



Patio Fruit
& Vegetables

which container?

When it comes to growing vegetables space need not be a problem. Any small sunny deck, patio, backyard or balcony has the potential to produce a tasty and healthy crop - even a window box!

The choice of container is governed by two fundamental requirements:

■ **It must be large enough to sustain the plant - at least 23-25 cm (9-10") in diameter.** If you are growing vegetables like leeks or potatoes, or any other root crops, you will need a deeper container. Salads and herbs will be fine in a shallower pot.

■ **There must be adequate drainage at the bottom.**

Beyond that the choice is yours. Your pots can be ornamental or simple and of any material that you wish. It is worth bearing in mind at this point that terracotta is likely to dry out quicker than plastic and will require more frequent watering. A vast range of pots are available to suit your taste and pocket.

A cheap and convenient method of growing on the patio comes in the form of grow bags. There are various products available to disguise them if required, but a good number of crops, especially tomatoes can be grown in this way. Not suitable for vegetables that need depth.

Specialist containers are available such as herb and strawberry tubs and potato barrels and buckets. Both the herb and strawberry pots

have small lipped pockets for single plants, enabling you to have a number of plants in a small space. Potato barrels are an ideal way to grow potatoes in a small area. It's easy to build up the compost around the plants and very convenient to harvest, however, a large, deep pot or even a black bin liner can also be used successfully for potato growing.

Strawberries and tomatoes have already been mentioned as ideal container subjects, but they add an extra dimension to space saving as both grow easily in hanging baskets, creating an attractive display at the same time. A herb hanging basket is useful by the kitchen door too!

And don't forget that window box! Many salad leaves, radishes, spring onions and herbs are perfect for this kind of container.



what type of compost?

Unless you produce your own compost you will need to purchase a suitable type. There are several types to choose from.

■ **Multipurpose (soil less) either peat based or peat free, or soil based (John Innes type).** A good quality compost will have been balanced to contain the optimum amount of nutrients to get your plants off to a good start, as well as being sterilised to make sure that it does not contain any weeds or diseases. These are suitable for most containers

■ **For taller crops a John Innes compost is better as, being soil based, it is denser and heavier, adding extra stability to the container**

taking care of your containers

■ **Most vegetables require a sunny position for best results.**

■ **Watering is extremely important, keep well watered. Perhaps add some water retaining crystals to the compost before planting.**

■ **While it won't be necessary to feed short term crops such as Leaf Salad; others such as Beans, Tomatoes and other long term crops will require a weekly feed of a high potash vegetable or tomato fertiliser. Slow Release Fertiliser added to the compost before planting may be an option.**


































































































growing chart

Unless otherwise stated we would recommend starting plants for patio containers into growth in a small pot on a sunny windowsill or in a greenhouse or conservatory.

Sow Seed  Sow Direct 
Plant Out  Harvesting 

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Variety	Grow in 25-30cm, (10-12") pot	Plant in Growbag	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Aubergine	1	3												
Runner Beans	4	8												
French Beans	4	8												
Beetroot	Sow direct and thin to 2.5cm (1") apart	Sow direct and thin to 2.5cm (1") apart												
Carrot	Sow direct and thin to 5-7cm (2-3") apart	(suitable for shallow rooting globe types only)												
Courgette	1	2												
Marrow (Squash)	1	2												
Leek (for salads)	Sow direct and thin to about 2cm (¾") apart													
Lettuce	Sow direct and thin out	15-20cm (6-8") apart												
Parsnip	Sow direct and thin to 5cm (2") apart													
Peppers	1	3												
Potatoes	1 or 2													
Leaf Beet (Chard)	8													
Leaf Salad	Sow direct finely - no need to thin	Sow direct finely - no need to thin												
Salad Onions	Sow direct finely - no need to thin	Sow direct finely - no need to thin												
Strawberries	3	30cm (12") apart												
Tomatoes	1	3												
Turnips	Sow direct and thin to 2.5cm (1") apart	Sow direct and thin to 2.5cm (1") apart												

getting started

easy raised beds

It couldn't be simpler these days to create raised beds even in a fully paved or concreted area. A raised bed kit comprising rigid plastic sides and plastic liner is a cheap way to add extra growing room to your garden. Even cheaper would be to create it out of old scaffolding or floor boards with a plastic liner.

recycled containers

Anything can be used as containers; they don't have to be costly. Old buckets, sinks, plastic, wooden or polystyrene packaging can be turned into something that will hold your crops quite easily. Discarded colanders or chip baskets make interesting hanging baskets.

Seeds that need sowing indoors can be successfully started in an empty margarine tub, or any other plastic container as long as sufficient holes are made in the bottom. Toilet roll and kitchen roll centres are a good way to start off runner beans, or anything else that doesn't like root disturbance when its planted out - the holder can be planted in the ground too, where it will disintegrate. Why not invest in a paper potter for the ultimate environmentally friendly plant pots.

sowing undercover

Some vegetable varieties need to be sown indoors undercover before going into the garden. There are numerous ways to do this, if you have a greenhouse that's ideal, but if space is at a premium there are lots of ways around the problem. There are a lot of space saving lean-to plant houses or temporary folding mini-greenhouses and cold frames available. With plenty of room for seed trays there is ample room to start your more tender subjects. There are a host of propagators on the market ranging widely in price and, of course, a windowsill is also a good place to start your seeds off.



what to grow

A wide range of vegetables can be grown in pots, it is usually best to opt for the varieties described as dwarf or bush. These varieties are ideal for pot culture.

aubergine

Contains vitamins E & K. Rich in potassium, folate magnesium & fibre.

Sow: February-March at a temperature of 16-18°C (60-65°F). Traditionally sown in a greenhouse, but an electrically heated propagator on a sunny windowsill is just as good. When the seedlings are large enough to handle transplant into 9cm (3½") pots and keep indoors. Pot on when necessary into 13cm (5"), and finally into 23cm (9") pots providing a cane for support. The container can be placed out of doors in a sunny sheltered position in late May/early June once all danger of frost is passed.

beans (dwarf french & runner)

Dwarf French Beans contain Vitamin A - Runner Beans are high in Vitamin C. Sow: indoors during April and plant outdoors at the end of May/early June once the danger of frost has passed. Alternatively sow direct into the container in May and grow on in sunny position.

Almost any variety of Dwarf French Beans are suitable for pot growing, and with a wide range of pod colour of these can be a very attractive feature, ranging from golden-yellow, through green, bright red and purple. Delicious and beautiful! Choose a low growing variety of Runner Beans for pot culture. Four plants is sufficient for a 25cm (10") pot.

beetroot

Roots rich in potassium and folate + vitamin C. Tops - high concentration of beta carotene, calcium and iron. Sow:

Thinly, direct into the container from late March to the end of July.

Thin seedlings to 2.5cm (1") and harvest after about 12 weeks when the roots are the size of ping-pong balls. Sow at regular intervals for a continuous supply.



blueberry

Rich in Vitamin C & A, high in antioxidants.

Blueberries will grow well on the patio in a large pot of moist ericaceous (lime free) compost. The bushes make a striking display right through the year from the delicate rusty red leaf tips in spring to the stunning colours of autumn. This fruit is one of a group very high in vitamins and minerals thought to have good health benefits, often known as 'super foods'.



carrots

High in Vitamin A. Sow: thinly direct into pots and cover lightly with compost. Sow fortnightly from the end of February through to early July. Sow seed thinly and then thin out seedlings to 5-7cm (2-3") apart. The earlier sowings should be made in a greenhouse or polytunnel.

courgette & marrow

High in Vitamins A, C & E. Sow: one seed to a small pot indoors from mid April to Early May. Once established transplant the young plants one to a 25cm (10") pot and place in a sunny position once danger of frost has passed.

leaf beet

High in Vitamin A. Sow: April to June direct into its container - roughly 8 plants to a 25cm (10") pot. There are some very colourful varieties that make a great display. Keep well watered.

leaf salad

Sow: Fortnightly outdoors from April to October. The first cutting can be taken approximately 14-21 days later leaving 3cm (1¼") for re-growth, you should get about 2-3 clippings from each sowing.



leek

High in Potassium, folic acid and vitamins A & C. Sow thinly in April/May and aim for plants about 2cm (¾") apart. Harvest within 10-12 weeks while they are still young and tasty. Fortnightly sowings will ensure a constant supply for salads, stir fries or lightly steaming.

lettuce

Source of beta-carotene and vitamin A. Sow: February to July outdoors. Thin the plants to 15-20cm (6-8") apart. Remember that the thinnings are good for salads too! Sowing at fortnightly intervals ensures a constant supply. Keep the plants well watered throughout the summer.

parsnip

Contains vitamin C & potassium, plus energy boosting starchy carbohydrates. Sow: Late February to mid June thinly in containers - thin out to 5 cm (2") apart. Harvest 18-20 weeks from sowing.

peppers

Rich in vitamins A & C. Sow: March or April at a temperature of 16-18°C (60-65°F). Grow in a greenhouse or propagator. When large enough to handle, transplant into 9cm (3½") pots. Finally the plants can be potted up either one plant to a 25cm (10") pot or 3 to a grow bag - a cane may be required by taller varieties. Place outside once danger of frost has passed.

potatoes

A good source of vitamin C + potassium, protein and fibre. Choose one of the early varieties. Plant one to three tubers according to size of container, or six for a specially designed potato barrel. Many kits are now available with good guidance for potato growing. The tubers should be started into growth (chitted) before planting. Place the tubers in a dish or egg box, sprouting eyes uppermost, in a cool, frost free, light place. Once the resulting shoots are approximately an inch in length they are ready for planting. Place a layer of compost in the base of the container. Plant the tubers covering with about 5 cm (2") of compost. As the shoots develop further top up with compost in 10cm (4") layers but do not cover the growing tip - repeat until the container is full. Once the plants begin to flower the crop should be ready for harvesting.

salad onions

Sow: March-May thinly direct into containers. Keep well watered during dry spells. A succession of fortnightly sowings will ensure pickings from June to September.

strawberries

Rich in vitamin C + high in folate and fibre. Space is no issue where strawberries are concerned as they grow well in pots and baskets. Any variety will grow well in a sunny spot but if you choose everbearer types that fruit throughout the summer, you can extend the growing season by taking them indoors late in the season. Grow bags or specialised strawberry pots are excellent, but most large pots are suitable, and the number of plants required will be dictated by the container size.



Hanging Baskets: Suspending strawberries off the ground is a great way to keep slugs and snails away from them. Three to four strawberry plants should be sufficient for a hanging basket.

tomatoes

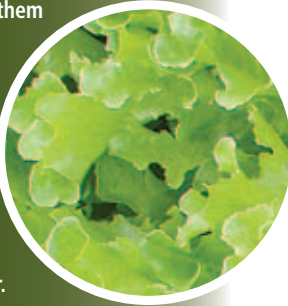
High in antioxidants, vitamin C & Lycopene. Sow: March or April indoors at a temperature of 16-18°C (60-65°F). Transplant seedlings into 9cm (3½") pots when large enough to handle. Most commonly grown in grow bags, tomatoes will do well in any large container that has sufficient drainage. A general guide would be three plants to a grow bag and one to a 25cm (10") pot. Provide a cane support for upright varieties. For hanging baskets choose a cherry fruited variety suitable for basket culture. One plant is enough for one basket. Keep well fed and watered. All varieties except the bush types need the side shoots removing as they develop and should be stopped when four trusses have been produced. Begin feeding once the flowers start to set.

turnip

High in vitamin C & fibre. Sow: April to July - sow thinly direct into the container. White ping-pong sized roots should be produced approximately 7 weeks from sowing. Use raw in salads or cook in the normal way. The tops can be steamed and used as greens.

handy hints and money saving tips

Keep picking Runner Beans, French Beans and Courgettes. This will encourage them to keep flowering, and ensures that the veg is picked when it is sweet and tender.



Make fortnightly sowings of salad leaves to maintain fresh supplies throughout the summer.

Grow a selection of lettuce varieties to give your container an interesting range of colour and leaf shape - this also provides a mix of taste and texture for your salads. Don't forget to use the lettuce thinnings in salads.

Do not allow containers to dry out. Many vegetables bolt (run to seed) or split if the water supply is erratic.



Remove side shoots of cordon (single stem) tomato varieties when small to avoid damage to the stem.

For early beans start the container indoors and move outside once the danger of frost has passed.

For an extended strawberry season choose an everbearer variety. Keep the container indoors in the early season and bring back inside later to prolong the cropping period.

Protect your pots from slug attack with copper tape around the pot - they won't cross it.



Plant some marigolds in with your tomato plants to discourage whitefly.

Keep some polythene or fleece handy to cover young plants in bad weather. Always protect them from frost should the temperature fall significantly.