

Turn your patio or balcony into a culinary delight!

A Beginners Guide to growing your own fruit & veg



HASKINS
for garden pleasure



Don't worry if you don't have a garden, a small sunny patio or balcony provides plenty of scope for growing your own fruit and vegetables by using hanging baskets and pots. Even the kitchen windowsill can provide a harvest!

If you don't feel you have the time or space to grow from seed many varieties are available as young plants – **great for beginners and busy gardeners.**



Herbs

such as basil, chives, parsley and mint can be grown on your windowsill. Coriander, oregano, sage, and thyme are also easy to grow and with good sunlight and well drained soil they'll be a useful addition to any kitchen. Herbs can also be grown in window boxes, or on a patio using a tiered terracotta planter (strawberry/herb tub) to create a compact and decorative display.

Chillies and Peppers

can also be grown on a sunny windowsill if you choose a small or dwarf variety. Keep them well fed and watered and they'll reward you with a colourful display for your kitchen, and a harvest of new chillies and peppers as you pick the mature ones off the plant. An added tip is to place your chillies and peppers outside in warm weather to help pollination of the flowers for a larger crop. Larger varieties can be grown in greenhouses or in pots on a patio.

Salad Leaves

are great to grow in a container for cutting fresh for use in your summer salads. Try planting a selection of your favourite lettuce in the same container to give colour and variety. All you need is a sunny spot and a container of rich moisture retaining compost with a good feed of pelleted dry chicken manure or Growmore fertiliser.

There are two types of lettuce, ones that form a heart (such as Iceberg) and ones that just grow leaves. Heart lettuces will be ready once the heart (the middle) is firm to the touch and should be cut at the stem. Leafy varieties can be harvested in stages, taking the leaves as you need them from the outside as they get bigger, this also applies to spinach and rocket.

Beans and Peas

have dwarf varieties ideal for growing on patios. They prefer a sunny spot out of the wind and rich compost, so add in some extra feed such as fish blood and bone or tomato feed. Even the dwarf varieties will need some form of support, either bamboo canes, trellis or why not try a wicker wigwam stood in a pot for a decorative look. As a tip, the more beans and peas you pick, the more will grow!



Courgette compact varieties are great for growing in containers and if picked often will provide you with a crop from July to October. Courgettes require a lot of feeding so add fertiliser to the soil when planting and then feed regularly once they start flowering with a general liquid or tomato feed. Courgettes also require plenty of water to produce their fruit so water them frequently, and watch how rapidly the fruit grows in size, however take care that the containers are well drained to avoid rot.

Tomato variety “Tumbler” is perfect for hanging baskets and window boxes. This easy to grow cascading plant produces sweet, juicy grape sized tomatoes in plentiful supply over the summer. Other varieties suitable for baskets or containers include Tumbling Tom, and Maskotka.

Aubergines (Egg Plant) are traditionally a greenhouse crop, however they can be grown on a warm sunny patio in containers using canes or wigwams for support. With warm conditions and regular use of tomato liquid feed your aubergines will be ready for harvesting in August-October.

Potatoes can be grown on a patio using 20 litre pots or potato bags. 3 to 5 seed potatoes can be planted in the pot/bag and you can choose from the many different varieties available to suit your yield and taste preferences.

Carrots can be grown in pots with up to 3 planted in a deep container (at least 2ft deep). The main thing to look out for when growing carrots is carrot fly, which is preventable with good housekeeping. As a preventative measure, try to avoid bruising the leaves by ensuring you plant carrots well spaced out, and if thinning the leaves it's recommended to do this in the evening.

Strawberries grown in tiered planters make a decorative and delicious feature in any small sunny area. As well as the traditional terracotta strawberry tub, there are now terracotta coloured plastic varieties complete with watering mats to maximise water retention and help you grow a bumper crop of juicy strawberries to enjoy this summer. Strawberries can also be grown in hanging baskets to create an eye catching and tasty display. If growing in a hanging basket pay extra attention to keep them well fed and watered.

Blueberries grown on the patio in a large pot not only provide succulent fruit, they're also a decorative plant when not fruiting. Simply grow in a large pot of ericaceous compost and watch the creamy white flowers develop into juicy blueberries in late July and August. A 3 or 4 litre pot plant will usually fruit in the same year.



What will I need?

Containers

While grow-bags have been the traditional choice for growing fruit and vegetables, there are many decorative container options that can also be used when growing on a patio or balcony. Ideally any patio containers used should be at least 23 – 25cm (9-10 inches) in diameter and either plastic or terracotta can be used, although it's worth keeping in mind that plastic pots do not dry out as much as terracotta ones. If you are using a terracotta pot it may be worth considering adding water gel/crystals to the compost or using water mats to help retain water.

Some fruit and vegetables require specific containers or can be planted in more innovative displays, for example:

- Potatoes need a deep container, and specific potato bags can be purchased that are the perfect shape and size, plus they have sections built in that allow you to gain easy access to your crop
- Tomatoes and strawberries can be grown in hanging baskets to make functional and attractive displays
- Strawberries and herbs can also be grown in tiered terracotta planters for a compact solution

Food

For growing in tubs and containers make sure you use fresh new bagged compost for your crops at the beginning of the season, and then regular top up feeds after 5 weeks during the growing season using a good tomato or general liquid feed. Try to feed in the evenings as this helps minimise evaporation and enables the plants to absorb the feed more easily.

Supports

For crops requiring some form of support, bamboo canes have traditionally been the growers choice. However as growing your own fruit and vegetables moves from the allotment to the garden, new more decorative forms of support are increasing in popularity. Items such as colourfully painted trellis and metal obelisks can add colour and fun to your crops, while handmade wicker wigwams are always a classic choice for function and style.

Pest Control

While growing your fruit and vegetables you may need a little help on the pest control front. For aphids, greenfly, whitefly and caterpillars use a fruit and vegetable insecticide spray. To protect against slugs and snails an organic barrier or pellets can be used. If protection is needed from birds, deer, rabbits, mice and moles plants can be covered by netting and staked down. Finally, to prevent fungal diseases always ensure correct care procedures are followed, plants are not over watered, have the correct spacing and good airflow around them.





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