

Introduction

Hopefully you and your families are all keeping well, while you are trying to stay safe at home and adapt as best as you can to this very different life we are all suddenly facing due to the unsettling coronavirus situation.

- maybe you are missing regular gardening activities at your local community garden
- perhaps you had big plans what crops to grow this year on your allotment
- you increasingly feel the need to relax and focus your mind on practical tasks such as seed sowing, planting, weeding, watering your plants?
- or you wish more than ever that you had a self-sustaining fruit & veg garden at home and aren't so hopelessly dependent on shops & supermarkets to supply you with all your daily foods!

So why not start growing some food at home?

You don't need to have a big garden - a backyard with a few large containers or even pots on a windowsill will be sufficient to grow a few herbs or leafy greens to add to your diets

Most gardening activities will require some form of soil. This can be topsoil from your garden, multi-purpose compost, well-rotted organic matter from an old compost heap or well-rotted animal manure, or even re-usable soil you could salvage from last years grow bags, window boxes or pot plants. Even without any soil or compost you can grow a few sprouted seeds to add to salads or stir-fries.

What food to grow? Try focus on a small number of vegetables with a big impact onto your diet for example to have some daily fresh salad leaves, add herbs known for their healing qualities and grow a few superfoods for immune boosting soups.

And what about seeds? Maybe you didn't get a seed order in yet and your gardening centre is now closed? A number of seed suppliers still take online seed orders although there might be a delay for dispatch and delivery and many of the larger supermarkets also sell a range of seed packets. You could also phone your local gardening centre to see whether they do deliveries.



You can also grow quite a few vegetables and herbs from foods bought in the shops!

So if you have recently bought potatoes, garlic, any packets of dried peas or beans or even some grain seeds such as quinoa or amaranth for cooking you can take a few for sowing into seed trays or planting into pots. Many spices in our cupboards are in fact also seeds and (if not too old) can be used to grow in the garden or window sill such as dill, caraway, cumin. Only whole seeds will work, not ground spice!

Let's get started this week with planting Garlic,

which is almost fool proof to grow, but will take about 6 months to mature. If you have bought a head of garlic for cooking you can split off a few individual cloves and plant each of them to grow into a new whole head of garlic. Magic!

The young green stalks ('scapes') that grow from the garlic bulbs and will eventually produce flowers are also edible and can be used like chives or spring onions in **salads or champ**. Most gardeners cut them off in spring, before they flower, to encourage the garlic plants to produce bigger bulbs, but be careful not to damage the actual leaves or bulb.



Garlic will grow in pots or directly in the open ground. Plant each clove **with the pointy end up** (see photo) about an inch deep into the soil and 10 -15 cm apart.

Add more soil/compost to your pot to cover the cloves fully.

Make sure you keep them watered throughout the growing season

Hope your garlic will grow well