

HOW TO GROW YOUR OWN FRUIT AND VEG AT HOME

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO GARDENING



INTRODUCTION TO GOWING YOUR OWN FRUIT AND VEG

There's never been a better time to start growing your own fruit and vegetables at home. With food bills rising across the UK, it's just the thing to help you cut costs from your weekly grocery bill. Not only that but creating your own fruit and veg garden can do wonders for your mental and physical health, helping you get outdoors and making it even easier to make healthy choices in the kitchen.

Giving growing your own fruit and veg a go may be something you've been thinking about for a while but for beginners, it can be a real struggle knowing where to start. It's easy to get overwhelmed by deciding what to plant or even where to plant it, but with the help of this handy lesson plan, you'll be picking fresh fruit from your garden before you know it.

From learning how to check your soil to gardening sustainably, we've got everything you need to know covered.



KEY TERMS

Seedlings

Seedlings are young plants that have been started from seeds but have not yet been transplanted into the garden.

Soil pH

This is a measure of the degree of acidity or alkalinity in the soil. It is important to identify your soil's pH levels as it will inform which plants will grow best. A pH of around 6.0 - 7.5 is considered ideal for most fruit and vegetables.

Compost

Completely decayed organic matter used for conditioning soil. It is dark, odourless and rich in nutrients and is usually made from kitchen scraps, garden waste and other organic materials.

Fertiliser

A chemical or natural substance added to soil to provide it with essential nutrients and improve its fertility.

Companion Planting

This is the practice of sowing seeds in such a way that plants can help each other to grow instead of competing against each other. For instance, planting marigolds beside tomatoes is beneficial as it will help to repel pests.

Harvesting

The process of picking fruits and vegetables from the garden when they are ripe and ready to eat.

Annuals

Varieties of plants that complete their life cycle in one year or less, requiring sowing every year.

Perennials

Varieties of plants that live for two or more years.



PLANNING YOUR GARDEN



Never underestimate the importance of planning your garden. Before you can enjoy watching your plants sprout to life, you'll need to figure out what and where they will be growing.

Common mistakes made by beginner gardeners often happen at the planning stage. Optimising the space you have to work with is often overlooked as excited first-time gardeners rush to plant all their favourite veg. However, it's important to figure out the number of plants you can realistically grow, especially if you're working with a small space (you don't want to take on too much, get overwhelmed and give up on the project halfway through). If you live in an urban area without access to a garden, 'container gardening' is perfect for you. Think about the types of fruit and veg you want to plant and research how much space they will need. Then, you can plant them accordingly, ensuring they each have enough room to grow.

When it comes to location, choose an area in your garden that receives at least 6-8 hours of direct sunlight per day and then ensure that the spot is close to a water source, so it's convenient for you to keep the plants hydrated. Also, consider placing your garden in a well-fenced area to shield it from strong winds and wildlife. And, as previously mentioned, make sure that the area is big enough to accommodate everything you want to plant.

To ensure cost savings and limit impulse purchases, you should choose what you will be planting according to your family's preferences, considering how much of each fruit or veg you will need. This will ensure you plant the right amount of each, maximising your yield but also avoiding over-planting, which can contribute to waste. This is just one of the many things to consider when gardening sustainably.

HOW TO GARDEN SUSTAINABLY:

Gardening with sustainable and organic practices in mind is important for many reasons. Implementing composting and natural pest control methods as opposed to synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides can limit damage to the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Not only that but there are also significant health benefits. Growing your own fresh, organic fruit and veg increases your nutrient intake and reduces your exposure to potentially harmful chemicals.

Keeping your fruit & veg garden organic and sustainable can have loads of health benefits

So, what sustainable practices should you keep in mind when planning your garden?

Conserving water: You can water your plants more efficiently, using less water by watering in the morning or evening, when the temperatures and evaporation levels are lower. You can even employ Mother Nature to help with your gardening by collecting rainwater in a container rather than turning on your garden hose.

Avoid chemicals: It's incredibly important to avoid using chemicals in your garden by opting for natural pest control methods like insecticidal soap and organic fertilisers, like compost. Creating a composting bin in your garden allows you to collect food scraps, grass clippings and other such materials that can then be used as a natural fertiliser to enrich your soil. This eco-friendly option is much safer than chemical-heavy alternatives.

By adopting these organic and sustainable gardening practices you'll create a garden that is not only beautiful, but that supports the health of your family and the planet.

PREPARING YOUR GARDEN:



Next, you'll need to start preparing your soil. This is an important step in the process because the higher the quality of your soil, the healthier your plants will be. Your soil provides the necessary nutrients, air and water that they'll need to survive. So, to ensure that your soil is in good condition you'll need to carry out some quick checks.

Check the texture: Scoop up a handful of your soil and squeeze it, does it feel gritty? If so, it may have too much sand. Does it feel sticky? It may have too much clay. Healthy soil should feel crumbly in texture and have a good mix of sand, silt and clay. To learn all about the different types of soil, check out our beginner's guide [here](#).



Check for drainage: To ensure your plants receive enough water, you'll want to make sure that your soil has good drainage. To check this, dig a small hole and fill it with water. Ideally, it should drain quickly. If not, your soil may have drainage issues which could negatively impact the growth of your plants.



Look for signs of life: Healthy soil should always show signs of life. So, dig a small hole and keep a lookout for earthworms, insects and other small bugs. They will help to decompose organic matter and improve the structure of your soil.

HOW TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF YOUR SOIL

Having trouble with the texture of your soil? Well, improving its quality can take time, but it can be done. Most plants prefer a pH level between 6.0 and 7.0. To test this, you can pick up a pH test kit online or at your local garden centre. If your soil isn't sitting within the right level you can make adjustments as needed by using organic fertilisers or adding lime. To learn more, check out our post about understanding pH levels [here](#).

You can also improve your soil by 'mulching' to reduce water loss and avoiding over-tilling which can damage the structure of your soil and increase the risk of soil erosion.

Once you've chosen your location and prepared your soil, it's time to consider what you'll actually be planting. For a little inspiration take a look at our list [below](#).





BEST FRUIT AND VEG TO GROW IN THE UK

Best fruit and veg to grow in the UK

Fruits:

- Apples: Honey crisp Gala, Granny Smith
- Pears: Concorde, Red William
- Strawberries: Albion, Chandler, Red Gauntlet
- Raspberries: Heritage, Caroline, Encore
- Blueberries: Bluecrop, Duke, Jersey

Vegetables:

- Potatoes: Maris Piper, Charlotte, Jazzy
- Carrots, Deep purple Hybrid, Lunar White
- Tomatoes; Early Girl, red Alert, San Marzano
- Lettuce, looseleaf, Romaine, iceberg
- Peas: Early Onward, Kelvedon, Wonder, English pea

Once you've chosen your location and prepared your soil, it's time to consider what you'll actually be planting. For a little inspiration take a look at our list on the following page:

BEST FRUIT AND VEG TO GROW IN THE UK

Type of Fruit/Vegetable	Planting Time	Harvest Time	Example Varieties	Required Tools
Fruits				
Apples	Autumn or Spring	Late Summer to Autumn	Cox's Orange Pippin, Bramley, Golden Delicious	Secateurs, Ladder
Blackberries	Autumn or Spring	Late Summer to Early Autumn	Loch Ness, Apache, Oregon Thornless	Pruning Shears
Raspberries	Autumn or Spring	Summer to Autumn	Autumn Bliss, Heritage, Joan J	Garden Fork, Garden Trowel
Strawberries	Autumn or Spring	Late Spring to Early Summer	Elsanta, Florence, Cambridge Favourite	Garden Trowel, Strawberry Planter
Plums	Autumn or Spring	Late Summer to Early Autumn	Victoria, Marjorie's Seedling, Czar	Ladder, Secateurs
Vegetables				
Carrots	Early Spring	Late Summer to Early Autumn	Nantes, Chantenay, Emperor	Garden Fork, Hand Trowel
Broccoli	Early Spring	Summer to Early Autumn	Calabrese, Purple Sprouting, Romanesco	Garden Trowel, Pruning Shears
Cabbage	Early Spring	Late Summer to Early Autumn	Hispi, January King, Savoy	Garden Trowel, Pruning Shears
Potatoes	Early Spring	Summer to Autumn	Maris Piper, King Edward, Desiree	Garden Fork, Hoe
Onions	Late Winter to Early Spring	Late Summer to Autumn	Sturon, Red Baron, White Lisbon	Hand Trowel, Garden Fork



PLANTING DEPTH:

You'll also need to ensure you're planting at the right depth. Planting too shallow or too deep will likely lead to your plant failing to develop a strong root system and struggling to grow. Ensuring that you are watering each plant correctly is also essential. Different plants require different levels of watering. For instance, parsnips and tomatoes will not require as much water as cabbages and peas. So check how often you should be watering each type of plant.

Growing your own fruit and vegetables at home is an incredibly rewarding experience. We hope this lesson has given you the confidence to get stuck in. Keep your eyes peeled on our knowledge hub for even more information on how to take care of each type of fruit and vegetable. We're to help ensure your garden thrives each step of the way. You can also check out our store now to grab all the bits you'll need to get started.