



Climate and nature-friendly growing



Growing your own fruit or vegetables as part of your Get Together activities can be a great way to connect to nature. It's great for people's health and wellbeing – and the health of the world around us.



Community growing can be incredibly rewarding. It allows you to have a positive impact on your local environment in the beautiful spaces you create, helping you to stay active and healthy as you enjoy being outside. Growing your own fruit and vegetables can also reduce your carbon footprint and use of plastics, and working on outdoor projects together is a great way of connecting with each other too – sharing tips and knowledge, or even swapping seeds!

What's more, growing your own produce is a simple, easy way to eat organically. Even if you don't have access to an outdoor space, small steps like growing one or two herbs indoors can make a real difference. Organic growing allows you to 'grow with nature' – focusing on prevention rather than a cure, and using traditional methods that reduce the use of chemicals that can harm the environment. Using companion planting and growing a diverse range of plants supports your garden or space to be herbicide and pesticide-free, benefiting not only the planet, but your wallet too.



Always check for the latest covid advice and regulations before running your Food for Life Get Together activity. For more information:

fflgettogether.org/support/covid-19-guidance

Make your space nature-friendly

Growing with nature also means inviting nature in and encouraging fantastic creatures, both big and small, into your garden. Many of them love nothing more than making a meal out of pests, or getting busy pollinating your plants.

Why not try out some of these ideas to make your garden or outdoor space nature-friendly:

- Build a **'bug hotel' for insects** to snuggle up in over the winter – they'll repay you by helping to control pests, and will even pollinate your plants. And even better: you can build it out of junk to stop it from going into landfill.
- Brighten up your space with some **bee-friendly flowers and herbs** or a colourful **wildflower meadow** to attract bees and butterflies. You'll just need a sunny outdoor space, some seeds and some sand. Why not share and swap seeds with your local community for a varied mix of plants?
- **Create a pond** – even a small one will encourage frogs, toads and newts. These animals are always on the lookout for insects and slugs to make a meal out of, so they can be a big help with pest control.
- Create a warm welcome for the Master Slug Catchers! Hedgehogs can completely save some plants from destruction by slugs. Hedgehog numbers have **reduced by a third in our town and cities since the millennium**, so you'll know you're really doing your bit to help support hedgehogs in your area. Here are **ten tips** you might like to try, to encourage hedgehogs into your neighbourhood.

Ideas to get growing at your next Get Together

1. Get creative with savvy growing containers

When planting seeds or cuttings, using what you have to hand or what can be collected from your local community can save money and resources, whilst making your outdoor space look interesting. There are so many ideas for unique container solutions: from the more creative, such as the use of tyres and **wellies**, to the humble newspaper pot or mushroom box. Let your imagination roam free and see what everyone comes up with!

2. Say no to peat

Peat is made up of decayed organic matter and vegetation, which develops over thousands of years. Peatlands provide unique homes for many plants, insects and birds. They are like fantastic giant sponges that filter and store water, and are the biggest land carbon store – **accounting for 42% of all soils**. Peat-free compost can cost a little more money, but helps to preserve these natural habitats. **Here is a guide to going peat free.**



3. Make your own fertiliser

There are a few ways you can make your own liquid feeds from simple ingredients – **all you need is a bucket, water and some common plants like nettle or comfrey.** Making your own instead of using synthetic fertilisers can save money, and also save the harmful greenhouse gases that are made in their production from entering the air. The Soil Association is leading a campaign on the challenges of Nitrogen for Climate, Nature and Health – read more about the **Fixing Nitrogen campaign here.**

4. Nourish your soil

Composting, mulching and creating your own wormery are all ways you can take waste and convert it into fantastic rich soils to nourish your garden, or share with your community. Planting soil friendly plants can also enrich your soil, as well as improve its structure.



5. Save water

Collecting rainwater reduces the dependence on mains water in outdoor spaces, and also reduces water consumption as a whole. There are a number of ideas to **save water in the garden.** If you are thinking of switching from a hose pipe to a water butt and watering can, speak to your community about the change: for example, a water butt may need extra consideration for people who find it difficult to lift and carry watering cans. Collectively, you can decide if the water butt will be in addition to a hosepipe, or instead of it – and what your group can do to make the water butt accessible to all.

We'd love to hear what you get up to on your next growing Get Together! Please tag us in your gardening and growing photos using the **#FFLGetTogethers**

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