

Growing on a Budget – Beginners Guide

The joy of smelling a flower you have grown from a bulb or tasting a tomato you have grown from a seed is amazing, but getting set up to start growing can feel expensive. In this resource you'll pick up some quick tips and ideas for growing on a budget, no matter what size space you have.

Growing-your-own has so many benefits; you can eat more sustainably, eat veggies and fruit free of pesticides, learn new skills, and gardening is proven to be good for our physical and mental health.



How to get started

- 1. Start at the beginning** – plan what you want to grow and write a list of what equipment you need. Plants on a windowsill or balcony can grow just as well as in the ground.
- 2. Don't be too ambitious** – start small, maybe try growing some windowsill herbs, quick growing pea shoots or cress. Affordable, easy to start and they don't need expensive equipment.
- 3. Crowd source** – ask friends and neighbours, school, work or pop a post on social media and ask who has any unused plant pots, trowels or maybe even knows of a nearby manure or compost heap! Lots of people have things they'll give away for free or a lot less than buying new. It's better for the environment too.
- 4. Join the library** – gardening books are a great way to learn, and you can take them outside to your plot or space too. If you join the library, you can borrow different books about what to plant when or how to garden organically.
- 5. Organise or attend a seed swap** – seeds average £2 per pack. If you have time you can buy at the end of the season and grab a bargain as seeds usually last a few years, but it can soon become quite expensive if you want to start with more than one plant. Another way to get started is to swap seeds, this could be with classmates or work colleagues, or you could plan and publicise a seed swap event.
- 6. Learn how to propagate** – whilst many of the veggies or flowers you can grow from seed, other crops like spinach and herbs like basil, rosemary, thyme, oregano, and plants like tomatoes and lavender grow easily from cuttings.
- 7. Grow in season** – different seeds and plants like certain conditions and need heat and sun. Commercial gardeners use greenhouses and energy to light and heat greenhouses to produce tomatoes all year round. By planting at the right time, you can rely on mother nature and garden more sustainably.
- 8. Search the recycling** – not got plant pots or seed trays? There is no need to buy new! The trays that mushrooms come in are great for planting seeds, egg boxes, loo roll tubes and yogurt pots are perfect for seedlings and old pallets make brilliant compost heap containers. Cut large water bottles in half, use the bottom for a plant and the top makes a cloche or mini greenhouse!
- 9. Create a compost heap** – commercial compost is expensive and if you want to garden as organically as possible, making it yourself is ideal. Use grass cuttings, leaf mulch, food scraps, paper and cardboard to make a 'lasagne' of layers. It can take six months to two years to create a heap of your own.
- 10. Harvest your seeds for next year!** Don't forget to save the fruits of your labour to save money next year, from your best producing crops and flowers. Tomato, sunflower and pumpkin seeds are simple to save and store.



Waste not want not – growing from other plants

Making use of a plant's ability to grow new roots, we can grow a huge range of new herbs. This is called propagating. Basil, mint and coriander for example can be grown on a windowsill from a few leftover leaf stems. Simply pop a few 10cm lengths in a tall glass of clean water, keeping leaves clear of the waterline, changing the water regularly. Once you have established roots you can transfer into compost in a recycled tub on the windowsill or outside in a pot.

Generate conversation and explore sensory experiences.

- Why not discuss your favourite herbs and discuss what could be used to grow new plants. What do they smell like? How do they taste? How quickly do you think new plants will germinate?
- Have a sunflower growing competition, then you can harvest the seeds in the autumn and use for baking and planting next year.



Seeds of change

The group at The Furnival in Sheffield are a great example of what you can achieve growing on a budget.

The Furnival – who use drama and interactive classes to teach non-English speaking families simple English – decided to plant up herbs, flower seedlings and easy to grow veggies for Plant and Share Month, as a way to help people who live in flats with no gardens to meet. Some took flower seeds for their balconies; others came back the next week to help tend the new raised beds.

As well as the raised beds, they collected bean tins and painted the empty cans with leftover paint, in bright colours filling them with fragrant herbs and nasturtiums. The group hung them off the security grids on the building for their community to use over the summer.

Over 140 families took part in Plant and Share Month as part of The Furnival's activities.

About this resource:

Want to explore more?

fflgettogethers.org/get-involved/plant-and-share-toolkit/

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