



GROW YOUR OWN



A Salvation Army guide
to sowing and growing



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Introduction



Dear reader,

We're really excited that you've joined us on your growing journey! Whether it's a new hobby you're looking to pick up, or you're an experienced gardener looking to branch out into growing your own fruit and vegetables, we've pulled together a guide to help you along the way. This year-round guide covers everything from the tools you'll need to get started, to sowing seeds and guidance on how to store your produce correctly once grown.

We run growing projects in various centres across the UK, bringing together our communities. These projects range from educating school children with additional learning needs at our allotment, running growing schemes to upskill people at our Lifehouses (hostels for people experiencing homelessness), teaching families to cook with seasonal produce and so much more. 'Care for creation' is one of The Salvation Army's mission priorities. We believe creation is a gift from God and we need to be good stewards.

So why grow your own? Simply, gardening can help you to cut costs, provide a positive impact on the environment, and crucially it can help improve your wellbeing. With the increase in the cost-of-living and with people looking for more ways to cut costs, our guide could help you to do just that by growing from seed and nurturing plants yourself. We've also included some key money-saving tips to help you along the way.

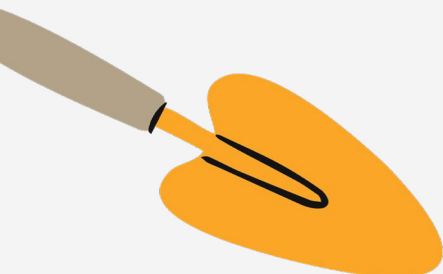
Alongside saving money, **gardening can also have a positive impact on the environment by reducing your carbon footprint and encouraging wildlife.** In our experience gardening and spending time in green spaces can also provide unmatched health and wellbeing benefits as you exercise and give thanks to creation.

We hope you enjoy our guide and hope that it helps you to save a little money in the coming months and contributes to your positive wellbeing.

Best wishes,
The Salvation Army Team



Logos Lifehouse Community
Garden in Bristol



Tools and equipment



To get started you'll benefit from having some basic tools to hand. We understand that buying tools can be expensive, so below we've pulled together an alternative list of items you'll likely already have sitting around your home!



Gloves

An old pair of washing up gloves will do - or go without gloves and give your hands a scrub afterwards.

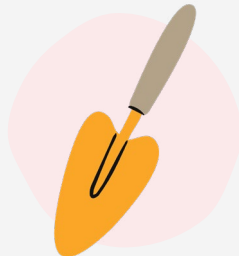


Watering can

Poke a few small holes in the lid of an old water bottle or use a measuring jug.

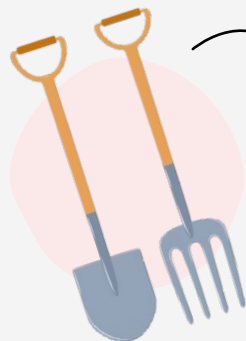
Hand trowel

An old dessert or serving spoon.



Pots

You can use toilet rolls, egg cartons or plastic trays from your recycling.



Fork and spade

Using a fork and spade will make your work outside easier.

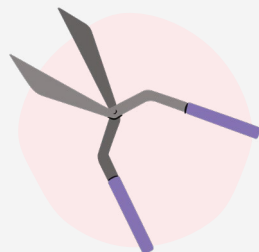


Seeds

Growing from seed is usually cheaper than buying plants. You can also swap seeds with family, friends or neighbours.

Secateurs

A sharp pair of scissors.



Plant markers

Use wooden lollipop sticks or old broken pottery with names written on in marker pen.



Want more gardening tips?

Sign up for extra inspiration, quizzes, and gardening tips
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I use cardboard toilet roll tubes to grow my seeds as it's kinder to the environment."

Major Heather Poxon,
Territorial Environmental Officer at The Salvation Army

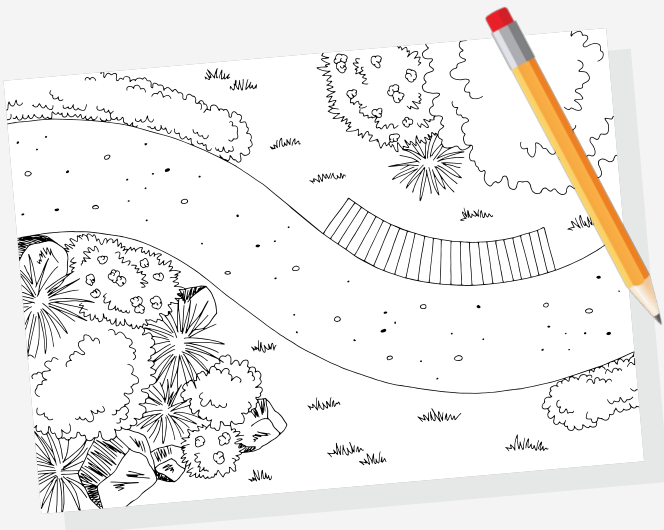
How to get started



Getting started can seem like a daunting task, but it just takes a little time, patience, and planning.

Where to grow

Firstly, it will help to map out your growing space on a sheet of paper. Whether it's planning how much space you'll have for pots on your windowsill or mapping the size of the beds in your garden, it will be useful to plan how much space you'll have, and in turn this will determine what crops you can grow.



What and when to grow

You'll find that vegetables such as courgettes and squash can take up a lot of your space, whereas herbs, tomatoes and chillies take up far less. You can use the growing planner on page 15 as a starting point to see which crops you want to grow and ultimately eat! To decide when to grow you'll need to reference either the seed packets or our growing planner.



In some of our centres as part of our cooking projects we teach families and individuals in our communities how to grow their own produce.

Our projects aim to reach out to people in our communities who need support, whether they're single parents looking to learn new skills, families struggling to make ends meet and looking for ways to save money, or people who are lonely and looking for company.



Gardening can provide a sense of calm and stress relief



Boosting mental health and wellbeing in Fleetwood



The Salvation Army's Lifehouse (hostel) in Fleetwood has formed a partnership with Fleetwood Town Football Club's Community Trust to launch the Fleetwood Gardening Club. The aim of the gardening club is to boost the mental health and wellbeing of people in their community.

People who go to the club learn about growing fruits and vegetables, what time of the year is best to plant, and the importance of a pollinator garden and garden maintenance. The gardening club also provides a space for people to engage with their community and form friendships.



Some of our Lifehouse residents have often been through very recent trauma and some require support with engaging back into local community life, a feeling of isolation that many people within Fleetwood may face themselves. Being outdoors and engaging in activities within a group promotes a healthy mind and allows support to others in similar situations."

Danielle Jones, Centre Service Manager



By giving a gift today you could help us provide support to individuals and families turning to us for help.

Donate now

How to sow



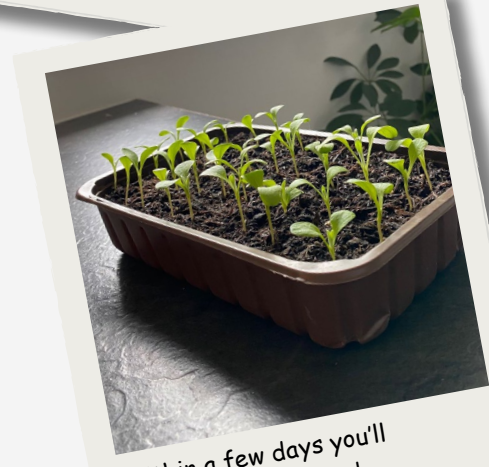
Sowing seeds is a quick and enjoyable process.

Just follow these three easy steps:

- 1.** Fill your pots or containers with soil that is free from weeds and stones.
- 2.** Make a hole in the soil using your finger or a stick – you'll want to refer to your seed packets for the depth at which you should plant the seeds, often 0.5mm-1mm. Depending on the size of the pot you can sow two seeds per pot, just make sure you give them enough space apart to grow.
- 3.** Cover the seeds with soil and lightly water the surface. Some seed instructions will suggest covering the pot/container with a clear lid to retain the heat and moisture which can speed up the growing process.

Next is the most rewarding part of the process, you will start to see the seedlings appear and depending on the seed type, this can be anytime from a few days to a few weeks.

While sowing seeds can be a simple task, it can be a great way for people in the community to engage with The Salvation Army and our services. Sowing seeds can lead to friendships being made, meaningful conversations taking place with our staff, and signposting to additional support.



Within a few days you'll see your seeds grow!

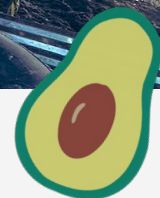
Use containers from your recycling to grow your seeds in. From plastic food trays to yoghurt pots, just make sure you create drainage holes to allow excess water to escape.



**top
tip**



Working with children who have additional learning needs



Our centre in Watford shows how The Salvation Army reaches out to their local community and engages with some of the most disadvantaged children and families in the area.

On a weekly basis Salvation Army staff, Captain Mark and his wife Grace, meet on their allotment with over 70 local school children, some of whom have additional learning needs. Their sessions include everything from learning to sow seeds and build bird feeders, to participating in bee hunts and running taste education

sessions where the children try freshly grown vegetables, sometimes for the first time. The allotment serves as a space not only to learn, but to experience nature and gain mindfulness for these children outside of a classroom setting. The centre recently received the RHS Five Star Gardening School Award in recognition of their hard work.



[The Salvation Army] enable us to instantly support our struggling families. Last winter [they] ran a homework club so that children and families had somewhere warm to go after school. They even think about the staff and visit with their tuk tuk coffee cart to cheer us up with free coffee – the impact they have had on us is immeasurable. The relationship we have with them is symbiotic – they are so involved in the inner workings of the school and help us really get the best for our children. The Salvation Army is a real safety net.”

Jo Ball, Assistant Headteacher at a local school

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Growing in small spaces



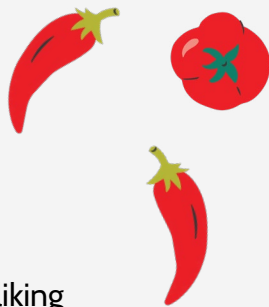
Whether you have a windowsill or a balcony you can start your growing journey. Below we have listed the types of fruit and vegetables you might want to grow in the size of the space you have at home.

Windowsill garden

If you have a sunny windowsill, then this is all you need to start your growing journey. While you won't be able to grow large vegetables there's still a range of crops that you can successfully grow.

These are just a handful of the crops you can grow:

- Tomatoes (*smaller varieties such as Tiny Tom*)
- Pepper
- Chillies
- Basil
- Thyme
- Rosemary
- Chives
- Other herbs of your liking



top
tip

Some garden centres sell 'patio vegetables' which are more suitable for small spaces

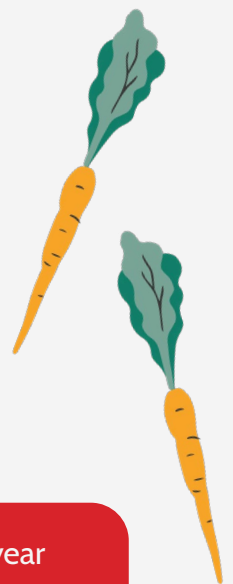


Balconies and patios

If you're lucky enough to have your own balcony, you can grow everything mentioned above plus more! You can grow from seed to vegetable in pots, grow bags and balcony planters.

Crops you can grow on a balcony or patio include:

- Tomatoes (*standard size varieties*)
- Lettuce
- Beetroot
- Strawberries
- Carrots (*grown in a deep pot*)
- Blueberries



Strawberries will come back year after year and create runners, which means new plants will form

top
tip



Growing in medium and large spaces



Gardens

If you have a garden the options for growing increase two-fold. While you might not want to turn your garden into an allotment, you could dig over a grass patch at the bottom of the garden or dedicate a patch in an existing border. You can also grow in pots which are temporary but still do a great job.

Alongside the small space plants you can also grow the following:

- Beans
- Potatoes
- Onions
- Garlic
- Spring onions
- Beetroot



Keep rotating your seedlings to ensure they grow upright and not just towards the light

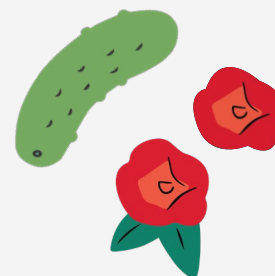
top tip

Allotments

If you're fortunate enough to have an allotment, then the list of fruit and vegetables you can grow is endless.

Alongside all of the small and medium space crops you can also grow the following, and so much more:

- Pumpkins
- Butternut squash
- Cucumbers
- Courgettes
- Raspberries
- Flowers



In good conditions a courgette plant can produce between 3-4 crops a week making them a wonderfully money saving crop!

top tip

If you grow surplus, you can share with family, friends or neighbours. Alternatively, you can donate to your local food bank.



“

Vegetables like asparagus and artichokes are expensive to buy, but are relatively cheap to grow. You could focus on perennial crops like rhubarb that come back year after year.”

Captain Mark Scoulding,
Watford



Plot to Pot: Teaching families how to cook with seasonal produce

In the Forest of Dean, The Salvation Army runs a lunch club called Plot to Pot. The aim of the group is to teach people how to grow fruit and vegetables and also how to prepare meals with seasonal produce.

The group grows vegetables in the centre gardens, which are then used to make lunch for their lunch club, along with locally sourced produce. The meals produced for

people in the community are low cost, healthy, and plant based. The group attracts a wide range of people including families and mothers of young families.

“

Working together in our garden has strengthened us as individuals as well as a community. Our plants grow strong and it's like we see this growth reflected in our community. From allotment to table...it truly is 'soul' food.”

James, a volunteer at the club



Want more gardening tips?

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tsa.link/grow-your-own



Storing your fruit and vegetables correctly



Did you know that by storing your fruit and vegetables correctly you can preserve them for longer, whether home grown, or shop bought.

Store your vegetables in water



For carrots, lettuce and broccoli – cut the ends off and store them in a cup of water in the fridge. This prevents them going soft and means they last a lot longer and retain their crunch!

Store your berries in sealed jars in the fridge



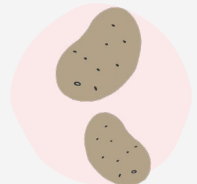
To keep your strawberries fresh for as long as possible make sure you remove any that are spoiled, wash and thoroughly dry them before placing them in a sealed glass container in the fridge.

Water your herbs from the bottom



To prevent your herbs from getting waterlogged, always water from the bottom. Place the pot in a shallow dish of water and allow it to sit for no more than 5 minutes. The top may appear dry, however it's the roots that matter!

Prevent your potatoes from sprouting



Place your potatoes in a cool, dry and dark place. This prolongs the time that they keep for and slows down the time taken for them to sprout. You should also store your onions, shallots and garlic this way to keep them fresher for longer.

Freeze your fruit and vegetables

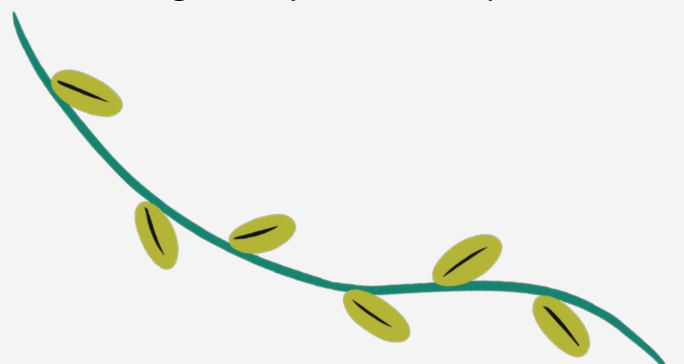


The sooner you freeze your fruit and vegetables the fresher they'll be. Fruit can easily be frozen in bags or containers for smoothies and compote. If you'd like to freeze them to eat at a later date, it's best to freeze them spread out on a tray in the freezer initially to prevent them sticking together, and then transferring them into a container.

Store fruit and vegetables apart



By storing your fruit and vegetables separately you'll find that they keep better. Fruit produces a gas called ethylene which increases the rate at which other fruit and vegetables ripen. Store separately either in the fridge or on your countertop.





Putting down roots: supporting people formerly experiencing homelessness

In Bristol we run a 93-bed all male Lifehouse (supported accommodation for people experiencing homelessness) which is home to the Putting Down Roots gardening project. In partnership with St Mungo's, this acts as a horticultural therapy and training project which uses gardening to help as part of their recovery.



The space here is both a garden and allotment, and since the project started attendees have built raised beds and a pond too. The garden also houses a poly tunnel,

picnic benches and art for the benefit of the residents. The produce is used in the kitchens of the Lifehouse for meals.

“

I like seeing the seeds I've sown growing, learning new skills, meeting people with similar issues, connecting in a non-judgemental environment. It's a great space to forget about my worries and concerns; my mind stays still. I can unload and get on with the day. It gives me a good routine.”

Lifehouse resident



“

I've loved meeting new friends, learning about gardening techniques and how to plant properly. Being outside improves my mental health and reduces me thinking about my problems.”

Lifehouse resident



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Money saving tips

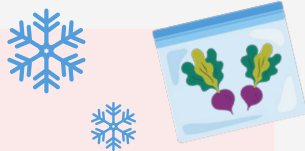


With the steady rise in the cost of food, it has become more important than ever to prevent wastage. As part of the cooking programmes at our centres, we also offer advice on cutting costs.

Our tips below are designed to guide you on how you can save money when you're shopping.

The freezer is your friend

If your produce is nearing its use-by date and you aren't going to get a chance to eat it in time you can freeze it. Did you know you can freeze bread, fruit, and vegetables to save waste?



Review prices online

If you're able to get to different supermarkets, then we would recommend shopping around to find the best price for your staple items. You can do this online and make a list of what to buy where.



Set a budget

Setting a budget for your shop means you'll be less likely to exceed your set budgeted amount. We would also recommend not doing your weekly shop on an empty stomach as it often means you'll end up buying more food than you need and picking up snacks you might have otherwise avoided.



Use less meat and add more veggies

You'll notice how meat is the most expensive part of the weekly shop, so why not switch to a veggie meal once or twice a week? Using pulses, such as beans and lentils, is cheaper than meat but still provides you with the protein you need. You'll also find yourself feeling fuller for longer!



Plan your meals

Write up a meal plan for the week as this means you'll be more likely to just buy what's on your shopping list. It will also prevent you from going to the shops during the week and spending money unnecessarily.



Shop in bulk

Where possible, think about bulk buying your food, and cook in batches. By doing this you can more easily keep track of how much you're spending on your food shops.





Growing planner

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
 Bean (runner)												
 Beetroot												
 Brussel sprouts												
 Butternut squash												
 Carrot												
 Chilli												
 Courgette												
 Cucumber												
 Lettuce												
 Spring onion												
 Pepper												
 Potato												
 Sweetcorn												
 Tomato												

Please note that the dates shown will vary depending on the variety and your geographical region

Sow inside

Sow outside

Harvest

[illegible]



We hope you've enjoyed reading our guide to growing your own fruit and vegetables and that you've been inspired to start growing, no matter how big or small the space available to you.

If you need support from The Salvation Army, please visit our website to find your local Salvation Army church and community centre who will be able to assist you, or call us on **0207 367 4500**.

We couldn't do what we do without support from people like yourself. Please consider making a donation today.

Donate now



To learn more about The Salvation Army's latest work and how we help vulnerable people in communities across the UK, visit salvationarmy.org.uk.



We would love your feedback! To let us know your thoughts please email us at digitalfundraising@salvationarmy.org.uk



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