

Learning how to grow our own food

Growing your own food can be a daunting task if you have never tried it before. But worry not - even the most experienced gardener started small. Here are some ideas for how to get started on your food growing journey.

Join a community garden

One of the most effective ways of learning how to grow food is to join a group of people who are already doing it. You can learn a lot of skills from other growers and you will likely be able to take home spare produce all whilst doing something for the local community. Glasgow

has a wealth of community

growing projects.

You can find a map of community gardens if you search for

[Community Gardens in and around Glasgow](#) on

Google Maps.



Gardening activities you can do indoors

If you don't have outdoor space or you want to start indoors before trying your skills on your garden, there's a few things you can do indoors:

1. **Make a windowsill herb garden:** Most supermarkets sell small herb plants that you can grow on at home. Choose your most sunny windowsill and fill it with plant pots (or recycled containers like yoghurt, ice cream or peanut butter pots). Make sure that any container you use has drainage holes at the bottom. Fill the bottom of your container with compost, pop your wee herb plant in and fill the sides of the container in with compost, gently firming the plant in. Water and harvest little bits of the herb regularly to encourage re-growth. If you are feeling confident, you can also try growing your herbs from seed. To do this just fill a container with compost, sprinkle seeds on top and cover lightly. Keep compost damp but not soggy. Your seedlings should germinate within a couple of weeks. Works well with: *Basil, Chives, Rosemary, Parsley, Coriander, Thyme*
2. **Grow microgreens:** Many vegetables can be eaten at their seedling stage and these can be grown indoors all year round. Research has shown that microgreens are packed with vitamins, antioxidants and minerals and can be even more nutritious than the fully grown vegetable. To grow them, just use any container (with drainage holes in the bottom) and fill it

with compost, sprinkle seeds on top and cover lightly. Water regularly. Microgreens only take about 2-3 weeks to grow and you can add them to salads, sandwiches, stir-frys or get creative with them. Works well with: *Cress, Broccoli, Kale, Chard, Alfalfa, Coriander, Basil, Spinach, Pea Shoots, Mustard Greens, Rocket*



- 3. Make a mini worm composter:** Worm composting is a way of recycling food waste that uses worms to eat the waste and turn it into compost you can use in your plant pots. It is great because it is like having a very low maintenance pet (or many wormy pets). You can make a worm farm out of two containers that can slot into each other, e.g. old storage boxes or large plastic containers. Make sure one of them has a lid. All you need to do is drill holes into the bottom and sides of one of the containers and then stack it inside the other container. Fill the top container with worm bedding (shredded paper or compost), some food waste and your worms (you will need composting worms, not just any old worm from your garden. You can buy these online or get them from another worm-composting friend). You can keep this composter indoors under your sink or in a cupboard (if you do it right it won't smell or attract fruit flies). The worms will produce a liquid

called leacheate (or worm pee) which will drain into the bottom container and which you can use at 1:10 concentration to feed your plants. There is more info on how to make a DIY worm farm and how to feed your worms in the resource list at the end.



Gardening in small spaces

If you have a small outdoor space, there are plenty of ways to utilise it. Here are some ideas for gardening activities you could do:

- 1. Potato Bags:** To grow potatoes in a bag all you need is some seed potatoes (you can get them online or in any garden centre), compost and an empty compost bag (or another large sturdy plastic bag). Fill the bag halfway with compost and roll the sides down. Put three seed potatoes in and cover with 5cm of compost. Water regularly. As the potatoes sprout they will grow up through the compost. Add more compost to cover the sprouts so that they keep growing upwards. Unroll the sides of the bag to give more height as you



go. When the bag is $\frac{3}{4}$ full, stop layering with compost and leave the shoots to grow out and produce flowers. The potatoes are ready to harvest once the flowers die off. You can just tip the whole bag over into a wheelbarrow to dig for your tatties. There is more info on how to grow in a potato bag in the resources.

Grow salads and herbs in containers: Salads and herbs don't need a lot of space so you can grow them in pots and containers. Make sure to wait until any risk of frost has passed before sowing outdoors, in Scotland this is usually in May. Just fill your chosen container with compost (make sure to leave a bit of space at the top for watering), sprinkle seeds thinly on top and then cover lightly with compost. Water in and then water regularly (if it doesn't rain enough). After about a month you should have your first cut of fresh herbs or salads ready. Most salad leaves and herbs will regrow a couple of times after you cut them, so you can get up to three harvests from each sowing. Works well with: *Basil, Chives, Coriander, Rocket, Mustard Greens, Oriental Greens like Mizuna, Cut and come again lettuce varieties, Pea Shoots*

Square Foot Gardening: This is a method of planning your growing space in which you split your plot up into square foot sections. Depending on how much space you have you can make several square foot quadrants and sow a different vegetable in each one. This is an easy way of splitting up small spaces to grow a variety of crops. Instead of having to measure

planting distance between plants, each square has either one, four, nine or 16 plants in it, depending on the size of the plant. You can grow vegetables, flowers, herbs and some fruit this way. There is more info on square foot gardening in the resource section.



In bigger spaces...

If you have a garden with plenty of space and you want to try your hands on growing your own veg, here are some things to consider:

- 1. Healthy soil:** Keeping your soil healthy is the foundation of successful growing. Healthy soils are ecosystems that are alive and thriving - full of worms, insects, fungi and microorganisms. You want your soil to have good drainage, be aerated and be nutritious for your plants. Most gardeners achieve this by adding organic matter such as compost, well-rotted manure or leaf mould to the soil. Before you start growing in your garden, try to find out what type of soil you have and how that will affect your plants. If you can, do a bit of research on local history to find out if there was any industry in your area

previously. Soil in cities can be contaminated with heavy metals and chemicals and it might be better to grow in raised beds that you fill with new topsoil.

- 2. Crop rotation:** Different plant families are susceptible to different pests and diseases. They also have different nutrient and watering requirements. It can be a good idea to grow plants of the same family together and rotate their location year on year to keep them happy. Plants in the cabbage family for example (Brassicas) should be grown together so you can net them to protect from pesky pigeons. The plant families/types that we mostly grow in Scotland are: *Brassicas (Cabbage Family)*, *Legumes (Pea Family)*, *Cucurbits (Pumpkin/ Courgette Family)*, *Alliums (Onion Family)*, *Solanaceae (Potatoes, Tomatoes, Aubergines, Chillies)* and *Root vegetables (Carrots, Beetroot, Parsnips)*.



- 3. Easy to grow crops:** Some vegetables and edible flowers that do not require special care or knowledge and are good for beginner gardeners are: *Beetroot, Carrots, Salad Leaves, Radishes, Chard, Calendula, Nasturtiums, Borage*

Resources

BBC Gardening Guides - this page has many how to guides on different gardening jobs at

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/>

Trellis Factsheets - lots of resources on how to get started growing food at home including indoors and in small spaces at

<https://trellisScotland.org.uk/content/factsheets>

Includes guides on Potato Bags, Square Foot Gardening, Container Planting and many more

RHS Guide on Crop Rotation at

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/vegetables/crop-rotation>

The RHS website generally has a wealth of information on plants and gardening

Glasgow Seed Library - community of growers maintaining a collection of open-pollinated vegetable, herb and flower seeds at the CCA. Often host free gardening workshops and skillshares at

<https://www.cca-glasgow.com/projects/glasgow-seed-library>

Urban Worm - build your own home worm composting system out of recycled materials at <https://theurbanworm.co.uk/wormup/>



Glasgow Allotments Forum - organisation bringing together allotment growers in Glasgow, often host free growing workshops and skillshares at <https://glasgowallotments.org/>

