

GET GROWING KIT

Contents:

Page 2..... key sites & resources for growing in Eastbourne

Page 3..... Grow a Row

Page 4..... zero waste gardening top tips

Page 6..... top tips for raising healthy plants

Page 8..... seed saving and sovereignty

Page 10..... veg cards

These kits were developed for the Seedy Stall at the Towner Spring Fair 2023, and so certain details may be out of date. The core growing advice remains timeless.



**EASTBOURNE
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP**

GROWING IN EASTBOURNE: USEFUL ADDRESSES AND SITES

There is a whole host of plant-y people and places out there for supplies, advice and sharing. Here are our top tips:

Eastbourne Food Partnership: your one-stop-shop for all things food and growing

Community gardens: Eastbourne is lucky to have several thriving community gardens that are always happy to share their expertise and advice. For the full directory of gardens, visit the Eastbourne Food Partnership website, or <https://www.goodtogrowuk.org/>

Eastbourne Allotments and Gardens Society (EAGS) shop - The Potting Shed: volunteer-run and not-for-profit, the EAGS shop is here to provide you with all of your gardening needs. Find Louise and the team at their Gorringe Road allotments office

Chalk Farm Nurseries: Family-run nursery offering a wide range of affordable garden supplies. Find them at Coopers Hill, Willingdon.

Online forums, support and information:

Eastbourne Growers Group - Facebook: to help you on your way and give you a forum for all things growing in Eastbourne, we've created a facebook group to share questions, celebrate wins and organise Grow a Row drop offs. Experts in the community will be on hand to help with any growing problems

Garden Organic Grow Along - Youtube: an accessible intro to growing, from seed to harvest with plenty of handy tips for low-cost gardening.

good to grow



SAVE THE DATE: 21st - 24th April 2023

Good to Grow is *the* weekend to celebrate community growing in Eastbourne and across the country. Follow Eastbourne Food Partnership or join the Eastbourne Growers' Community group for more info. Think exclusive give-aways, seedling shares, open days, growing kits and more!



**EASTBOURNE
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP**

GROW A ROW

For many years, community gardens have been donating food to community food projects in Eastbourne, from community kitchens to community fridges and larders. At Eastbourne Food Partnership, we want to give all growers the opportunity to share their produce and increase access to locally-grown nutritious food in Eastbourne communities. Could you help us?

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Set aside some pots or rows of produce to nurture for community projects. Come harvest time, take the fruits (or veg) of your labour to one of our handy drop-off points situated at Gorrington Road allotments, or directly to an affordable food project and fill in a quick form to let us know. It's as easy as that!

DOES THIS MEAN I HAVE TO GIVE ALL MY PRODUCE AWAY?

First thing's first: we don't expect you to give away 100% of your hard-grown veg. We want this kit to help you to grow food that you, your family and friends can enjoy. However, we are also inviting you to share the love and give little back to the community. We recommend setting aside a few, dedicated pots or 'rows' that you can nurture for the community. You can also choose to 'repurpose your surplus' come harvest time (we know that even the best-laid planting plans can lead to gluts).

WHAT PRODUCE SHOULD I DONATE?

Any and all produce is welcome for 'Grow a Row'. However, it can be difficult to keep some produce like salad leaves fresh after picking. However, the vast majority of produce from tomatoes to beans to peas to chard to beetroots, as well as anything you might have growing on a tree, are very welcome.

WHERE WILL MY PRODUCE GO?

The destination of your produce might vary, but all of your produce will be going to free or affordable food projects that are increasing access to healthy food and food skills in Eastbourne. We'll be keeping all participants up to date with where their produce will be going.

Visit <https://eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk/grow-a-row>
Get in touch at info@eastbournefoodpartnership.org.uk



ZERO WASTE TOP TIP #1

MAKING YOUR COMPOST GO FURTHER

Getting enough organic matter to your new seedlings is vital to helping them grow strong and produce delicious food. We know that compost can be expensive so we've taken a leaf out of permaculture's book with this zero-waste, low-cost alternative that works for containers and raised beds alike

Recipe for Lasagna



a thin layer of straw



3-4 inches multipurpose compost (e.g. from your compost voucher)



4 inches shredded cardboard, dead leaves, straw (carbon-rich)



3 inches vegetable peelings, grass-cuttings, used coffee (nitrogen-rich)



a double layer of corrugated cardboard



a drainage layer of pebbles (for containers)

To set up your lasagna in a pot, start off with an inch of pebbles or gravel, topped with a double layer of corrugated cardboard. Then you can start to alternate your layers of nitrogen-rich and carbon-rich materials (see above) until you're about 4 inches from the top. Finish your lasagna with multipurpose compost and a sprinkling of straw (if available), and you can plant your seedlings directly.



ZERO WASTE TOP TIP #2

DIY PROPAGATORS AND SEED CONTAINERS

Want to give your seeds the best chance in life without having to buy any fancy kit? We hear you, which is why we have put together these handy tricks for creating seed propagators and containers using common items of household waste



Toilet roll seed containers: the cardboard part of toilet rolls can make excellent seed containers that naturally decompose when replanted. Simply make a series of 1 inch cuts around one end of the roll, about half an inch apart, and fold the cut sections inward, to create the bottom of the pot. Fill the pots with seed compost, water well and sow your seeds. When the seedlings are ready to repot, simply tear away any excess cardboard peaking out of the top of the soil. Beans and peas do especially well with this technique.



DIY propagators: a seed propagator is effectively a mini-greenhouse for your seeds. You can buy these in garden shops, and there are even heated models on the market. However, you can also take a punnet (such as one used for mushrooms, tomatoes, berries etc) as your tray. Ensure there are small holes for drainage, place on a lid or another punnet and fill with seed compost. After sowing, place the tray in a clear plastic bag or place another clear plastic tray on top for heat and water retention. Place in a warm spot and be sure to remove the plastic bag when the seeds have germinated.

TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOWING

Nothing is more satisfying than watching your lovingly-planted seeds sprout into new life. You will no-doubt develop your own sowing ritual - we know successful growers who swear by the germination powers of an encouraging poem, song or growing dance - but here are some general tips that will start you on the right path.

1. **Sow into firm, moist seed compost:** ensure that you distribute your seed compost evenly in your container, trying to get rid of any lumps as you go and pressing down gently to firm up the compost. Water the container well *before* sowing so that the seed doesn't wash away. Create little dents with your fingers and sow into the dents, before covering with handfuls of compost (twice the thickness of the seed diameter is a good rule of thumb).
2. **Follow the instructions on the growing cards/seed packets:** some seeds will require specific spacing, others prefer to be sown in groups. Some seeds might also require a little extra attention, such as soaking before sowing. Attention to the specifics will help you raise strong seedlings.
3. **Label, label, label:** you get the idea, whilst we know that each of your babies are unique, they might all look very similar at an early age so please do label to keep track of what you sow! Cut-up yoghurt pots or coffee stirrers are a useful solution to avoid buying more plastic.
4. **Keep seeds in warm, moist conditions:** be sure to keep soil moist with regular watering with as fine a spray as possible. You can also cover with a plastic bag to help retain moisture, and keep on a windowsill or even your bathroom (depending on the tolerance of your flatmates).
5. **Thin out seedlings:** to prevent overcrowding and competition amongst your seedlings, you can lift out and replant seedlings (or cut and eat them as micro-shoots) once they have their first set of true leaves. Ignore this advice for plants like beetroot and spring onions that like to grow in clusters.



TOP TIPS FOR NURTURING SEEDLINGS

Now that your seedlings have poked their heads up out of their seed compost, you can nurture them so that they grow into healthy, productive plants.

1. **Repotting:** when your seedlings have grown several inches with their second set of 'true leaves' (the sets of leaves that appear after the first 'seed leaves') you can transplant them into a new home. Fill pots, trays or containers that are deeper than your seed tray with multipurpose compost. If your seeds were sown in biodegradable containers (toilet rolls, egg trays etc), make a hole the width of the container and put the container directly in the hole so that the soil level matches. Carefully rip off any toilet roll/container that is still exposed. For seedlings grown in trays or plastic pots, create a hole in the new pot with a pencil and ease the seedling out with a teaspoon. Hold by the leaves to protect the stem and roots, which are much more delicate, and lower into the hole. Plant so that the lowest leaves are just resting on the soil, and firm the compost around the seedling to get rid of air gaps.
2. **Light conditions:** at this stage of life, getting enough light is essential. For window-sill plants, try wiping the window pane to remove dust and giving your plants better light exposure. You can even DIY your own reflectors by lining the windowsill surface with aluminium foil to maximise light available. As plants will grow towards the light, it's worth turning the plants daily to ensure an even light exposure.
3. **'Hardening off':** if started off indoors, your seedlings will need a little tough love to get them ready for the outside. Exposure to outdoor conditions during the daytime will prepare your plants for the great outdoors. My personal favourite hardening off technique is stroking young plants to replicate the action of wind and animals brushing plants. Science backs up this slightly eccentric-sounding gardening tip, explaining that stroking activates vibration sensors which causes them to grow stockier and more damage resistant. 10 seconds a day can increase your seedling resilience by a significant amount, and give you an outlet for all the helicopter plant parents among you.



AN INTRODUCTION TO SAVING SEEDS

For the last 11,000 years, people have been saving and sharing seeds from season to season, producing varieties with more genetic diversity, that are better able to adapt to the specific conditions of the area.

Inspired by our seedy stall? Fancy creating a 'heritage' variety to pass down through the generations? Want to save money on your seed bill next year? Want more resilient crops? Here are some pointers and resources to get you going.

1. **You cannot save seed from F1 varieties:** F1 or hybridised seeds are not stable, so will not produce predictable, viable off-spring. Ensure that, when saving seed, you are only saving open-pollinated varieties
2. **Each plant is different:** some plants are easier than others to save seed, and each has their different particularities, so be sure to check out the resources below for more info. We recommend getting started with plants like peas, beans, mizuna and tomatoes, which don't risk cross-pollination
3. **Drying your seed could be make or break:** carefully follow drying guides to avoid storing mouldy seeds, as this will be key to ensuring a high germination rate come next season.

Useful resources to get going:

realseeds.co.uk & vitalseeds.co.uk: both these sites have a whole range of freely available resources to help you harvest, process, dry and store seed for different varieties of plants.

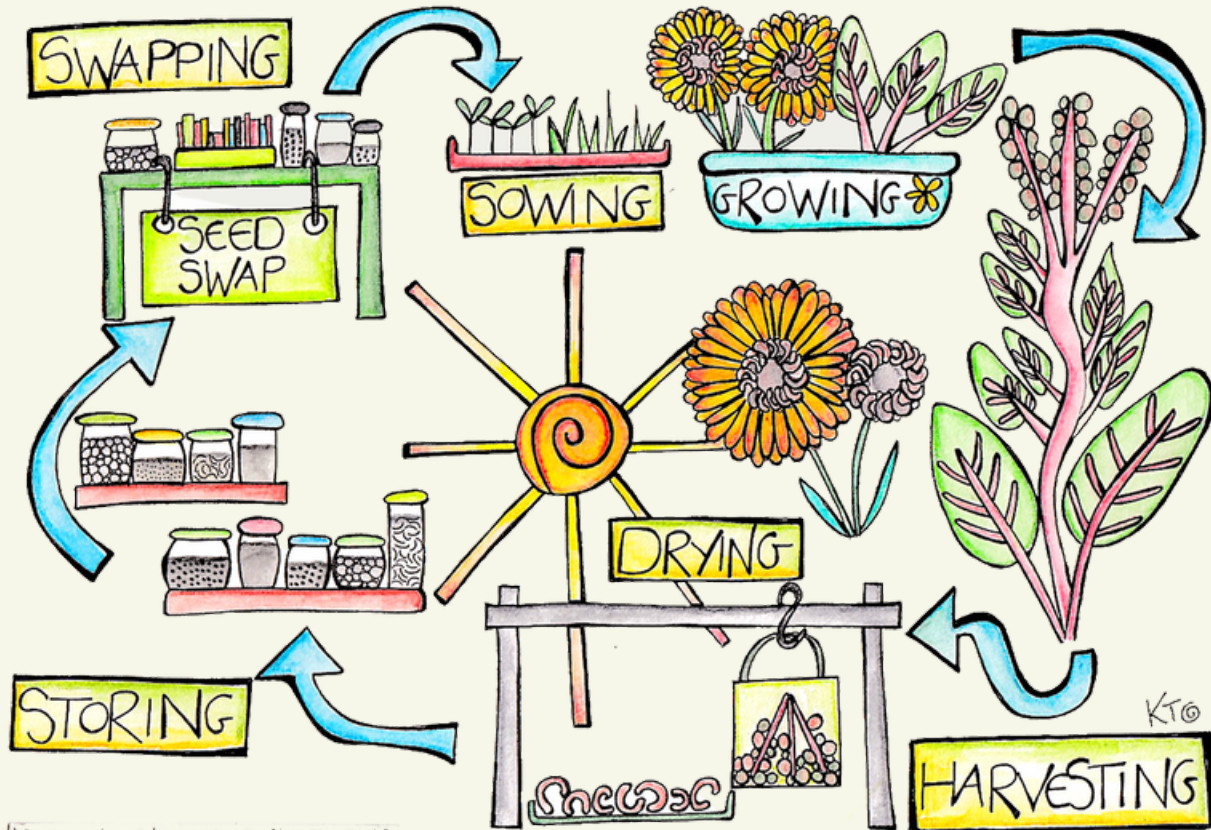
seedsovereignty.info is the hub for the Gaia Foundation's Seed Sovereignty Programme, supporting growers of all scales with events and resources to build more resilient local seed systems

The Heritage Seed Library is Garden Organic's living seed library at www.gardenorganic.org.uk. You can subscribe as a member for access to a selection of heritage seeds to grow each year, or you could even become a volunteer 'seed guardian' and grow and harvest your own crop of seeds to feed back into the library next season.

theseeddetective.co.uk shares seeds and stories from a journey of seed saving from across the world over 35 years.



WHAT DOES SEED SOVEREIGNTY LOOK LIKE?



ktshepherdpermaculture.com

Thank you to Katie Shepherd for her open access permaculture illustrations.
Visit ktshepherdpermaculture.com to discover more



**EASTBOURNE
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP**



MIZUNA & MIBUNA

These easy-going Japanese leafy greens will be happy on your windowsill or planted out in your raised beds. Before you know it, these speedy-growers will give you a harvest of peppery-but-sweet leaves, packed with nourishing anti-oxidants, vitamins and fibre, edible from leaf to stem

Planting season: sow from March-Aug (outside)
sow from Sept-Feb (inside)

Grow

You can replot your mizuna seedling in a small pot (6" wide), and keep on a windowsill or patio. Water regularly and protect from too much sun in hotter, dryer periods

Harvest

You can get up to 5 pickings from your plants by harvesting the outer leaves, or if you're feeding a crowd you can wait 6-8 weeks and harvest the lot. If left to flower, the young flowering stems can also be harvested like broccolli

Eat

Add freshly picked leaves to your salads. The younger leaves are particularly juicy. You can also throw them in to your stir-fries once the pan's off the heat, which works especially well for flowering stems



**EASTBOURNE
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP**



BEETROOT

Earthy-sweet and highly nutritious, beetroot can be a wonderful addition to your container family or raised beds. This *chioggia* variety is especially striking, you're in for a wonderful surprise when you cut inside! They're not just pretty: high in fibre and packed with antioxidants, from leaves to root.

Planting season: sow from March to July

Grow

Soak your beetroot seeds overnight in a glass of tepid water, and plant 5-6 seeds in each pot. Once they start sprouting (5-8 days), thin the bunch down to four strong plants. Transplant into your final pot (22cm diameter) in a clump once

the seedlings have 2 leaves. Be sure to water well.

Harvest

As early as two months after sowing, you can harvest the largest roots by twisting them off the clump. You can also harvest the leaves at this stage like spinach.

Eat

Thinly slice and pickle your beetroot in vinegar, grate it raw into yoghurt for a colourful raita, boil whole for 30-35 minutes, microwave on high for 10 mins or roast in the oven with plenty of olive oil. Beet leaves can be fried in oil or added to stirfries.



**EASTBOURNE
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP**



FRENCH BEANS

Beans are a true veg hero, delivering nourishment both to you and to the soil. That's right, as a legume family member, French beans fix nitrogen in the air and restore it to the soil. They are also packed with fibre, folate and vitamin c

Planting season: sow from April (indoors) or mid-May til June (outdoors)

Grow

Sow seed in toilet rolls or directly into their final pots. Once the seedlings have grown robust, transplant (or thin) the seedlings 15cm apart. They can go outside after the first frost from mid-May. For a constant supply, keep sowing every three weeks.

Water regularly and support with a stake if necessary

Harvest

When the beans cleanly snap in half, they're ready for harvesting. You can also dry the beans by leaving pods to go brown and hanging upside down.

Eat

Sneak them into mac 'n' cheese, lightly boil with a sesame and ginger dressing for a zingy summer salad, add to stir-fries and curries, add to pasta-pesto (along with potatoes cooked with the pasta for traditional dish)

PEAS

The first pea snatched and eaten straight from the pod can convert even the most veg-skeptic kid (or adult for that matter). Packed with fibre, vitamin C and folate, peas are also a handy nitrogen fixer, so will leave behind them a rich soil for next season

Planting season: sow from mid- March to early summer (outside).

Grow

Sow 3cm deep in toilet rolls or in their final containers/beds in rows 60cm apart with seeds spaced 5cm apart. Transplant when 2-3 inches tall. Water when the plant starts flowering to swell pods. As the plants grow, you can support them with sticks.

Harvest

2-3 months from sowing, the first peas will be ready to go. Pick as soon as you can feel the peas through the pod, and pick regularly to encourage more pods.

Eat

Raw peas straight from the pod are wonderful additions to any salad especially paired with mint, mash with feta or ricotta for a creamy spread, add to pesto-pasta or a potato salad, make a minty soup, or a herby pea risotto.



**EASTBOURNE
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP**



TOMATOES

Eating sun-warmed tomatoes straight from the vine is one of home-growing's most joyful moments. Tomatoes are nutritious, delicious and versatile - a home-grower's must-have

Planting season: sow from mid-March to early April (indoors)

Grow

Sow your tomato seeds 1mm deep in small pots. Harden off and transplant when first flowers open 6-8 weeks later, ensuring that the tomatoes are in a sunny spot. You can support their growth with tomato feed and watering to keep soil moist.

Tie main stem to stake. Pinch off any side shoots and cut off yellow leaves

Harvest

Come August, your tomato harvest will be ready. Pick when fully coloured and ripen green tomatoes indoors at the end of the season

Eat

Raw in greek-style salads with feta and cucumber or Italian salads with mozzarella and basil, slow roasted with oregano, simmered into an intense tomato sauce, the options are truly endless.



**EASTBOURNE
FOOD
PARTNERSHIP**

CHARD

A widely overlooked leafy green, spinach will feel drab compared to a brightly coloured bouquet of chard. Chard is packed with iron, magnesium, potassium and other vitamins, and is incredibly versatile. It's also a handy winter crop



Planting season: sow from mid-March to July

Grow

You can sow your seeds directly into moist soil in a container or into the ground, spacing the seeds 6-12 inches apart. Thin the seedlings to 6-12 inches apart and keep soil moist whilst the plants are young. Seeds sown in July will leave you

with leaves all winter

Harvest

Cut outer leaves first whilst young and tender and work inwards. Harvest regularly to ensure a constant supply of regrowth.

Eat

Separate the leaf from the stalk, and fry the stalks like onions as a base for stews and soups. Fold in shredded chard leaves for the last few minutes of cooking as you would spinach.