

# Get Growing

Plant and Share Month uses good food to bring people of different ages and backgrounds together through growing, cooking and eating. Rooted in partnerships with groups of schools, nurseries and community organisations, Food for Life Get Togethers is a project that anyone can take part in.

## Inspired to Get Growing?

If you are interested in organising or supporting community growing activities, you may want some guidance on where to grow, tools and safety, simple activities to demonstrate to groups or seasonality to link your growing to Get Togethers events, such as Plant and Share Month. Or you may simply want a little inspiration!



## The Benefits of Community Growing

Whether you're just starting out, or have some previous experience, growing is a great way of bringing together groups within your community. Whatever our ages and backgrounds, we all have something to contribute in group growing activities: sharing knowledge and skills, gardening stories, successes and challenges, tasting newly harvested foods and creating community meals. Community gardens and growing spaces are great places where people of different ages and backgrounds can share the benefits of tending plants, while also supporting others and the environment.

- Local food growing can help people make better eating choices and provide exercise opportunities
- Public spaces improved by the people that use them allows a sense of ownership
- Growing spaces act as a hub to bring people together from across the community
- Gardening is a source of relaxation and exercise, as well as being beneficial to mental health and well-being
- Growing spaces provide much needed food and habitat for wildlife
- Gardening can help people to feel better about themselves by reducing isolation and promoting independence through social interaction
- Individuals can develop themselves in fields such as; horticulture; cooking and communication; finance and enterprise; teamwork and problem solving
- Older people can share their wisdom, skills and real-life experiences

- Growing together can rebuild a sense of community, for example by inviting members of the community into school to grow
- Greener environments have been linked to reduced anti-social behaviour and lower crime rates
- Growing can challenge stereotypes by building greater understanding of different generations
- Sharing the pleasure and joy of growing and food.

## Planning, preparation and organisation

There is lots to think about when planning and organising growing activities, but worth spending time on.

- **Space & Accessibility** – indoors or out; garden or balcony; containers or beds
- **Facilities** – WC, handwashing, storage
- **Weather** – time of year/light quality/temperature
- **Who** – think about your participants
- **Soil management**
- **Health & safety**
- **Best practice** – carry out a risk assessment
- **Growing** – what skills & experience you have, need, or can access
- **What to grow?** – is it for an event such as Plant and Share Month or a street party?? What do you like to eat? What's seasonal? What seeds/plants do you have available?
- **Equipment** – what have you got/need?
- **Suitability for age & ability** e.g. weight of equipment; needs of participants
- **Time** – how much do you have?
- **Materials** – how to source/find them/fund them.

# Simple activities

Choosing suitable growing activities and passing on safe and effective growing techniques are key to help a growing activity run smoothly and ensuring people come away inspired with more confidence, skills and knowledge. It is helpful to have a range of simple growing activities to hand to get you started with groups, which require no prior growing experience.

## Here are some simple tips:

- There is no need to buy fancy pots and containers – get creative and reuse what you've got, such as mushroom trays or wellie boots!
  - Make your own paper pots and plastic bottle greenhouses.
  - Consider starting with crops that are easier to grow, such as peas, spinach and courgettes.
  - Consider splitting herbs to make them go further amongst community members or for the community herb garden.
  - Plan your growing with seasonality in mind, so that produce is ready to use for your Get Together events.
- Resources to further support this learning including Strawberry Wellies and Bee Friendly Herbs can be found on our website : **[www.fflgettogethers.org](http://www.fflgettogethers.org)** and on Garden Organic's website: **[www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/schools)** These include: top tips; weeks to harvest; risk assessment; seed sowing glossary; how to take cuttings; seasonal activities; ideas for distancing growing activities.

The key to Get Growing success is planning, preparation, organisation, inspiration and allowing for flexibility and fun.

**[foodforlife.org.uk/gettogethers](http://foodforlife.org.uk/gettogethers)**

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