

Grow-Our-Own (GO²): Growers' Guide for Beginners

				Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	
Plot 1	Potato & Cucumber		Courgette							S	S	S	H	H	H	
			Potato							S	S	S		H	H	H
			Squash/pumpkin									S	S		H	H
Plot 2	Onion, Pea & Bean	↑	Broad bean	S	S			S	S			H	H			
			Pea						S	S	S/H	S/H	H			
			Onion sets	S	S					S	S			H	H	S
			Garlic	S	S									H	H	
			Runner bean	H								S	S	H	H	H
			Dwarf French bean								S	S	S/H	S/H	H	H
			Climbing French bean	H								S	S	H	H	H
Plot 3	Cabbage, Kale, Broccoli..	↑	Radish/rocket	H				S	S	S	S/H	S/H	S/H	S/H	S/H	
			Kale	H	H	H	H	H	H	S/H	S	S	S/H	H	H	
			Purple sprouting broccoli							H	S/H	S				
			Green sprouting broccoli (Calabrese)								S	S		H	H	H
			Cabbage/wintergreen								H	H			S	S
Plot 4	Carrot & Beet	↑	Beetroot	H	H				S	S	S	S/H	S/H	H	H	
			Perpetual spinach	H	H	H	H	H	H	S/H	S	S/H	S/H	H	H	
			Swiss chard	H	H	H	H	H	H	S/H	S	S/H	S/H	H	H	
			Parsnip	H	H	H	H	S/H	S/H							
			Carrot	H							S	S	S/H	S/H	H	H
No Family (fit in any gap)			Lettuce	H				S	S	S/H	S/H	S/H	S/H	S/H	S/H	
			Oriental salad	H						S	S	S/H	S/H	S/H	S/H	
			Sweetcorn								S	S		H	H	
Permanent Crops			Strawberry	S	S			S	S	S		H	H		S	
			Raspberry		S	S	S	S					H	H	H	H
			Rhubarb		S	S	S	S	H	H	H	H	H			
			Gooseberry		S	S	S	S				H	H			
			Currants		S	S	S	S				H	H	H		

Note: S = Sow; H = Harvest. Colour: Green = Easy; Orange = Slightly difficult

For crop rotation, follow the arrows: for example move potato and cucumber to carrot and beet; carrot and beet to cabbage and kale and so on. For more information about crop rotation, please visit www.grow-our-own.co.uk

This guide is for beginners and therefore covers only the most common fruit and vegetables grown outside (not under cover) in England; if you are interested in growing vegetables like cabbage, tomato, pepper, aubergine, etc., please see our fact-sheets.

Some useful tips: general

Dig your plot thoroughly, removing couchgrass and bindweed before you start planting.

Always sow vegetables in succession (at 2-3 week intervals), if possible.

Mulch crops like potatoes, kale, courgettes as much as possible using grass-cuttings, weeds, straw etc to save water and for better harvest.

Sowing/harvesting times given here are only indicative, so always play by ear.

Use any empty space in your plot to grow small, fast-growing crops such as salad, beetroot, radish.

If your plot is empty during autumn/winter, either sow green manure or cover it with cardboard or black plastic to avoid the rain washing out soil nutrients and to suppress weeds.

Crops such as potatoes, beans, courgette and squash are susceptible to frost damage, so any sowing of these crops before the end of May need protection (cover with fleece or cloche).

Protect your brassicas (kale, cabbage, broccoli etc) from pigeons using nets.

Grow tall plants such as sweetcorn, runner beans on the north side of your plot to avoid shading smaller plants, although a bit of shade is a good thing for salad crops in summer.

Crop specific tips

Maincrop potatoes are susceptible to blight and scab; use blight-resistant varieties of potato (Lady Balfour, Cara, Sapro) and leave a wide space between rows for good air circulation to reduce the risk of blight; mulch potato beds with grass-cuttings/straw etc to reduce scab (spots on potato skin).

Grow climbing French beans next to runner beans using the same site for several years; simply add more compost in autumn/winter and sow seeds in the spring.

Grow radish/rocket in any gaps between slow-growing crops.

Make at least 2 sowings of kale each year: in April for summer use and in June/July for autumn/winter use. Note that 4 types of kale are widely grown in this country.

Carrots are difficult to grow but worth trying; prepare the soil well in the autumn with a lot of compost and leave it covered with cardboard until the spring. Cover carrots with fleece to reduce carrot fly attack.

Sow beetroot in gaps between slow-growing crops or on its own at 3-week intervals between March and July.

Sow perpetual spinach and chard in April for summer use and in July for winter and spring use. Note there are 4 types of Swiss chard and it is a good substitute for spinach.

Parsnips are difficult to germinate but after germination need very little care. Grow parsnips in place of broccoli/cabbage/kale.

Grow lettuces in any gaps between crops or on its own at 3 weeks interval between February to September.

Grow oriental salad in gaps between crops or on its own at 3-week intervals between April and September.

Sweetcorn can be grown in any empty space as it does not belong to any plant family.

Strawberry plants produce runners after fruiting; if you need more plants, keep the runners, otherwise remove them. Replant strawberry every 3 years. Don't put old plants in the compost to avoid disease.

Autumn-fruiting raspberries do not require netting and crop well compared to the summer-fruiting raspberry; prune (cut the cane just above the ground) autumn raspberries in January-February.

Don't pick rhubarb in the first year of planting as it needs to establish before we start picking rhubarb. Also stop picking rhubarb after June in subsequent year.

Prune gooseberry and currant bushes between November and February.

For more information about crop-specific advice, please see our fact-sheet or visit our website - www.grow-our-own.co.uk