

Take part in our **Gardening Competition**



Starts: Monday 3 March 2025
Submission: Monday 21 July 2025



ready steady **grow**

Resident Information



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Introduction

Welcome to Ready Steady Grow 2025

Thank you to those who sent in feedback to improve the way we are running the competition this year. We have made some changes to the booklet based on that feedback and hope you enjoy entering this year's competition.

This year's competition focuses on two themes:

The Great Garden Challenge and
Wholesome Harvest

Additional category: **Tallest Sunflower**

There are also some fantastic prizes up for grabs!

The competition is designed for residents at all Supported Living and Retirement Communities services. Whether you have access to a communal garden, allotment, or courtyard, you can inspire us with developing your garden.

There is only **one entry per person** and entries can be submitted at any point from the launch date **Monday 3 March 2025** up to **Monday 21 July 2025**, so you have plenty of time to get planning and planting!

It's easy to get started – read through this, start planning and ask staff for support and advice if you need it.

How to use this pack

This pack provides all the information you need to understand the requirements for Ready Steady Grow 2025, including how to enter the competition, how it will be judged, when it will be judged and what the all-important prizes are.

The pack mentions useful documents that you can use to plan your entry, so make sure you ask staff to provide you with everything you need.

Competition categories

There are two themes you can enter in Ready Steady Grow 2025:

The Great Garden Challenge and **Wholesome Harvest**

An additional entry for the **Tallest Sunflower**

Details on how the competition will be judged are provided in the **Voting** section.

1 The Great Garden Challenge

How you choose to make your garden look amazing is entirely up to you. Some ideas for you below.

Transform your garden using recyclable products or make an insect house. A great way to create beautiful spaces and keep junk out of landfill. Using toilet paper rolls for growing plants, wellies for planting flowers, pallets are great for displaying plants or making tables.

Grow your garden or window pots and boxes to capture all the beauty of nature, creating nesting for birds or colourful flowers to attract bees and butterflies.

Most of us would like more wildlife to visit our gardens, and making your outdoor space attractive to birds, mammals and invertebrates needn't involve a lot of work but can be very therapeutic.



Some of the best easy-to-grow flowers

Nigella (Love-in-a-mist)

Simply scatter seeds across a patch of soil. Nigella is tougher than it looks and will happily self-seed for the following year.

LOVES Full sun and watering in dry conditions.

TOP TIP Sow two or three times between Spring and Summer to maximise the amount of flowers you get.

Californian Poppy

The seeds grow fast so you will quickly see their colourful flowers. Tall varieties for the border, smaller ones for beds and pots.

LOVES Full sun and well-drained soil.

TOP TIP Super hardy, this plant is also ideal for rock gardens.

Marigolds

The seeds grow fast so you will quickly see their colourful flowers. Tall varieties for the border, smaller ones for beds and pots.

LOVES Sunny, fertile and well-drained soil.

TOP TIP Sow marigolds among tomato plants to repel blackfly and greenfly.

Sweet Peas

Pretty and fragrant. Easy to handle.

LOVES Sunny, fertile and well-drained soil.

TOP TIP Mice love sweet pea seeds and young shoots. Cover with a mini propagator or cut off plastic bottle.



2 Wholesome Harvest

You can have a fruit and veg patch even in a courtyard if you have one. Fill it with large terracotta pits and grow herbs, figs, chillis, blueberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, and courgettes. If you have space, why not buy a couple of raised beds.

Questions and Answers

How do I lay out my vegetable patch?

- Consider staggering the plants by planting in triangles you will fit more plants in each bed.
- Avoid planting too close together

What fruit takes the shortest time to grow

- Strawberries
- Blackberries
- Raspberries

What is the most difficult vegetable to grow?

- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Melons
- Head lettuce

Although difficult to grow the rewards might be worth the work.

When should I start my vegetable garden?

- The easiest to sow vegetable seeds in Spring, Summer, and Autumn into prepared beds. This is known as direct sowing.

How to plan a low-cost vegetable garden

- Manure can often be obtained for free from farms or stables-just be aware of herbicidal residue.
- Hazel and other trees and shrubs with long straight stems can be used to make plant supports for free.
- Hoverflies and other insects can perform free pest control services for you!



Here is a link to a YouTube video on How to Plan a low cost vegetable garden.

Video link: [How to plan a low-cost vegetable garden](#)



3 Tallest sunflower

This year we have added the Tallest Sunflower for individuals to enter their Sunflower. **You can add this entry in addition to one of the themes below:**

The Great Garden Challenge Wholesome Harvest

How to get the tallest Sunflower

It's essential you direct sow seeds directly into the garden rather than starting from a pot of any kind.

This is due to Sunflowers having long taproots that grow quickly and become stunted if confined.

How to increase the size of my Sunflower

- Deep, regular watering, particularly in the morning.
- They will benefit from a liquid fertiliser every two to three weeks to boost their height.

Which Sunflower seeds grow the tallest?

- The tallest sunflower variety that is easy to grow from seed is the Russian Sunflower which can reach heights of up to 15 feet.
- Sow them singly under glass into multipurpose compost from March-April and outdoors from April-June once all the risk of frost has passed. Flowers will appear between July and September.



- Don't forget to support the stems for even taller flowers!

How long does it take a sunflower to reach maximum height?

- A Sunflower grows rapidly in the first 50 days then the growth rate slows until the sunflower reaches its maximum height of approximately eight feet tall.

Where is the best place to plant Sunflowers?

- Pick a full sun location 6-8 hours a day is ideal in a location protected from wind.
- Provide fertile, well-drained soil amended with good compost.
- As Sunflowers have large taproots they can grow deep in the soil.

Important dates

Monday 3 March 2025

Competition opens – send us an email confirming you are taking part to readysteadygrow@sanctuary.co.uk

Monday 21 July 2025

Deadline to submit final photos and entries for the competition.

Monday 11 August – Monday 18 August 2025

Online public vote is open.

Monday 1 September 2025

Winners announced via email to managers and scheme mailboxes, and on our website: www.sanctuary-supported-living.co.uk



Prizes

Everyone who enters the competition will receive a certificate of recognition for participating in the competition.

All winners will receive a certificate, trophy and a gift card as follows:

1 The Great Garden Challenge

First Place

£200 gift card

Runner Up

£100 gift card

Spot Prize

Chosen by Resident Advisory Panel and Resident Scrutiny Panel members.

£30 gift card



2 Wholesome Harvest

First Place

£200 gift card

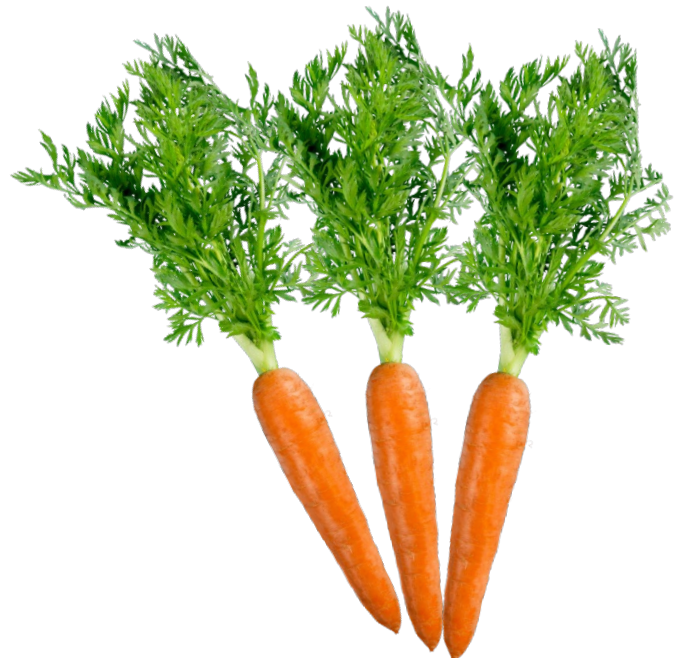
Runner Up

£100 gift card

Spot Prize

Chosen by Resident Advisory Panel and Resident Scrutiny Panel members.

£30 gift card



3 Tallest sunflower

The winner will receive a **£50 gift voucher**.

All winners will be asked to have a photo with their trophy, certificate and voucher that will be published on the website.

Gift cards

Winners will receive a gift card from B&Q.

B&Q gift cards can be spent nationwide at all stores on homeware, DIY, and garden supplies.



How will my entry be judged?

Your garden will be voted for by public vote between **11 August – 18 August 2025**. The winners will be announced **Monday 1 September**.

It will be important to show the transformation so that voters can see how your garden has improved.

1 The Great Garden Challenge

Voting will be based on the overall positioning of display and designs. how colourful and bright your garden looks.

Having your plants in the right position will help you on your way to a successful garden.

Think colour, impact, composition, health but also would these plants live and survive together?

The transformation from before to after photos will make a big impact on the voting. It doesn't matter whether your garden is large or small it's how you have developed it and how much effort you have put in to showcase your transformed garden.

2 Wholesome Harvest

Voting will be based on quality being the most important factor. Consideration will be taken on all conditions which influence quality — maturity, freshness, free from disease, insect damage and blemishes.

It doesn't have to be the largest space but if you have managed to grow several fruit and vegetables that look ripe and ready to eat and show the before and after photos you will be in with a good chance.

As well as entering either of the Great Garden Challenge or the Wholesome Harvest categories, residents can also enter the Tallest Sunflower category for a bonus chance to win a prize!

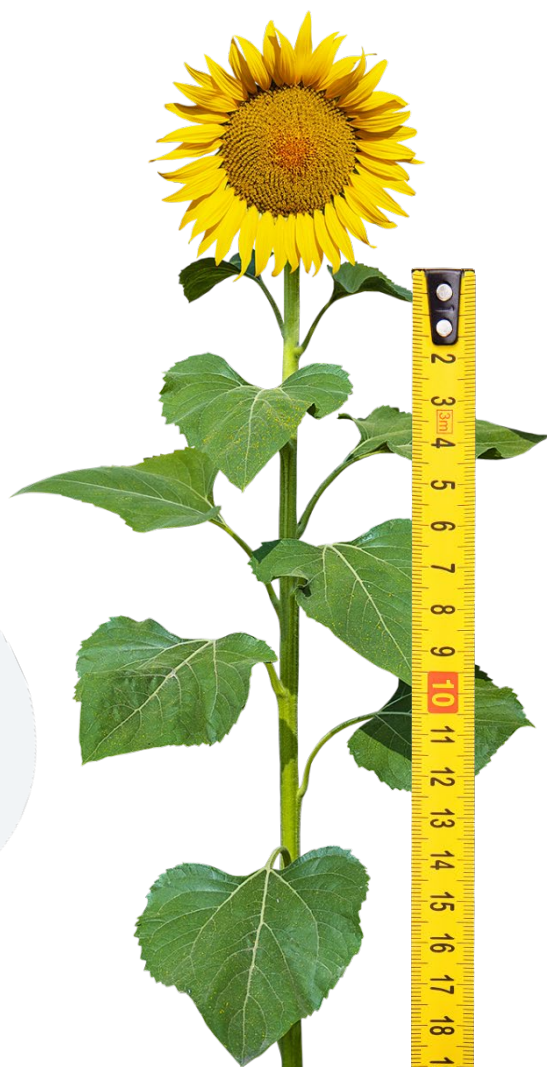
3 Tallest sunflower

The winning sunflower will be based on the measurement. You will need to measure your flower and a photo of the measured flower shown on the photos.

Measurements are taken from the bottom of the plant (ground) to the base of the sunflower head or green bud using a tape measure.



Please
measure
sunflowers in
centimetres
(CM)



How do I register to take part and submit my entry?

It's simple to register, just email readysteadygrow@sanctuary.co.uk, telling us who you are, where you live and that you want to take part in this year's competition. If a whole service is entering, please let us know when entering.

We will accept one entry per service, or an individual entry if you are entering on your own.

Once we receive your email, we will confirm you have been registered and explain the next steps.

Please make sure to take photos of before, during and after, so when you send us the photos of your garden, we can see how it has been transformed.

If you would like to send us any pictures of you in your garden or with a planter that you're particularly proud of, please email these with a completed photography consent form (available from staff).



The deadline to submit your photos is Monday 11 August 2025.

You can register your entry any time from the when the competition launches **Monday 3 March 2025 - Monday 21 July 2025.**

If you need support with your entry, please speak to a member of staff who can help you or submit your entry on your behalf.

You can view entries and vote for your favourite on the Ready Steady Grow pages of our websites from **Monday 11 August 2025 to Monday 18 August 2025.**

***You are not allowed to vote for your own entry*.**

Taking photos

It's important that any photos you take are clear, sharp and high-quality, so that they provide good evidence of what you've done. We can accept photos from staff or residents. If you don't have your own camera or smartphone to take photos with, speak to a member of staff who can take photos for you.

We'll be celebrating your gardening activities via our Sanctuary Supported Living Facebook page throughout the competition, so keep your eyes peeled for updates.

If you or your friends, family or members of staff are in the photos, the photos must be accompanied by a completed consent form, which a member of staff can provide. Without this form, we will not be able to accept the photos. Make sure you write down the names (first and last) of people in the photos and send a brief description of what is happening in the picture to SSL.Marketing@sanctuary.co.uk

Tips for taking great photographs

Resolution

To get a clear, crisp image, take photos at the highest possible camera setting. Photos should be around 3MB. Anything with KB on the end of the file size is too small.

Lighting

Always avoid photos where the main light source (windows, the sun, lights) is coming from behind the subject.

Focus

Check the subject is in focus. If your digital camera has an LCD screen, you should be able to see if the shot is in focus. On most smart phones, the focus is often controlled by tapping the part of the image you want focused on screen before pushing the shutter button.

Composition

Try to ensure that you can clearly see what is supposed to be the feature of the photo and that anything of interest is in the picture. Take several photos, both vertical and horizontal so that there are plenty to choose from.



Getting started

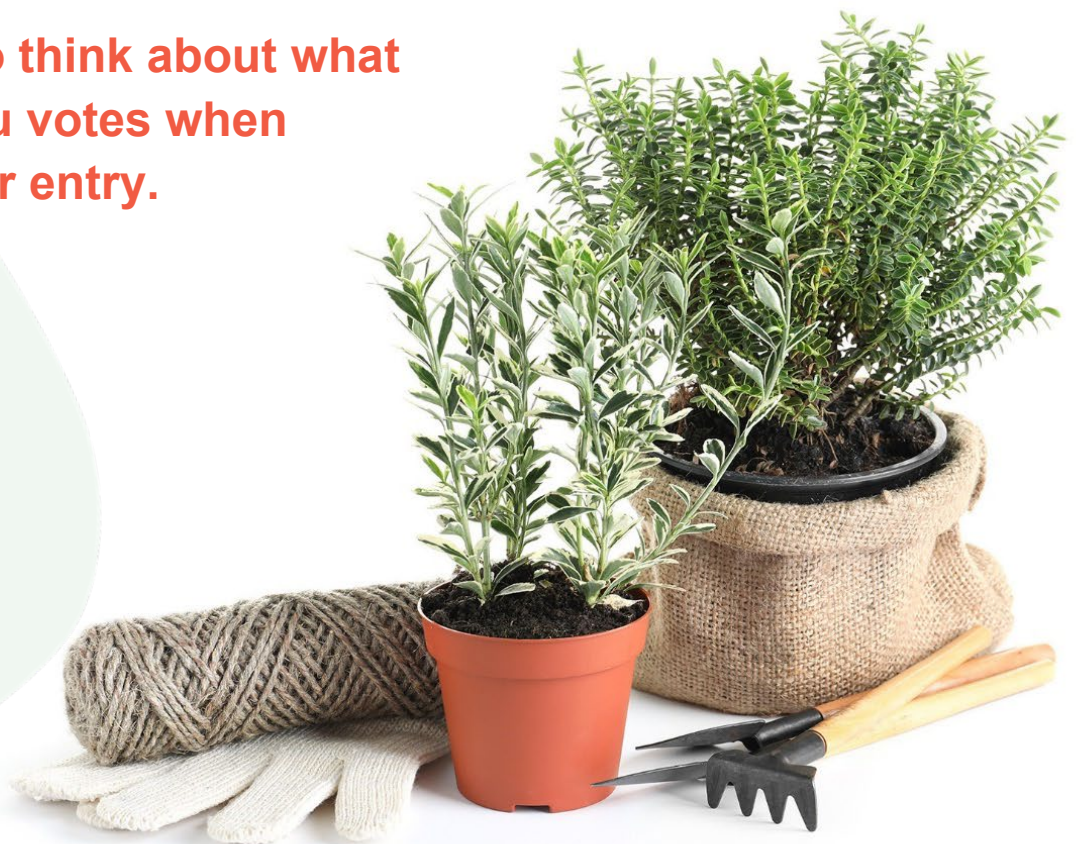
Now you know how the competition works it's time to get planning. Let's keep it real. We know planting and keeping a nice garden costs money. That's why you won't gain any extra points for extravagance in this competition.

Knowing where to start can often be your first hurdle. Especially if you don't have any equipment, seeds or soil. But there are ways to get inspired and options for getting support with costs.

Read the **Top tips and ideas** section to give you great ideas and inspiration. If you'd like to enter but are worried about the costs, then speak to a member of staff. It's likely there are others at your service who are in the same situation. Staff may be able to apply for funding, ask for discounts or get hold of some gardening tools and equipment that you can share.

We have put some ideas in the **Funding your project** section.

Remember to think about what might get you votes when planning your entry.



Funding your project

Organisations sometimes have funds available to help local community projects, like your gardening project.

They can help to buy soil, plants and gardening tools or simply provide them for you. Sometimes they might be able to donate unsellable items, which may otherwise go to waste.

Before you go any further, think about what materials you need and how much you expect your project to cost. Speak to other residents in your service or a member of staff to find out who else is taking part. If you want to ask for donations or funding, it's likely to be more effective if you apply together. A member of staff or manager will be able to help organise a group application or request for you.

Local funding

If you decide you only need gardening tools or materials which **are likely to cost less than £200**, you could try approaching local stores including:

- Wickes, B&Q, Argos and Homebase
- Local garden centres and nurseries
- Local supermarkets: Tesco, Co-op, Sainsbury's, Morrison's, Asda, Aldi and Lidl

Donations and expertise

You could also see if there are any **local environmental Friends Groups or Allotments who could donate equipment, soil or seeds**. They may be keen to help and you could ask if they would be interested in providing you with their expertise and advice to help you transform your garden.

Client Engagement Funding

Through Sanctuary's Client Engagement Funding, grants of up to £500 are available for projects that support you to develop your skills, in this case it would be horticultural skills for instance growing vegetables. You may also want to consider mentioning the physical and mental health benefits your garden project could provide.

A member of staff will need to apply for this funding on behalf of residents at the service (it would have to support a group of residents) and the applications must also demonstrate:

- Some measure of match funding. Match funding doesn't need to be financial but could be in the form of donated items or volunteer time.
- An element of working with the wider community. This could be a peer support role or local allotment society.

For more information, speak to a member of staff or email:

readysteadygrow@sanctuary.co.uk

National initiatives

As well as approaching organisations locally some companies run national funding initiatives as well. This sort of request is most suitable if there are a lot of residents at your service participating and you apply for funding as a service.

If you think this is a good idea to support, you and others with their competition entry then speak to a member of staff about what you have in mind and they can help you to organise an application and make contact with a suitable organisation. Companies get a lot of requests so don't feel disheartened if you don't hear back. It is always worth checking that you are eligible to apply, often applications need to come from registered charities or constituted community or friends' groups.

Applying for donations or funding

It's always best if funding applications come from residents – it is your project after all - but speak to a member of staff if you would like to do any of the above to make sure your request is co-ordinated with other residents' requests. You're likely to be more successful this way and staff can help you to write a letter too.

Top tips and ideas

Inspiration

- Free apps such as Instagram and Pinterest can be a good place to start. Use them to research the type of project you want to create or follow professional gardeners.
- Gardening magazines – see if anyone is throwing them out. Cut out the pictures you like and make collages.
- Take a walk – get some inspiration from around you.
- Ask an expert – do you have any relations that like gardening? The best tips are often passed down the generations. Do you know anyone that can help or offer advice?

- Watch gardening videos online or programmes on TV. You might pick up some tips - even if their project is more advanced. Gardening programmes include Garden Rescue, Love Your Garden and Gardener's World.

Top tips

While gardening is a therapeutic and mindful task, knowing where to start can be daunting, but it doesn't have to be.



Below are eight simple gardening tips to get you started.

- 1.** Start with the right tools, i.e., secateurs, shears, pruning saw, trowel, hand fork and garden hoe for weeding. Alongside that a pair of gardening gloves to protect your hands!
- 2.** Plan your garden so you can work out what to grow where. Planning will also help you to use colour and structure wisely.
- 3.** Planting your plants properly will ensure they grow well and live for a long time.
- 4.** Take time to weed and prepare the soil before planting and add fertiliser where needed.

5. Feed and water plants regularly, knowing when and how to water plants will make all the difference between them living and dying. As a general rule, water the root ball rather than the leaves as it's the root that absorbs the water.
6. When starting a new veg patch it's much better to do a little bit at a time. You can easily cover areas you don't want to cultivate with cardboard or black plastic to prevent weeds growing while you work on different areas
7. Most garden pests don't do much harm to plants and can be left alone. Sometimes pest populations can become an infestation and you will need to act. Keep an eye out for increasing numbers of pests like slugs and snails will help to keep your plants safe and save you a lot of heartache.
8. Composting kitchen and garden waste is good for the environment, wildlife, your purse and your garden.

Don't forget to enjoy your garden and take time to sit back and enjoy what you have achieved.

FAQs

Which part of the garden is best for my plants?

Check plant tags or ask the staff at your local garden centre to find out how much sun a plant requires, then find a suitable place for it. Put the plants where you can see them, so it reminds you to attend to them.

When should I dig the soil?

Digging loosens the soil so roots can grow more easily. Dig only when the soil is moist enough to form a loose ball in your fist, but dry enough to fall apart when you drop it.

How often should I water my plants?

It depends on how often it rains. Plants are begging for water when they wilt slightly in the heat of the day. Water them slowly so the water soaks into the soil. It is best to water the plants early in the morning to minimize evaporation and give your plants a better chance of dealing with a hot sun. Watering in the evening is also more effective than in the heat of the day.



Chose the right plant for your garden by checking your soil type. Is it light and sandy or heavy and clay? Many plants thrive better in one type than the other.

Do I have enough space?

Don't be tempted by the displays in garden centres and buy too many plants for the space you have. You don't need much space to attract birds and other wildlife to your outside space and you don't need much space to grow small vegetables and herbs. Plant labels will tell you how much room they need.

How do I prevent weeds?

All gardens have some weeds. To avoid harming your flowers, weed your garden by hand. Digging out weeds by their roots will ensure they do not return. Wear gardening gloves for this if you have them.

What is compost?

Compost is the natural process of recycling organic material such as leaves and vegetable scraps into rich soil. Putting compost on your soil helps to keep it hydrated and feeds the vegetables and plants you grow. You can buy compost, but you can also make your own with garden waste such as grass trimmings and leaves and as well as fruit and vegetable peel, which may otherwise just go in the bin.

More Ideas for your project

Nesting spaces for birds

If you don't have suitable trees or hedges for birds to nest in, or want to

supplement them, put up nest boxes for birds to use.

Growing plants

Growing plants in pure compost can cause problems with water retention and stability as well. While it may be tempting, planting in pure compost is not a good idea. That's not to say you shouldn't plant in compost at all. Just an inch or two of good compost mixed with your existing topsoil is all your plants need.

Use of compost

All soils can be improved with the addition of compost. Spread the compost in a thick layer on top of exposed soil.

Keeping plants alive

Don't over-water, cut off dead flowers, use good dirt and remember different plants need different levels of light.

Somewhere to reflect

If you have open space, you want to be able to sit and reflect on your achievements or just have some quiet time on your own.



Get creative with a pallet

Save money and give an old pallet a new lease of life with this clever recycling idea to make a vertical pallet planter.

You will need: an old pallet, landscape fabric, staple gun

Step 1 Prepare your pallet

Smooth the slats with sandpaper then decide which way is up. Cover the bottom, back and sides with landscape fabric, pulling it taut before stapling it in place. Leave the front and top open.

Step 2 Plant into the gaps

Lie the pallet face up. Slide 12 plants into the top opening to keep the compost in place. Pour a bag of compost on top of the pallet and push it between the slats. Repeat with a second bag. When the pallet is full, start planting from top to bottom.

Step 3 Water and feed

Leave the pallet flat on the ground for a couple of weeks, watering regularly so the roots can establish and hold all the plants in place. Feed and look after plants according to packet instructions.

Ideal for tumbling tomatoes, strawberries, and herbs.

Sow herb seeds



Grow your own herbs from seed for a steady supply of flavoursome leaves. Herbs are easy to grow and don't take up much space. Grow them in a trough, patio containers or in an old bucket with drainage holes. While some herbs can be sown directly outside where you want them to grow others should be started off indoors. Harden off indoor-sown seedlings by gradually acclimatising them to outdoor life over 10-14 days.

Basil	Chives	Coriander
Sow little and often indoors, two seeds per cell and thin to the strongest	Sow indoors or outside, keeping soil or compost evenly moist.	Sow indoors. Hates root disturbance so sow in a pot that you can put outside.

Great with: Italian style food	Great with: Potato salad	Great with: Curry
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Parsley	Marjoran & Oregano	Dill
Seed is notoriously slow to germinate. Sow indoors for warmth.	Sow indoors with warmth in pots or trays.	Sow indoors from early April or outside in May.
Great with: Greek style food	Great with: Italian style food	Great with: Seafoods and salads

Compost

Compost is crucial for all gardens as it helps your plants get the essential nutrients to grow and thrive. Making your own compost is affordable and helps reduce waste which would otherwise end up in a landfill.

You will need: a bin, suitable waste

Step 1: Prepare your bin

Make sure your bin is large enough! Too small, and you won't be able to add enough materials which will make the mix unbalanced especially when adding waste that slow down the composting process such as grass clippings.

Step 2: Put the right stuff in

Any organic material will be fine! Good things to compost include vegetable and fruit waste, teabags, and grass cuttings. If your mix is looking wet and slimy, don't be afraid to throw in some cut up paper, egg cartons and loo roll tubes to suck up excess moisture and thicken the heap, and if it's looking too dry add more wet materials.

Also, give layers a try – alternate between a layer of soft and moist material (e.g. new leaves, fruit and vegetable peelings, grass clippings) with a layer of drier materials (e.g. dry leaves, twigs). Avoid using any meat or dairy products as these will attract unwanted pests and smells. Don't forget to turn the compost heap regularly and water it if required!

Step 3: Get the best out of your compost

When your compost is ready you will have a dark brown soil-like layer with a spongy texture at the bottom of your bin. Spreading the finished compost onto your flowerbeds greatly improves the quality of the soil by helping it retain moisture and stopping weeds from growing. It also reduces the need to use chemical fertilisers and pesticides!

Top tips

- Keep a pail in the kitchen for collecting compostable waste – when it's full, just add it to the heap.
- Use two compost bins rather than only filling and collecting compost from one – as one bin is composting away, add fresh material to the other.
- DIY your own compost bin by getting creative with a pallet.

Create your own unusual containers

It's time to think outside the flowerpot.

Look for waterproof household items that would otherwise go to waste. We have provided a couple of examples for you, which you are welcome to try yourself. Here's how to transform your old wellies into plant containers in six simple steps:

1. Clean the wellies with soapy water and dry with a cloth or old towel.
2. Remove any insoles and make a few little holes in the bottom for water drainage
3. Put a few pebbles at the bottom of the wellies (helps water drainage)
4. Fill your wellies with compost from the toe to a few inches from the top
5. Plant seeds by pressing them lightly into the soil and top up with more compost
6. Give them a good water and place in sunlight (check seed packet for direction)



Bicycle Tyre

How to transform an old tyre into planters.

Follow the four simple steps below, you could even paint your tyre to add colour.

1. Clean the tyre.
2. Paint your tyre. An exterior-grade primer is crucial for sealing the tyre and helping the paint to stick. After that, acrylic art paints are the best option, as they will adhere to the rubber surface more effectively. Ensure the tyre is clean, so the paint and primer can stick firmly.
3. Put your tyre planter in place. If your tyre will be laid down on the floor, then you should fill it as you would a plant pot. Perennials or small shrubs are best suited for a tyre planter.
4. Evenly distribute your potting soil throughout the bottom half of the tyre planter (the side with the drainage holes).



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Good Luck!

ready steady
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