

# community growing toolkit





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## foreword

**For many people gardening may appear as a very technical pastime for which you need to have a good level of horticultural knowledge and skills.**

I'd like to dispel any fears that you may have by saying that you could ask twenty gardeners the same question about how to grow a particular crop or plant and you'd receive twenty different answers. There is no right or wrong when it comes to gardening, the worst you can do is lose a few plants, the best you can do is enjoy the activity, and learn as you go along.

Establishing growing groups has been something that I have been advocating for many years now, and over the past 3 years Incredible Education have supported many different people of varying ages and abilities to take up gardening. From my experience, a successful group requires a support network that they can turn to for help and information.

So, if you have a passion to start a gardening group take a look through this helpful guide and remember that gardening should be fun and enjoyable.

Inside this booklet you will find a month by month guide to tasks and jobs around the garden across a whole year, as well as helpful tips and advice for running your growing group. These are the kind of tasks you will be able to take part in through your membership of a local gardening group, but you can also use them as a guide to growing your own fruit and vegetables at home. At the back of this booklet you will find a checklist on which you can record the progress you make as you pick up new skills as a part of your community gardening group, as well as a few pages of useful advice and reference.

**Ian Bocock, Gardener and Director of Incredible Education CIC**

# year round tasks:

- \* Weeding planted areas.
- \* Watering or covering dependent on weather.
- \* Composting waste.
- \* General upkeep of garden area, furniture etc.
- \* Keep an eye out for seed sales in supermarkets.

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# JANUARY

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Harvest winter chard, leeks, radish and salad.
- \* Protect soil from damage caused by heavy rain, and from the cold, by covering the earth with polythene weighed down by brick, stone, or wood.
- \* Cover unused areas with light blocking material to starve weeds of nourishment.
- \* Keep an eye out for the first sales of seed potatoes in the shops, it's time to get "chitting".
- \* Sow your first lot of tomato and peppers and germinate in a warm and bright location, ideally in a heated greenhouse.

# FEBRUARY

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Continue to harvest winter chard, leeks, radish and salad.
- \* Dig manure or fertiliser into the soil ready for planting in April.
- \* Sow lettuce in small pots and keep under clear cover.
- \* Sow early peas in pots, or sow outdoors in mild weather areas.
- \* Second sowing of tomato and peppers – these are good plants to sell later in the season to raise funds.
- \* Sow peas in plastic guttering indoors, in April they can be slid out of the guttering straight into a shallow trench when the roots have established.
- \* Protect any outdoor sowings with fleece or cloches.

# MARCH

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Continue to prepare the ground by digging in compost or well rotted manure.
- \* In areas where you want to grow chard or potatoes, make sure to add fertiliser.
- \* Sow carrots, peas, radish and lettuce outdoors. If the weather is still very cold, wait until next month, or start off in pots indoors.
- \* Sow leeks under cover in pots.
- \* Plant out onions and shallots, as well as early potatoes.
- \* Continue to protect outdoor sowings with cloches or fleece for another month or two.
- \* Support young pea plants with sticks or netting once they begin to grow.
- \* Sow seed of ornamental annual bedding plants such as lobelia, marigold or cosmos.
- \* Prick out your earlier sowings of tomatoes and peppers into individual pots or module trays.
- \* Harvest the very last of the winter chard, leeks, radish, and salad.

# APRIL

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Incorporate plenty of bulky organic material into the soil where you plan to grow pumpkins.
- \* Sow early carrots, chard and radish outdoors.
- \* Sow french beans, pumpkins, courgette and cucumber in pots, and keep in a warm place indoors.
- \* Continue to protect outdoor sowings with cloches and fleece, as frost is still a risk.
- \* Cover early potato shoots with soil as they push through, to encourage growth and protect from frost.
- \* Prick out the annual bedding seedlings sown last month into individual pots or module trays. Grow these on under-cover or indoors.
- \* If you are growing plug plants it's your last chance to pot them up.

### TIP of the MONTH

Seed potatoes appear cheaply in supermarkets and DIY stores.

### TIP of the MONTH

Check your plant pots and containers. Ask for donations of containers from friends and family.

### TIP of the MONTH

When pricking out seedlings handle the plant by the leaf only!

### TIP of the MONTH

Keep on top of those weeds!

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# MAY

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Try successional sowing of lettuce and radish outdoors for a continuous summer crop.
- \* Sow French beans and pumpkins outdoors in the prepared areas, or indoors if weather is still cold.
- \* Thin out seedlings if necessary.
- \* Plant out seedlings from earlier sowings once they grow large enough.
- \* Be ready to protect using fleece and cloche, or by moving plants indoors, if frost threatens.
- \* You still have time to sow fast growing courgettes, try a few different varieties – Telegraph and Golden Griller are good options.
- \* Now is the time to start creating hanging baskets, they are a good way of raising funds too.
- \* Continue earthing up potatoes as shoots push through.

### TIP of the MONTH

Save money. Use compost bagged up in the previous November for your potting on activities.

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# JUNE

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Sow early carrots for a winter crop.
- \* Sow the first of the winter salad leaves.
- \* Plant new potatoes out in large tubs.
- \* Continue moving seedlings from earlier sowings outdoors once they grow large enough.
- \* Water where needed, during dry spells.
- \* Harvest lettuce, radish, and the first carrots as well as the overwintering onions, the spring peas, and the first of the potatoes.
- \* Established ornamental plug plants can now be planted into their final place.
- \* Harvest your courgettes regularly to encourage new fruits to form.

### TIP of the MONTH

Check plants regularly for pests and disease.

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# JULY

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Continue to water during dry spells.
- \* Establish a regular feeding schedule for your container grown plants.
- \* Add mulch between plants, ensuring soil is damp first, to protect from weeds and trap soil moisture.
- \* Harvest French beans, carrots, lettuce, onions, peas, potatoes and radish.
- \* Harvest your runner beans regularly to encourage flowering.
- \* Plant up strawberry runners into pots, this is another great fund raising opportunity.
- \* If the shallots are ready, harvest them. If not, leave until September.

### TIP of the MONTH

Enjoy your triumphs and share your produce with friends, family, and the local community.

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# AUGUST

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Water during dry spells. Salad leaves and pumpkins will need extra care to make sure they do not dry out.
- \* Look out for vegetable seeds for sale in supermarkets and garden centres.
- \* Take the time to visit other gardens and allotments to gather ideas for next year.
- \* Continue to feed tomatoes and peppers that are grown in containers or “Grow Bags”.
- \* Keep on top of pinching out tomato plants.
- \* Courgette, pumpkin and other squash family plants are thirsty and hungry so feed them well.
- \* Harvest the last of the french beans, carrots, lettuce, onions, peas, potatoes and radish.

### TIP of the MONTH

Why not arrange an event and join up with other growing groups?

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# SEPTEMBER

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Sow fast growing lettuce and radish as well as winter varieties of salad leaf.
- \* Plant special varieties of overwintering onions.
- \* Water lettuce and radish during any dry spells.
- \* Sow areas that will be dormant over the winter with green manure.
- \* Plant out winter brassicas such as cabbage
- \* Now's a good time to plant spring flowering bulbs such as daffodils and tulips
- \* Harvest carrots, pumpkins, any remaining onions or shallots.
- \* Pick climbing French beans for drying and gather the first leeks and chard.

### TIP of the MONTH

Keep an eye out for gardening bargains in local shops as they sell off summer stock like seeds, containers and tools.

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# OCTOBER

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Prepare ground for carrots, leeks, onions and potatoes. Work in rotted compost and manure into the soil ready for planting in spring.
- \* Sow hardy overwinter peas for an early crop next year.
- \* Protect your lettuce and radish with fleece or cloches.
- \* How about creating some Autumn/ Winter displays in containers or hanging baskets?
- \* There's still time to plant the final spring flowering bulbs.
- \* Harvest the last of the summer veg, lettuce, radish and pumpkins. Also take leeks, and the first of the winter salad leaves.

### TIP of the MONTH

Remember to keep watering any new container displays as they can quickly dry out.

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# NOVEMBER

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Continue to get the ground ready for carrots, leeks, onions and potatoes. Make sure your chard and overwinter peas and radish are protected from frost by cloches or fleece.
- \* Harvest chard, leeks, salad leaves and winter radish.
- \* Build raised beds. Perform any pre-winter maintenance on paths, structures etc.
- \* This is a good month to paint structures like sheds, planters and benches.
- \* Turn over your compost bin and sieve the compost before bagging up.
- \* Clean up pots, trays, labels etc for use next year.

### TIP of the MONTH

Don't get caught out by a sharp frost. Keep updated with the weather forecast.

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# DECEMBER

## TO DO THIS MONTH

- \* Finish preparing the ground for planting in early spring.
- \* Harvest the winter chard, leeks, radish and salad.
- \* Begin planning the layout of the plot for next growing season.
- \* Begin planning the layout of the plot for next growing season. Check the crop rotation guide in the main Tool Kit booklet for tips and advice.
- \* Maintain and check tools, repairing or replacing where needed.
- \* Harvest your Christmas dinner sprouts.

### TIP of the MONTH

Did you put a gardening book on your Christmas list?

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# TIPS FOR STAYING SAFE IN THE GARDEN

## WEATHER

In very warm weather sun protection should be used, provide shaded areas where possible and provide plenty of water to drink. During cold weather ensure older people are adequately dressed when working outdoors. In some cases, it may be better to do activities indoors as some older people can be particularly vulnerable to cold weather. During wet spells ensure all have suitable waterproof clothing which provides adequate protection.

## SOIL

Be sure to check the quality of the soil you are thinking of planting in as sometimes ground can be contaminated. You can check this with the local authority or environmental health dept. In many cases, it may be wise to plant into purpose made planters where you know the source of soil/compost.

## SLIPPERY SURFACES

Gardens can become very slippery and this can cause a high risk of slipping and falling. Be particularly careful to risk assess all areas before sessions and use signage where necessary to warn of hazards.

## ANIMAL FAECES

Remember to check all areas for signs of animal faeces. This can be particularly dangerous if accidentally touched. Cat, dog and fox faeces carry a harmful micro-organism called *Toxocara canis* which can cause blindness.

## TOOLS

Ensure tools are safely stored and suitable for the tasks for which they are intended. Tools should not be left lying around on the floor as this can cause a risk of tripping and falling. A risk assessment should be carried out before tools are used during gardening sessions. Tools should be in good condition and be regularly maintained.

## ALLERGENS

The garden environment contains many different things that may provoke allergic reactions. These include different plants/grasses and biting and stinging insects that may be present.

## USE OF CHEMICALS IN THE GARDEN

It may be best to avoid the use of chemicals whilst carrying out sessions with older people. Where possible employ natural solutions to garden pest problems e.g. use orange peel to discourage cats, place copper coins around succulent plants to reduce damage from slugs. If chemicals are used then COSHH guidelines must be followed for safe use and storage.





# SUGGESTED EQUIPMENT

## GENERAL TOOLS

- Compost bin
- Dustpan and brush
- Dutch hoe
- Fork
- Gloves
- Half moon edger
- Garden hand fork
- Garden trowel
- Kneeling pad
- Secateurs
- Labels
- Loppers
- Shovel
- Soil rake
- Spade
- Trug
- Waste bin
- Watering can
- Wheelbarrow
- Scissors

## CONTAINERS

- 6 way module tray
- Full tray
- Deep root plug tray
- 15 way module tray
- Module tray
- Half tray
- Plant pot
- Plug tray

## PROPAGATION TOOLS

- Dibber and widger
- Dustpan and brush
- Plant labels
- Soil sieve (metal)
- Soil sieve (plastic)
- Scoop

# GLOSSARY

## BRASSICAS

A wide range of common leafy vegetables, such as cabbage, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, kale and cauliflower are all part of the Brassica genus. Some root crops such as turnips, swedes and kohlrabi are also part of this nutritious group.

## CHITTING

Chitting simply means encouraging the seed potatoes to sprout before planting. Start chitting from late January.

## COMPANION PLANTING

Companion planting is the practice of planting two or more plants together for mutual benefit. Planting some vegetables together leads to enhanced quality and growth. There are plants such as Marigold that emit odours that aid in masking the odours of insect-desirable vegetable plants.

## CUT AND COME AGAIN LETTUCE

These are a salad leaf that enable us to pick leaf from without the need to harvest the whole plant – they are ideal for a garden setting where everyone is sharing the produce.

## GERMINATE OR GERMINATION

The start of growth in the seed. Three factors are required for successful germination:

- Water** – allows the seed to swell up and the embryo to start growing.
- Oxygen** – so that energy can be released for germination.
- Warmth** – germination improves as temperature rises.

## GREEN MANURE

Green manures are fast-growing plants sown to cover bare soil. Often used in the vegetable garden, their foliage smothers weeds and their roots prevent soil erosion. When dug into the ground while still green, they return valuable nutrients to the soil and improve soil structure.

## HALF TRAY

A half tray is a tray often used for sowing seeds directly into. It measures approx. 17cm x 23cm.

## INTERCROPPING

This is the process of utilising space by sowing fast growing crops between the rows of slower growing crops. For example sow fast growing radish in between rows of slower growing brassicas or onions.



LEGUMES

These are plants such as beans or peas.

MODULE TRAY

This is a tray used in horticulture, they have a series of small modules within a larger tray and vary from 4-way trays and upwards.

MULCH

Any material that is spread or laid over the surface of the soil as a covering. It is used to retain moisture in the soil, suppress weeds, keep the soil cool, and make the garden bed look more attractive. Organic mulches such as wood chip or garden compost also help improve the soil's fertility, as they decompose into the ground.

ORNAMENTAL PLANTS

Ornamental plants are plants that are grown for decorative purposes in gardens, these may be annual or perennial plants. In the main they are not used as edibles, however some ornamental plants can be eaten.

PLUG PLANTS

Plug plants are young plants – either seedlings or cuttings grown in single units in modular trays. This allows for minimum root disturbance when planting.

POTTING ON

This is simply the process of moving a plant into another container, this may be due to the plant becoming pot-bound (the roots have nowhere to go) or to provide more nutrients for a plant.

PRICK OUT

This is the process of removing young seedlings from their germination site to another container or area once they are large enough to handle.

SUCCESSIONAL SOWING

This is the regular sowing of fast growing crops such as lettuce or radish. To avoid a glut of produce sow small amounts of seed but do this regularly during the growing season.

BECOMING A CONSTITUTED GROUP

In the future you may want to apply for funding to help your group develop. In order to do this, you will need to have a bank account. The bank will require you to become a constituted group in order to open this account.

WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION?

A constitution is basically a written agreement of what a group is going to do and how they will do it. Constitutions are important because they can help people to understand exactly why they are working together and can help them to plan how best to get things done.

You can get help with becoming a constituted group from Salford CVS [www.salfordcvs.co.uk](http://www.salfordcvs.co.uk)

MY NEAREST GROWING GROUP IS

VENUE

ADDRESS

DATE + TIME

notes





Use this page to record your progress and the skills and knowledge you have gained in the garden.

# SKILL AND KNOWLEDGE CHECKLIST

SKILL OR KNOWLEDGE	DATE ACHIEVED
Sowing seeds in a half tray	
Preparing a variety of containers	
Recognise 5 different containers	
Pricking out seedlings	
Planting out container grown plants	
Preparing ground for planting	
Caring for a planted area	
Developing a watering regime	
Care of established plants	
Recognising standard garden tools	
Sowing seeds in drills	
Creating a container for display	
Caring for tools and equipment	
Propagation – taking root cuttings	
Propagation – taking stem cuttings	

Ambition for Ageing is a £10.2 million programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund's Ageing Better programme, which aims to reduce social isolation of older people.

The Greater Manchester programme aims to create more "Age Friendly Cities" and empower people to live fulfilling lives as they age. This is led by Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO).

In Salford the Age Friendly Cities model is delivered by a partnership of Age UK Salford, Inspiring Communities Together and Salford CVS working closely with Salford City Council and Salford Clinical Commissioning Group.

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