

Grow Your Own

Supporting the residents of Medway to maintain a healthy lifestyle by growing their own



**A BETTER
MEDWAY**
Easier ways to be healthy

Medway
Grow's

Welcome to your **Grow at Home Pack!**

Don't worry if you are lacking in outdoor space, inside you'll find instructions, activities and some free seeds to help you grow some delicious salad leaves, indoors.

You'll need some sort of pot to grow in, like a margarine pot with a lid, a bit of compost or soil to sow your seeds in and a little space on a windowsill.

When you are ready to harvest, we've even included some recipes to make the most of your yummy produce.

Have fun, and let us know how you are getting on.

Email us on *change4life@medway.gov.uk* or feel free to post progress photos on *www.facebook.com/triforyoumedway*

Good Luck and Happy Growing!



Why Things Grow

In your pack, you have a packet of lettuce seeds.

At the moment the seed is dormant, sleeping in its seed coat. Inside the seed is actually a mini plant waiting for the right conditions for it to grow. Seeds need four things for this to happen. Do you know what they are?

Water – so it can germinate and grow. When we plant seeds on the windowsill, we have to make sure that we don't overwater it. So we keep the soil moist but not wet.

Light –green plants need sunlight so they can make their own food in their leaves. Because light only comes from one direction, plants tend to stretch towards the light. You can balance out the growth by turning the pot regularly so the other side of the plant faces the light.

Warmth – plants grow better when it's not too hot or too cold.

Nutrients – plants need minerals to be healthy which they get from the soil.

It's also worth remembering to keep your pots away from food preparation areas so any soil can't contaminate food.

TIP

If you find the sun is very strong, you could try putting a sheet of plain white paper onto the window so the seeds don't get scorched by the sun.



Decorating Your Pot

You'll need:

A large margarine or ice cream tub

Some PVA glue and a spreader

Photos of plants, vegetables, fruit or flowers

TIP

Seed companies send out free catalogues which are perfect for this activity.

You never know, you may get the growing bug and order some seeds!



Cut out some photos to decorate your pot.

Cover the tub in PVA glue and stick your pictures all over the tub.



When the pot and the lid are covered, coat with PVA glue and leave to dry. Do the same with the lid.



Sowing Your Seeds

You'll need:

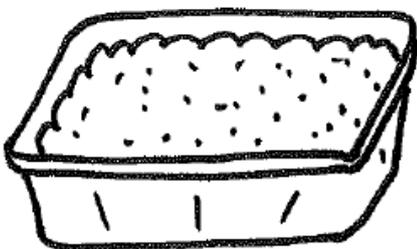
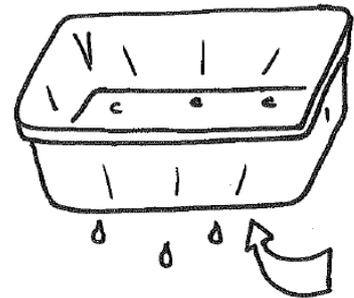
- Your decorated tub
- Some compost or soil from the garden
- Your free salad leaves seeds
- Scissors or a sharp knife

TIP

If you are using soil from the garden, make sure its fine and not too sticky or your seeds will struggle to germinate.

Next:

Take your tub, and check to see if it has any drainage holes. If it doesn't, make a few small holes at the bottom, just big enough for the excess water to drain away.

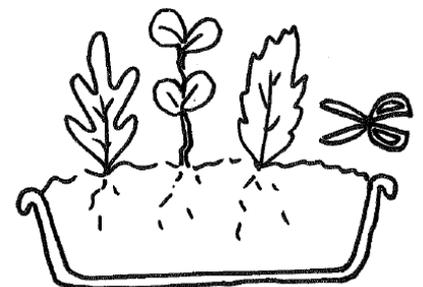


Fill the tub nearly up to the top with compost or soil from the garden. Finely scatter the seeds on the top of the compost. Cover them very lightly with more compost and gently water in.

With a bit of light, they should soon germinate at room temperature.

Once they start growing, you can harvest when they are tiny, like cress or wait until they are producing bigger leaves. Just snip the leaves off and the plant will keep growing and produce some more.

You should be able to get a few pickings off each plant, until it becomes exhausted and gets a bit tough and woody



Homemade Watering Can

You'll need:

An empty milk carton

Some permanent marker pens

Something with a sharp pointy end, like a wine bottle opener, a fine skewer or a nail and hammer.

TIP

Using a watering can may wash away any tiny seeds and stop them from germinating. Stand the seed tray in a larger tray with 3cm of water in it and let the soil soak up the water instead, don't let it stand in the water for more than 4 hours though!



Take your empty milk carton, and give it a good rinse out.

Take the lid and make small holes in it, like the rose on a watering can. The bigger the holes, the faster flow of water so have fun experimenting but be careful, unless you have some spare lids!



Next, make a tiny hole in the handle of the milk carton. This is to allow air into the bottle to prevent a vacuum forming that would prevent the water flowing freely.

Decorate your watering can with the pens.

Use to water your seedlings so they don't dry out.



Making a label

You'll need:

Giant wooden lollipop sticks

Some permanent marker pens

Or

Wood and some blackboard paint

Chalks pens

TIP

Labelling your seeds is a good habit to get into. Write down the date you sowed the seeds so you'll have a good idea when they should germinate or whether your seeds haven't germinated.

Next:

Take your giant lollipop stick and decorate it using the permanent markers or paint the stick in blackboard paint, wait until it is dry then decorate with chalks.

Be creative and make something that really stands out!

Don't forget to write the date the seeds were sown.



My How You've Grown!

Use the grid below to record the progress of your seeds – either draw or stick in a photograph



Jam Jar Dressings

You'll need:

Clean jam jars with a well fitting lid

Chopping board

Knife

Label and pen

TIP

Dressings can be yummy, but they usually contain oil which can quickly make your healthy salad into a salad high in fat and calories.

Remember, if you use them, use sparingly!

Next:

Here are some oil based dressings. The quantities are usually the same, 1 part vinegar to 3 parts oil. Pop the ingredients into a jam jar, screw the lid on tight and give it a good shake until all the ingredients are combined. Label, and store in the fridge for a couple of days.

Balsamic Vinaigrette

1 tablespoon of balsamic vinegar

3 tablespoons of olive oil

Something Zesty

1 tablespoon of lemon juice

3 tablespoons of olive oil

Something Herby

Small bunch of finely chopped parsley – easy to grow your own!

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

3 tablespoons olive oil



Jam Jar Dressings

You'll need:

Clean jam jars with a well fitting lid

Chopping board

Knife

Label and pen

TIP

Remember to use low fat or 0% fat yoghurt for these creamy dressings to keep the fat and calorie content down.

Next:

Here are some creamy dressings that you could also use as dips, especially if you can grow your own little carrots and radishes!

Creamy Cucumber

125ml low fat or 0% fat natural or Greek style yoghurt

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

Half a cucumber, grated and then given a good squeeze through a sieve

Some chopped fresh dill or a tsp of dried dill

Cooling Mint

125ml low fat or 0% fat natural or Greek style yoghurt

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar

Bunch of chopped mint

½ clove of crushed garlic



Garden Veg Salad

You'll need:

100g bulgur wheat or cooked brown rice

300ml low salt vegetable stock, if using the bulgur wheat.

3 radishes

3 spring onions

100g cooked French beans

100g peas or broad beans, podded

Some chopped mint or parsley

100g feta cheese

100g of your home grown salad leaves

50ml of the Cooling Mint Dressing

Next:

If you are using bulgur wheat, pour the hot stock over the top, cover with a lid or cling film and leave until all the liquid is absorbed and the wheat is soft.

Chop up the spring onions and finely slice the radishes.

Cut the French beans in half and make sure the broad beans have had their pods removed.

On a large plate, put the bulgur wheat, the vegetables, scatter the feta cheese and herbs and top with your lovely salad leaves.

Drizzle with the dressing and enjoy!

TIP

You could use lots of different vegetables here: cucumber, tomato, grated carrot, cooked beetroot, courgette or broccoli.

Swap the bulgur wheat to orzo pasta or cous cous

Add some crunch with some sunflower and pumpkin seeds.

Change the feta to halloumi cheese or some steamed fish or even some chargrilled chicken



Tasty Sandwich Fillings

You'll need:

Something to fill:

There is so much out there than just your sliced white!

Bread can be made with lots of different flours and grains like rye, spelt, cornmeal, oatmeal and rice flour.

There is also a huge variety of bread products available, plain or flavoured with herbs, spices, nuts, seeds and fruit.

So have a browse and try something new, maybe a bagel, tortilla wraps, rolls, pitta bread, naan bread, chapattis, scones, soda bread, focaccia, ciabatta or even a muffin.

Next:

Ready to try something new?

Grated cheese, grated apple, some sunflower seeds and a little low fat mayonnaise to bind it together.

Some chopped beetroot, low fat cream cheese and a little chopped dill or horseradish sauce

Sliced apple, low fat cream cheese and a scrapping of marmite

Hummus, sliced avocado and tomato

Peanut butter, grated carrot and raisins

Chopped egg and spring onion

Tuna, sweetcorn, red pepper and sweet chilli sauce

TIP

Adding some salad leaves to your sandwiches is a great way to add another portion of veg to your daily diet.

You'll be eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day before you know it!



Other Plants to Grow in Pots

You'll need:

- Pots to suit your crop
- Soil
- Seeds
- A wall or space for a tubs

TIP

Don't forget you can grow up too, so any wall can be used for planting against or for hanging baskets.

Be creative with your containers; old tins, wellie boots, basins, baths, plastic bottles, old toilets even supermarket trolleys!

Next:

There are lots of vegetables and fruit that can be grown in pots and containers. To grow them successfully, you need to remember the following things:

1. Choose the right size container for the crop – root vegetables like potatoes, parsnips and carrots will need deeper containers than vegetables that grow on or near the top of the soil like beetroot and onions.
2. Check you use the right compost; although multi purpose compost is fine for most plants, just check to see if they need anything else adding to keep the plants healthy.
3. Plants don't like their feet getting too wet, this can cause their roots to rot if they become too waterlogged. Before you put in your compost, always put some gravel or broken pots at the bottom of the container so there is good drainage.
4. Plants in pots can quickly become dry, especially in hot weather so remember to water to keep the soil moist.
5. Don't forget to feed them – plants can soon use up the nutrients in the soil and some nutrients can be washed away so it's important to give the plants a feed. Again, check the labels to see what they need and how often.



Other Plants to Grow in Pots

You'll need:

To know what vegetables and fruit are best for container growing and which varieties are tried and tested for giving a good tasty yield.

Next:

Choose your varieties:

Tomatoes - Gardeners Delight can be grown in a grow bag against a wall or try a variety called Tumbling Tom for growing in a hanging basket. There is even a variety called Microcherry which is a compact bush type and is great for a large container.

Carrots grow well in pots and can be picked when they are young and small. Chanterey is a short stubby carrot and Nantes is another variety to look out for.

Beetroot is good grown in rows, with the thinning's being very delicious!

Courgettes can be very vigorous, but can do well in a pot with good feeding. Try 'All Green Bush' which is compact and perfect for pots.

Aubergines, yes little baby aubergines, can be grown in pots. Aubergine Slim Jim produces long thin fruits which are very reliable and are quite happy in a pot.

Radishes are quick to grow and can be ready to eat in 4-6 weeks and add a lovely crunch to your salad. Try 'Caro'.

Potatoes are the best for growing in pots. Get some seed potatoes and a bag, top up with compost when the green shoots start to appear until you reach the top of the bag. Soon, you'll have a bag full of spuds!

Follow the instructions on the packets, keep the soil moist and you'll be eating the freshest, locally grown produce before you know it!

TIP

Don't forget to check the seed packets. They will usually say if they are a variety suitable for growing in a container.



Notes

Handwriting practice area consisting of 20 sets of horizontal dashed lines for writing.



Further Information

There are lots of resources out there for growing and many recipes for making the best of your home grown vegetables. Here are some of our favourites:

www.gardenorganic.org.uk

www.rhs.org.uk/advice/grow-your-own

www.eatseasonably.co.uk

www.nsalg.org.uk

www.nhs.uk/change4life/recipes



www.abettermedway.gov.uk

**Supporting Healthy Weight Team, Public Health Directorate,
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Produced by Rachel Hogben-Lambert