



**A Grow your Own and Eat Your Own
project**

The Very Useful Information Booklet

Our aim is to build resilience within
communities, families and
individuals through food growing



A photograph of several spring onions with their white bulbs and green stalks, lying on a dark, textured wooden surface. The roots are visible at the base of the bulbs.

New plants for free!

A close-up photograph of the green, blade-like leaves of spring onions, showing their vibrant green color and texture.

Did you know that spring onions will grow from root cuttings?

Cut off the ends of the bulbs leaving about 3-4 cm of stem.

Stand them in a small water glass or an egg cup in a small amount of water. Change the water every couple of days.

In 3-4 days new green shoots will start to grow.

They will grow on in water that is changed every few days or you can plant them out into soil or compost.

Compost

The compost we have provided comes from organic green waste, from New World Products and is peat free. When you are handling compost, use the gloves provided and wash your hands well afterwards. The compost may be in clumps, so loosen these with your gloved hands as you fill your pots.

Pots and using recycled packaging for growing in

We have supplied you with plastic pots which can be used again and again. When you want to expand your growing activities (and we know you will) please try to repurpose things you already have, or packaging which is sometimes unavoidable when you shop. For example, yoghurt pots, egg cartons, fruit and veg containers; just wash thoroughly before use and make sure there are drainage holes in the bottom.

Labels

You will forget what you have sown if you don't label it! Make labels out of anything you might have at home – wooden lollipop sticks are great, or cut up old yoghurt pots or milk cartons and write on them with pencil, permanent marker or crayon; something that won't wash off.

Sowing Seeds

We're sure you can't wait to begin sowing your seeds so here's a quick guide:

Don't sow too many of each seed all in one go. It is better to sow a few seeds every week to ensure a continuous supply of fresh vegetables throughout the summer. If you have too many of one type of seed, share or swap with neighbours.

- Fill your chosen container with compost to nearly the top, gently flatten and firm with your hand.

- Tip a few seeds into your hand and spread evenly over the top of the compost.
- Cover with a light sprinkling of compost - the general rule is that seeds should be covered to about twice the depth of themselves – it is better to sow too shallowly than too deep. Lettuce leaves need light to germinate so shouldn't be covered at all.
- Water the seeds gently but thoroughly (or let the pot/container sit in water so that the compost sucks up the moisture it needs – the top of the compost will go dark when it is wet).
- Take the container out of the water, allow to drain and place in a warm and sunny spot; you may need to place a protective tray or saucer underneath.
- Do not water again until the compost feels dry to the touch; you want to have moist compost but it shouldn't be very wet or soaking.
- Make sure you put a label in your container.
- Seeds should sprout in 7 – 10 days.

Watering seeds and seedlings

More seeds and seedlings don't succeed because of overwatering rather than under watering. Only water when the compost feels a little dry to the touch. You will soon learn by looking and feeling when your plants need watering. Don't let your seedlings dry out though as they have a very shallow root system until they become established.



Pricking out

Once seedlings have grown a bit and developed a pair of proper or “true” leaves they will need separated out so that they have enough light and nutrients to develop strongly. Ease them out of the compost with a teaspoon or pencil and put into an individual pot or container with some fresh compost. Be very gentle and handle them only by the leaves and not the stem.

Hardening off

This just means that if you have grown seedlings inside they need to get used to colder weather before going outside for good. Put pots outside each day in a sheltered spot for longer periods each time but bring them in at night. After a week or so you can leave them outside all night, either in their pots or plant them out in their new permanent home.

Conserve Rainwater

We all need to conserve water as much as possible and all plants just love rainwater. Leave out buckets or containers to collect rainwater or connect a water butt to a down spout if you have a larger area.

Planting your fruit tree – if you have one

Choose a site for your fruit tree which is relatively sunny and also sheltered if possible. Dig a hole wider than the pot but not deeper. Remove any large stones, ease your tree gently from its pot and place in the hole. Back fill with the soil you have just dug out and firm in – you want the soil level around the tree to be the same as the level of the compost in the pot. Water in really well so that the soil settles around the tree roots.

Make Compost

Making compost is a natural process that transforms your kitchen and garden waste into a valuable and nutrient rich food for your plants. Basically you can make a pile of compostable material in an

unused area of the garden, make a surround out of recycled pallets if you wish or use a large plastic compost bin. The idea is to layer up lots of material over time, turn it regularly to let air in, and nature will do the rest. It is a good idea to have more than one compost bin or heap so that when one is full and breaking down you can start on a new one. It takes about 6 months to a year to make good compost depending on how often it is turned. If you don't have room to make your own compost, make sure to put garden and food waste into your food waste bin so that the council can make it into compost.

So many things can be composted, but never meat or cooked food.

Compostable material is normally described as "brown" (carbon rich) or "green" (nitrogen rich). You are aiming for more "browns" than "greens" in the ratio of about 3 brown to 1 green.

Brown – dry or woody material	Green – wet or recently growing material
Cardboard Shredded paper Egg shells Newspaper Sawdust Wood shavings Fallen leaves Straw	Grass clippings Apple cores Banana skins Coffee grounds Tea bags Fresh hedge clippings Vegetable peelings Plants that have finished cropping Flowers Seaweed Weeds (that do not have seed heads)

Getting the balance right can sometimes be tricky, so if your compost is too wet add more cardboard or shredded paper, and if it is a little dry, add some water. When handling compost it is important to wear gloves and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

Using your produce

Before long you should have a few delicious things to eat that you have grown yourself! Amazing! Anything that grows above the ground such as salad leaves, pea shoots and herbs just need a quick rinse in cold water and then dry them gently on a clean tea towel or in a salad spinner. They can then be kept in a covered container in the fridge for up to a week.

Root crops such as carrots beetroot and turnip may need more thorough cleaning in cold water and a gentle rub to dislodge any soil; there are lots of nutrients in the skin so try not to peel them if you can.

Take off any dead or yellowing outer leaves as your crops grow. This will allow air to circulate and is less attractive to munching pests!

Edible flowers are very delicate and shouldn't need to be washed at all; a gentle dip in a bowl of cold water is the most they would need. Shake off excess water and leave to dry.

Harvesting

When harvesting here are some simple things to know so that you get the most from whatever you are growing.

Root Crops – carrots, beetroot, turnip

This may seem fairly obvious, but the general rule is pull them up when they look big enough! Things like beetroot, carrots and turnips will usually sit a little bit proud of the ground so you can see what size they are. If not, gently remove a little bit of soil from around the top so you can see what size the root is. If you are going away on holiday, do not be afraid to harvest your root crops when they are 'baby' size; they will still taste absolutely delicious.

Not every root crop pulls out of the ground cleanly so ease a hand fork underneath to help release them.

Salad Leaves

Mixed lettuce leaves can be picked once they are about 10cm high. Pick the outer individual leaves to ensure that the plant keeps on growing.

Remove any leaves that are yellow or have large holes and put in the compost bin.

If the salad leaves begin to grow flower spikes, cut them off immediately. When the plants slow down with leaf production, take them out, and put in your compost/food bin and re sow some more.

Radishes

Radishes are ready to harvest once they are the size of marbles. It's better not to let them get too big as they start to get 'woody'. You want them crisp and juicy!

Spring onions (scallions)

Sow spring onions in small clumps of 4-5 seeds. They can be pulled once the white part has swollen slightly. Cut off the roots and give the scallions a quick wash in cold water. Use the whole scallion from top to bottom.

Pea Shoots

The 'Pea Shoot' activity sheet will show you how easily and quickly pea shoots can be grown using any dried pea from the corner shop. When the pea shoots are about 7- 10cm high you can harvest them by cutting about 2-3cm up from the compost (above the first set of leaves will ensure regrowth at least once more).

Cabbage

Cabbage grown from seed takes quite a while to form a head – about 80 – 160 days depending on the variety. Once a head has formed and is the size of a football and feels quite solid, cut the whole plant off at the stem. You can discard any nibbled or yellowing outer leaves.

Spinach (also applies to Kale and Chard)

Some leafy greens produce leaves over a long period of time. To get the most out of them, you can take some (1/2 to 2/3) of the larger leaves off at once. Pick them off by hand, and leave the smaller leaves which will help to regenerate the plant. You will get another harvest much more quickly. If the plants looks like it might flower at the top, cut this top bit off.

Fruit

Generally, fruit is ready to harvest when it comes off the tree, bush or plant easily. So apples will come off with a little twist, and berries such as: strawberries; blueberries; blackcurrants; raspberries and tomatoes will come away with the lightest of touches. You should never have to yank ripe fruit off a plant.

Your best judge is always your nose, your eyes and your taste buds. If they smell ripe, have a deep colour and taste ripe, then they are ready. Always taste some before you start to harvest.

Herbs, how to harvest them and their uses.

Herbs usually fall into 2 categories – perennial and annual/biennial. Perennial just means that they are a permanent plant, that may grow more slowly or die right back in winter but will regenerate and grow even stronger come the next spring. Perennial herbs are a great investment as they will keep producing for many years once they are established.

Annual herbs either will not survive the winter, or their life cycle just means they will flower, seed and die in one season.

Biennial herbs will flower and then die in their second year.

To further complicate things herbs are usually defined as either “soft” or “hardy”. As a general rule, the soft herbs such as: parsley; dill; herb fennel; coriander and basil, should be added to dishes at the last minute, as too much heat will impair their flavour.

Hardy herbs such as: rosemary; thyme and sage are more robust, quite a strong flavour to eat raw, and impart lovely flavour to hot dishes such as roasting root veg.

All herbs should be washed gently in cold water and will keep in a covered container, or clean plastic bag, in the fridge for 5-6 days.

Below is a list of the most common herbs that you might grow for use in the kitchen.

Basil - annual

Basil is a sun worshipper and loves the heat, so is better grown inside or in a very sheltered spot outside. It likes plenty of water but hates going to bed with wet feet, so water in the morning. Keep plants bushy and productive by pinching off branches, larger leaves and removing any flower spikes that appear.

Uses for basil:

- Can be eaten raw in salads or tomato dishes
- If cooking, add to your hot dish at the last minute to preserve the flavour
- A classic on top of pizzas or pasta dishes
- To make pesto (can be bulked out with parsley, rocket, coriander or other soft herb).

Parsley – flat leaf and curly – biennial – needs replacing every 1.5 - 2 years.

Harvest both parsley and coriander by cutting about 5cm (2 inches) above the ground or pick off the individual stalks at the base. If the parsley produces a flower spike cut this off immediately.

Uses for parsley:

- Use to stretch out a basil pesto, or use as a parsley pesto in its own right.
- Use in a leafy green salad

- Parsley mayonnaise
- Parsley butter
- For omelettes and egg dishes

Thyme - perennial

When harvesting thyme you are aiming for a haircut type trim of the new growth every 2-3 weeks during the summer so the plant will keep producing. If you cut down into the old wood, the plant will take a long time to recover.

Tender new stems can be chopped whole, but with older stems, which can be woody, strip the leaves off the stem before using.

The tiny thyme flowers are edible and unlike rosemary, it is good to cut the flowers off once they have died to keep the plant going and tidy looking.

- Add to trays of roasting vegetables or potatoes.
- Add to soups, stews and stocks.
- Chopped finely into stuffing for pork or lamb.
- Great chopped finely into apple sauce.
- Chop flowers and leaves over tomato salad

Sage - perennial

As with the other hardy perennial herbs, cut or pick the leaves from the topmost new growth. As with thyme, cut the dead flower spikes off to keep the plant looking tidy.

- Make stuffing with chopped sage, onions and butter (or oil)
- Fry some sage leaves off in butter or oil to make a herby dressing for pasta
- sage butter
- Flavour robust soups and stews
- Pasta with garlic, mushrooms, spinach and sage

Mint - perennial

Mint can really spread and take over a whole bed in just a couple of years so it is a good idea to grow it in large pots, or put it in a corner somewhere on its own.

When harvesting mint, cut the whole sprig close to the ground about 3-5cm (1-2 inches) up, even if you only need the top part. Cut the bottom off the stalk and put in the compost; this ensures fresh new growth. It is important to cut mint rather than pull it as it will come up by the roots.

- Mint tea
- Adds a great flavour to peas or when boiled with new potatoes.
- Good chopped finely with strawberries or other fruit salad
- Pea, ham and mint soup
- Put in jugs of cold drinks

Sweet Marjoram – perennial – will die back and reappear in springtime

This herb is very similar to oregano but is milder and sweeter in flavour. It is usually associated with Italian and Greek cuisines. Cut the juicy stems and leaves as it grows.

- Goes very well with tomato dishes
- Add to pasta sauces
- Sprinkle chopped leaves over roasted meats
- Great sprinkled liberally over pizza or pizza bread
- Use however you might use oregano

Other herbs to try are:

- **Coriander** (the herb that divides the world like Marmite) – sow regularly from seed
- **Herb fennel** - a perennial that has edible fronds, flowers and seeds.

- **Chives** – a perennial that also has beautiful purple edible flowers.
- **Bay** – if you don't have a bay tree in your garden already, your neighbour might! A common compact garden tree. Grows well in a large pot
- **Tarragon** – a perennial – grow French Tarragon for the best flavour (not Russian).
- **Rosemary** – a perennial herb that is intensely aromatic. Like thyme, harvest by trimming the new growth at the top of the plant every week or so.



Basil



Thyme



Pea shoots

Recipes

A herby Pesto

A traditional Italian pesto is made with basil, but in fact you can use any combination of soft herbs to make a delicious pesto.

1 large bunch of soft herbs such as basil, parsley, dill, coriander, herb fennel or rocket.

1 good pinch of sea salt

1 clove garlic (crushed)

Squeeze of lemon juice

2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese (optional – use 2/3 tablespoons breadcrumbs instead)

150 – 200ml olive oil or rapeseed oil

Use a pestle and mortar to crush the herbs, salt and garlic together into a smooth paste. Add the squeeze of lemon juice and most of the oil and mix to the consistency you like – add more oil if you like it more liquid.

If you don't have a pestle and mortar use a saucepan and a rolling pin to bash the ingredients together before adding the oil.

If you have a blitzer or hand blender you could use that.

Add to hot pasta, as a dressing on sandwiches, on top of pizza or bruschetta, or on a fresh tomato salad.

Salad leaves

Easy all round salad dressing.

Ingredients:

150ml local rapeseed oil or olive oil

2 teaspoons honey

2 tablespoons light vinegar such as white wine or apple cider

A pinch of salt

1 teaspoon of Dijon or wholegrain mustard (optional).

Method - Put all the ingredients into a jug or bowl and whisk together with a fork. Drizzle some of it over your salad and mix through with clean hands. Add more dressing if you need to.

This dressing will keep covered in a bowl or jug in the 'fridge for 3 weeks.

Make your salads more interesting

Salad leaves are the basis for lots of really interesting salads. To your leaves you can add thinly sliced onions, tomatoes, celery, beetroot, apple, pears or grated carrot. You can add chopped up soft herbs such as coriander, parsley, fennel and chives, and toasted nuts and seeds such as pine nuts, walnuts, pecans, almonds, pumpkin seeds, or sesame seeds. Let your imagination run wild and add whatever you find to be your favourite combination. Don't forget to add the salad dressing!

Make croutons from stale bread

Croutons are a perfect way to use up "old" bread (not mouldy obviously) and are great in salads or on top of homemade soups.

Cut your bread into decent sized chunks about 2-3cm square. Spread them on a baking tray, sprinkle with olive or rapeseed oil and some herbs or a pinch of salt if you fancy it.



Bake in a low oven until golden brown and crunchy. They will keep in an airtight container for a week or more.

Soup

Spicy (or not) Thai root vegetable soup

You can adapt this recipe to whatever root vegetables (or vegetables generally) you have in the house. It is especially good with the addition of pumpkin! If you carve pumpkins for Hallowe'en please, please do use the inside of the pumpkin. You can freeze the flesh in pieces for this soup and use when it suits you. It's a great recipe to get children involved with too.

This makes a big pot of soup which will feed your family at least twice! It will also freeze very well.

Ingredients:

1 medium onion, peeled and chopped
2 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped
1 thumb sized piece of fresh ginger, peeled and chopped
1.5kg washed and chopped root vegetables such as carrots, turnips, swedes, potatoes – sweet potatoes, pumpkin, peppers and butternut squash work well too. Make sure the chunks are roughly the same size.
1ltr vegetable stock (using stock pots or cubes is fine)
1 tin coconut milk
½ tsp chilli flakes (or 1 tablespoon of Thai curry paste)
1 fresh green chilli, finely chopped (optional)
Salt and freshly ground pepper
Freshly chopped herbs and spring onions to garnish

Method - Add a glug of rapeseed oil or olive oil to a large pot over low heat and add the onions. Sweat gently until they go translucent and add the chopped garlic, ginger and chilli flakes. Cook gently for another minute or so and add all the root vegetables. Add the stock and coconut milk and add more water to cover the vegetables if necessary.

Turn up the heat to medium, cover the pot and bring up to a simmer. Simmer for about 40 minutes or until the veg is tender. Do not let the soup boil rapidly.

Let cool a little and then blitz until smooth with a hand blender. If you don't have a blender or want a more rustic texture, drain the liquid from the soup into another pan, mash the vegetables and then put it all back together again.

Serve in bowls topped with a sprinkle of finely chopped fresh herbs and spring onions.

Pea shoots

Cut off your pea shoots whenever you want to use them and eat as they are, as a snack. They are also a great addition to salads, sandwiches, stir fries and pasta.

Pea shoots are always best added at the last minute to a hot dish so that they retain some crunch and texture.

Pasta with pea shoots and mint

Ingredients:

A good handful of finely chopped fresh mint (other soft herbs such as parsley and basil also work really well)

1 lemon

3 tablespoons olive oil or local rapeseed oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

400g pasta, any type you like – why not try whole wheat pasta for a change?

300g fresh or frozen peas, sliced mange tout peas, sugar snap peas or sliced French beans.

100g freshly grated Parmesan cheese or other hard cheese (optional)

1 large handful of fresh pea shoots.

Method - Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, in a large bowl mix the herbs, olive oil, and the juice of the lemon.

When the water comes to a boil, add a pinch of salt and the pasta. Follow the cooking instructions on the packet and 3-4 minutes before the pasta is done, add the peas to the water. When the pasta is just about done take a half cup of the cooking water and add to the bowl with the olive oil and herb mixture. Drain the pasta and peas, toss with the herb mixture and the pea shoots. Serve with the grated parmesan sprinkled over the top (if using). Add salt and freshly ground pepper to taste.

Variations: To make the dish creamy stir 2 tablespoons crème fraîche through the cooked pasta. You could also cook a couple of rashers of bacon and chop finely to sprinkle through the pasta.

Radish

Radishes grow so quickly and are crisp with a peppery flavour. Thinly slice them raw into salads or bring them whole as part of a picnic.

They can be roasted like any other vegetable (try roasting them with garlic and some thyme).

A creamy dip for radishes or other raw veggies:

Ingredients:

225g soft cream cheese or natural or Greek style yoghurt

A squeeze of lemon juice

A pinch of salt and pepper

1 clove of garlic finely chopped or grated

A bunch of fresh soft herbs like parsley or sweet marjoram

Stir everything together until well mixed and creamy. Simply dip and eat.

A Quick Sweet Pickle

This quick pickle is perfect for finely sliced radishes, onion, carrots, beetroot or baby turnips. It's not harsh like you might get in jars that you buy and will lightly pickle your goodies in less than an hour. When you've made it a few times you can adjust the amounts depending on how sweet, salty or sour your taste is.

Ingredients:

½ cup apple cider vinegar (or white wine or red wine vinegar)

1½ tablespoon granulated sugar

1½ teaspoons salt

1 cup hot water

Bay leaf, parsley stalks, a couple of peppercorns, (all optional)

Method - Put the vinegar, sugar, salt in a bowl (with the herbs if using). Add the hot water and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Pour over the finely sliced vegetables and let sit until cool. This will keep in the fridge for approx. 2 weeks.

Spring onions

Spring onions or scallions as we know them have many uses.

Cut them finely into salads, or through rice or noodle dishes just before serving. They also add freshness to tacos or burritos.

For classic champ, cut up your scallions quite finely and put in a small bowl covered in milk and a good knob of butter with salt and pepper (or non-dairy if you prefer). Heat gently in a microwave or pan to infuse the fresh oniony flavour and melt the butter. When your potatoes are boiled and mashed add the warm oniony milk and mix well for perfect champ.

Scallion flatbreads – a great one to do with children

Ingredients:

350g Self-raising flour
300ml Natural yoghurt
2 good handfuls of chopped and washed scallions
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt

Method - Mix all the ingredients together, tip out onto a floured bench, knead for about a minute, divide into 40g pieces approx. (golf ball size), roll out flat, cook on a dry non-stick pan over medium heat until done and starting to colour on both sides.

Carrots

Carrots are the most versatile vegetables. Use raw and finely sliced or grated through salads, stir fries, and crunchy slaws.

Carrot salad

Ingredients:

500g carrots thinly sliced, grated or made into ribbons with a vegetable peeler.
3 tbsp of local honey
Juice of 1 orange
4 tbsp local rapeseed oil
200g washed salad leaves
80g golden raisins

Method - Whisk together the honey, orange juice and oil and season to taste with salt and ground black pepper (optional). To serve, toss the carrots in a bowl with the raisins and salad leaves. Pour the dressing

over, toss well and pile into a serving bowl. You could scatter with toasted nuts (optional).

Creamy dip for carrots:

Ingredients:

1 x 500ml tub local plain or Greek style yoghurt
Big handful of chives or spring onions finely sliced
1 tbsp chopped fresh mint
1 tbsp chopped parsley, fennel, dill or other herb

Method - Mix everything together, drizzle with rapeseed or olive oil and serve. Wash and peel a big handful of carrots and cut into long chunks. You can also use other raw vegetables such as celery, cucumber, broccoli, baby tomatoes or whatever you fancy. Happy dipping!

Roasting carrots:

Wash and peel your carrots (if necessary). Cut into even sized pieces and put on a roasting tray with a drizzle of rapeseed oil and a little salt. If you have any rosemary or thyme, chop finely and sprinkle a little over the top.

Put into a preheated oven at 200 degrees C and cook for 25-30 minutes stirring once half way through.

Turnip

Turnip can be used in the same way as potatoes; roasted, steamed, baked or mashed.

If roasting, cut into bite sized chunks, place on a baking tray or dish, toss with some olive oil or rapeseed oil, salt and pepper and roast in a medium hot oven until tender and starting to colour. If you have thyme, rosemary, sage or marjoram, add some of this as they are roasting.

Turnip tops are edible too!

Turnips also marry very well with bacon and Parmesan cheese.

Beetroot

Beetroot is a fantastic vegetable. Mostly grown for the root but the young leaves are edible too. If using the leaves only take 1 or 2 off each plant though as they need some leaves to be able to capture the light and grow.

Beetroot can be eaten raw mixed through salads or other dishes if it is very finely grated. It also adds crunch and colour when finely sliced and lightly pickled using the method in this booklet.

Cooking brings out more of the sweetness in beetroot and removes some of the 'earthiness'.

Beetroot can be steamed or boiled in their skins until tender in the middle (about 20-30 minutes depending on size). You can also peel them, cut into small pieces and microwave them with a sprinkling of water in a covered bowl for 8-10 minutes until tender.

They can also be roasted on a baking sheet with a drizzle of oil and some salt. However you cook them, rub off the skins using a clean cloth or with your thumbs when they are cool. You might want to wear gloves to prevent red staining.

Once cooked there are so many uses for beetroot!

- Cut up into bite sized pieces and add to mixed salad leaves
- Beetroot, apple, celery and nut salad
- Beetroot hummus
- Simply roasted with other root vegetables

Beetroot brownies

Ingredients:

250g butter

250g dark chocolate (about 70% cocoa solids)

250g beetroot – cooked, peeled and grated

3 medium eggs

200g caster sugar

150g self-raising flour

Method – Sprinkle some water into a shallow baking tin (approx. 25 x 20cm) and line the base and sides with grease proof paper.

Preheat your oven to 180 degrees C.

Bash the chocolate into small pieces, cut the butter into small chunks and place in a heat proof bowl. Set into the oven for a few minutes to melt; take out and stir and put back in the oven if necessary, until the butter and chocolate are completely melted.

Whisk the sugar and eggs in a large bowl and then mix in the melted chocolate/butter mixture. Sift the flour into the whole mixture and fold in gently with a metal spoon. Add the grated beetroot and mix gently until everything is combined.

Pour or spoon the mixture into the tin lined with grease proof paper and smooth the top evenly with the back of a spoon. Bake for 20-25 minutes; remove the tin from the oven and leave to cool on a wire rack. When cool, cut into squares.

Cabbage

What a fabulous and versatile leafy green. Put the memory of over boiled cabbage away and embrace it for the hero veg it is.

Use cabbage raw in salad or slaws. Below is a basic recipe; adjust the quantities of vegetables up or down depending on how many people you are feeding.

- ¼ to ½ head cabbage finely sliced (you can add some red cabbage too if you have some).
- 3-4 carrots grated or finely shredded. You can also use a potato peeler to create larger carrot ribbons.

Dressing for traditional coleslaw:

- 2 tbsp cider vinegar or red or white wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp mustard (any kind and optional)
- 100g mayonnaise
- 100g natural yoghurt
- Good pinch of salt and pepper

Mix everything together well and coat the carrot and cabbage mix. Will store in the fridge for 4-5 days.

Dressing for Asian style slaw

- 2 cloves garlic – crushed or finely chopped Grated fresh ginger
- Thumb sized piece of fresh ginger grated.
- 1 fresh chilli finely diced or ½ teaspoon chilli flakes
- 3 tbsp olive oil or rapeseed oil
- 1 tbsp sesame oil (optional – use more olive or rapeseed oil instead)
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tsp honey
- 2 tbsp fish sauce (leave out if vegan and add more soy sauce)
- Juice of 1 lime
- A big handful of fresh coriander leaves and stalks chopped.

Mix everything together well and coat the cabbage and carrot mix. Will store in the fridge for 4-5 days.

Add apple, sliced radishes, toasted nuts and seeds, spring onions, spinach leaves or other chopped herbs to either of the above.

Cooking Cabbage

Remove the central stalks from the outer leaves if they are really big as these can be a little bit tough. Shred the cabbage into smaller pieces with a knife and steam or boil lightly so that it retains a bit of crunch and texture (about 5 minutes)

Once lightly cooked, try:

- Fried cabbage with bacon, onion and garlic
- Colcannon – add the finely shredded cooked cabbage to mashed potatoes with scallions, cream and butter.
- Shred really thinly and add to soups and broths before serving
- Shred really thinly and add to hot pasta dishes

Spinach

Spinach can be grown to produce a crop of leafy greens all year round. This is very useful at times of the year when other green veg might be in short supply.

Smaller leaves are lovely used raw in salads, and spinach has so many other uses! Spinach will cook down to a very small proportion of the fresh leaves which you pick because it contains a lot of water. As a result, when cooking spinach, put the leaves in a saucepan with just a small splash of water, cover with a lid and it will steam in its own moisture.

If adding to omelettes or frittata, pies or quiches, squeeze the excess moisture out of the spinach first (when it is cool enough to do so) in a clean tea towel or using a wooden spoon in a sieve.

Spinach can be added in the same way as soft herbs at the end of cooking a hot dish and will wilt with the heat from the other ingredients. Some suggestions below:

- Toss a large handful of leaves into a hot pasta dish just before serving; pea shoots are a great addition too.
- Spinach, garlic and mushrooms on toast.
- Add to any soup at the end of the cooking time.

Edible flowers

Lots of flowers are edible and add colour, interest and flavour to your food, making the ordinary, extraordinary with hardly any effort at all. Use in salads, to decorate puddings and cakes, or platters of sharing food.

The smaller edible flowers and petals of the larger ones can be placed into ice cube trays before freezing. They look stunning placed in a jug of water.

Remember: ***NOT ALL FLOWERS ARE EDIBLE***

Favourite edible flowers include:

Violas

These dainty little flowers don't have a particularly distinct flavour but they look beautiful through salads or as a garnish for desserts or to decorate cakes. They flower prolifically over a long period of time and are fairly hardy early and late in the season. They also self-seed with abandon so you should always have a plentiful new supply for next year.



Borage

Bees absolutely love borage. The plant produces masses of star shaped blue flowers which taste fresh like cucumber. They really stand out in drinks or in a leafy green salad.

Calendula (Pot Marigold)

Pot marigolds have vibrant orange or yellow flowers which smell faintly “fruity”. The petals can be used to flavour and colour rice dishes instead of saffron which is very expensive and can be difficult to get. Sprinkled over salad leaves they add a lot of vibrancy.

Not to be confused with French marigolds which are great at keeping aphids and pests away but their pungent smell makes them unpleasant to eat.

Lavender

Lavender can be very powerful in flavour and should be used sparingly. Try putting a few flowers into a jar of sugar and leave for a week or 2 to let the flavour gently infuse. You can then use some of the sugar to make shortbread or custard.

Nasturtium leaves and flowers (and seeds)

Vibrant red and orange flowers which add a peppery zing to salad dishes; think rocket on steroids. The leaves are edible and make a punchy pesto, and the seeds can be pickled and used instead of capers.

Cornflowers

Deeply gorgeous blue flowers (also available now in pinks and purple) to use as decoration whole or pull out the individual petals to add splashes of colour everywhere. Mild flavoured.

Herb flowers

Lots of herb flowers are edible; the general rule is, the stronger the herb, the stronger the flower in flavour so rosemary and thyme flowers

are very small but pack a mighty flavour punch. Plump purple chive flowers are made up of lots of tiny individual little flowers which have an amazing essence of onion flavour. Scatter over salads, garnish soups, and add at the end to pasta dishes or any other dish which requires an intensely savoury, oniony hit.

Garlic chives produce large white flowers made up of lots of little florets the same as chive flowers and can be used in the same way.

Fennel flowers are yellow and tiny; produced in clusters they taste of fresh aniseed with a background sweetness. Beautiful to scatter over fish or put a few on top of buttery shortbread before baking.

Apples

Apples are wonderful just eaten as they are for a snack, in smoothies, sliced finely and added to salads or slaws, made into toffee apples or cakes and puddings.

Many Fruit Crumble

Sometimes we all have random bits of fruit left over in the fridge or fruit bowl – a handful of blueberries that are a bit soft, a couple of apples with wrinkly skin, some squishy strawberries or raspberries or grapes.

You can make a crumble with apples, rhubarb, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, plums, pears, peaches, or a combination of any fruits. Trim off any brown or damaged bits and pop them into the freezer rather than put them in your food bin until you have enough for a crumble. If you can't wait, bulk up the mixture up with a couple of peeled and cored Armagh Bramley apples.

Sweeter fruits will take less sugar. You can also add chopped nuts such as almonds or pecans to the crumble mixture. Experiment!

Ingredients:

For the filling:

500g of fruit (peel and core apples and pears, and take the stone out of plums and peaches))

70g caster sugar (less if using sweeter fruits than Bramley apples or rhubarb)

For the topping:

100g plain flour

100g porridge oats

80g butter, cubed

4 tablespoons demerara sugar

Method – Slice the fruit about 1 cm thick and place in an oven proof pie dish. Sprinkle the caster sugar over the top.

Mix the remaining flour, oats and demerara sugar in a large bowl with the butter and rub in lightly until you have the texture of coarse breadcrumbs.

Sprinkle the crumble over the fruit and bake in a preheated oven at 180 degrees C for about 40 minutes until the topping is golden and the fruit mixture is bubbling up.

Allow to cool slightly and serve with custard, cream, natural yoghurt, ice cream or whatever you fancy.



Useful On-line resources

Our project partners are:

The Conservation Volunteers

<https://www.tcv.org.uk/northernireland>

Belfast Food Network

<https://www.belfastfoodnetwork.org/>

Other useful resources:

GIY Ireland <https://giy.ie/>

Incredible Edibles <https://www.incredibleedible.org.>

Social Farms and Gardens <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/your-area/northern-ireland>

Garden Organic <https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/>

RHS <https://www.rhs.org.uk/>

Growing for the Future – School's resource

<http://legacy.ccea.org.uk/growing/about.php>

Make Your Plastic Promise

We've known about the devastating impact of plastics for more than a decade. It is polluting our oceans, killing wildlife and damaging our health. Yet our consumption of plastic continues to increase!

We're not saying all plastics are bad, many serve an important purpose. It's our misuse of plastic that is the problem.

Let's put an end to throwaway plastics!

Make your Plastic Promise as an individual, community group or organisation and reduce your plastic footprint. Small steps can make a difference.

<https://www.liveherelovehere.org/cgibin/PlasticPromiseMakeYourPromise>



There are lots of things which can be recycled to make plant containers.



Take a look in your green bin and remember to make drainage holes if there aren't some already.

Huge thanks to The National Lottery Community Fund



Find out how you can help your local community in other ways by visiting:
www.livehere lovehere.org

Adopt A Spot

The Small Grants Scheme opens in April every year to help fund community projects.



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