Place the sliced cucumbers and onion or shallots in a large bowl, and sprinkle with salt. Mix well, and leave for 2 hours to draw out the moisture from the vegetables.

2 Transfer the salted vegetables to a colander and rinse under cold water. Drain well, pressing down on them lightly to squeeze out more moisture; then tip into a clean, dry bowl.

3 Mix the vinegar and sugar to taste, stirring well to ensure the granules dissolve, and then add the spices. Pour over the vegetables, mix well, cover, and store overnight in the fridge.

4 Transfer to freezer containers, leaving a gap of ½ in (1cm) at the top of each container. Seal, label with the date, and freeze for up to 6 months.



Tomato, red pepper, and chili chutney

Red—and green—tomatoes are a fantastic base for a delicious chutney that will keep for up to nine months in sterilized jars. To sterilize jars properly, either put both the jars and lids through a hot dishwasher cycle timed to be finished when the chutney is ready to be preserved, or wash them in hot water, drain upside down, place in a boiling-water canner or stock pot, and boil for 5 minutes.

Ingredients

2 red peppers (skinned)
1lb 2oz (700g) ripe tomatoes (skinned and deseeded)
1 onion, roughly chopped
1-2 fresh red chiles (optional)
8oz (225g) granulated sugar
10fl oz (300ml) white wine vinegar

1 To remove the skins of the peppers easily, roast them in an oven at 400°F (200°C). Place the peppers on a baking sheet and cook for up to 30 minutes until they are slightly charred. Remove from the oven, place in a plastic bag, and leave to cool. Pull off the stalks, peel off the skin, seed, and chop roughly.

2 To skin the tomatoes, plunge them in boiling water for 1 minute and then peel and deseed them.

3 Put the tomato flesh, red peppers, onion, and chiles in a food processor and process briefly until the ingredients are all chopped but not mushy—or chop them well by hand. Transfer the mixture to a large, heavy-based, stainless steel saucepan or preserving pan and add the sugar and vinegar.

4 Cook on a low heat, stirring continuously using a wooden spoon, until the sugar dissolves. Turn up the heat, bring to a boil, and then reduce to a simmer and cook for approximately 1-1½ hours, stirring the mixture occasionally, until it thickens and turns jammy. Keep an eye on the heat—you may need to increase the heat slightly near the end of the cooking time—and stir continuously at this point so the chutney doesn't catch on the bottom of the pan.

5 Transfer to warm, sterilized jars using a ladle, ensuring there are no air gaps in the jars. Cover each with a two-part lid, and process for 15 minutes in the canner. Store in a cool, dark place for 1 month to allow the flavors to mature. Refrigerate after opening.



Useful resources

PLANTS & SEEDS

Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds

Suppliers of heirloom, non-GMO seeds for a wide variety of vegetables, herbs, and flowers.
2278 Baker Creek Rd.
Mansfield, MO 65704
www.rareseeds.com

W. Atlee Burpee & Co.

Quality non-GMO seeds and plants since 1876.
300 Park Ave.
Warminster, PA 18974
800-888-1447
www.burpee.com

Eden Brothers

Full line of vegetables, herbs, flowers, fruits, and supplies.
2099 Brevard Rd.
Arden, NC 28704
www.edenbrothers.com

Everything Mushrooms

Complete mushroom supply, gifts, and resource center.
1004 Sevier Ave.
Knoxville, TN 37920
865-234-0977
everythingmushrooms.com

Field & Forest Products

Superior, certified organic mushroom spawn, kits, tools, technical information, and advice.
N3296 Kozuzek Rd.
Peshtigo, WI 54157
(800) 792-6220
www.fieldforest.net

Gurney's

Vegetables, fruits, trees, herbs, and supplies.
513-354-1492
www.gurneys.com

Harris Seeds

Supplier of vegetables, flowers, herbs, fruits and supplies.
P.O. Box 24966
Rochester, NY 14624
800-544-7938
www.harrisseed.com

Johnny's Selected Seeds

Breeders and sellers of vegetable and flower seeds.
955 Benton Ave.
Winslow, ME 04901
877-564-6697
www.johnnyseeds.com

Kitazawa Seed Company

Oldest US supplier of Asian vegetable seeds.
201 4th St., #206
Oakland, CA 94607
510-595-1188
www.kitazawaseed.com

Park Seed Company

Supplier of seeds and growing supplies for vegetables and flowers.
One Parkton Ave.
Greenwood, SC 29647
800-845-3369
www.parkseed.com

Pepper Joe's

Large selection of organically grown hot pepper seeds.
888-660-2276
<https://pepperjoe.com>

Southern Exposure Seed Exchange

Specializing in seed varieties intended especially for the southeastern US.
P.O. Box 460
Mineral, VA 23117
540-894-9480
www.southernexposure.com

Stark Bros.

Supplier of fruit and nut trees since 1816.
P.O. Box 1800
Louisiana, MO 63353
800-325-4180
www.starkbros.com

Territorial Seed Company

Large selection of non-GMO vegetable and flower seeds, fruit and nut trees, and herbs.
P.O. Box 158
Cottage Grove, OR 97424
800-626-0866
www.territorialseed.com

Tomato Growers Supply

Offers more than 600 varieties of tomato and eggplant seeds.
P.O. Box 60015
Fort Myers, FL 33906
888-478-7333
www.tomatogrowers.com

Urban Farmer

Seeds, plants, and supplies for home gardeners, with a good selection of varieties suited to containers.
www.ufseeds.com

GARDENING SUPPLIES

Gardener's Supply

Containers, potting mix, seed starting supplies, and more.
888-833-1412
www.gardeners.com

Sunlight Supply Inc.

Wholesale grow lights and hydroponic equipment with retailers nationwide.
888-478-6544
www.sunlightsupply.com

ORGANIZATION

National Gardening Association

Online database of plants, discussion forums, articles, gardening blogs and much more, for members in the US and Canada.
www.garden.org

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Entries in *italics* refer to general (plant group) and species, for example *Allium* and *Capsicum*, which are abbreviated if there is more than one variety.

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About the author

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DISCLAIMER

Stevia (page 49) is used in many countries, including the US and Canada, to sweeten teas and other foods. EU legislation has yet to approve it as a culinary herb, but you can grow it as an ornamental if you do not wish to use it for culinary purposes.