

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Growing vegetables in small spaces

Growing vegetables with children is a valuable way of teaching life cycles, caring for living things and promoting healthy eating. If you're short on outdoor space you may think this isn't for you, but these top tips will help with ideas for growing a wide range of tasty veg in the tiniest of places.



Here are some top tips for effectively communicating with parents at your setting.

1. Use windowsills inside and outside. These are ideal, providing they are wide enough, although they can be extended by placing tables or a bench in front. As long as there is some indirect sunshine and drainage holes then the plants will grow when regularly watered. Make sure any larger containers on sills are weighted down with large stones or securely fixed:
 - a. Outside: windowsills can take traditional window boxes, pots and so on
 - b. Inside: cardboard eggs boxes make ideal containers.
2. Use outside wall space in a sunny spot to plant vegetables in hanging baskets. Put the baskets on a chain so they can be lowered down to the children for watering and harvesting
3. Fix shoe hangers with multiple pockets on a wall, filling each pocket with soil. These are usually made from porous material and so will naturally drain
4. Use wooden or metal fences to fix or hang boxes, trays, old wellington boots and pots. 'S' shaped hooks are particularly useful for this
5. Use large jars, such as old coffee jars (without the lids), lined with thick kitchen paper or paper towel for beans. Slide the beans between the jar and the paper, water, leave in a sunny spot and the children will see the roots and shoots growing. When the beans have sprouted, they are best transferred to a pot with soil
6. Suitable vegetables include:
 - a. Lettuce and salad leaves in small, shallow pots. These also grow quickly, in just a few weeks
 - b. Cherry tomatoes are ideal in hanging baskets as the vines can grow down
 - c. Spring onions and chives need very little space and are quite hardy
 - d. Herbs such as rosemary, mint and thyme are best in low places where the children brush past to release the scent; they will also survive all year round
 - e. Carrots usually need deep containers but there are short varieties suitable for shallow containers
 - f. Broad beans and runner beans are great in jars.

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7. Remember, vegetables in containers will need watering regularly. Children often enjoy this, so make sure you have plenty of watering cans and spray bottles available.

NDNA products to support you with this activity

- Online course: [Little Scientists Leading the Way](#)
- Publication: [Inspiring Your Little Scientists](#)
- Publication: [Nature Play – Inspiring Outdoor Approaches.](#)

Find more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna