

Lucky Hens Rescue

Grow Your Own!

Growing your own vegetables in pots and containers – Benefits and drawbacks of container growing

Benefits –

- You don't have to get changed and drive miles for your veggies
- You can inspect the plants on a daily basis
- You can harvest and cook within minutes
- You can manage them easily and have more control over soil quality
- You can grow plants which require differing soil types, side-by-side

Drawbacks –

- Containers can be more prone to drought, unless you use an automatic watering system
- You can't grow large quantities of vegetables

Getting Started

There is more information on our Facebook page, about how you can join in on our event day, and we share lots of useful tips and tricks for growing your own too! On the page you can ask us questions and share with us, any ideas you have. The page URL is – www.facebook.com/LuckyHensPotatoDay

Choice of container – The container has to be large enough to accommodate the plant(s), compost and drainage. The larger the plant, the larger the pot. Additionally multiple plants require large pots, the minimum size is generally 14" in diameter.

Compost – A good quality proprietary compost is usually sufficient, compost should not be filled above 2" below the pot rim.

Drainage – The bottom of the pot must be filled with broken crocks or polystyrene to a depth of around 2". This is vital to prevent water logging.

Feeding – An application of fertiliser during the season at weekly intervals will usually be necessary as the plants are quite hungry, and are restricted within the container.

Choice of plants – Unless your containers are huge, buy dwarf varieties of seed or plantlets.

Watering – If you are using pots on a patio, consider a watering system with a water clock. This will ensure that the soil never dries out, which is a risk in container gardening. For larger, more hungry plants, such as tomatoes, courgettes and the like, install a pipe with holes drilled along it's length at an angle beneath the root ball. Water and feed through this pipe to get the moisture and nutrients directly to the roots.

Pests – Pests will still attack vegetable plants, even in containers, the benefit is that you can inspect daily and treat.

Planting Ideas

Peas in hanging baskets –

- Plant the seed in the seed compost in biodegradable pots. The peas should be 'Half-pint', sweet peas 'Cupid' or similar
- When the peas have germinated, plant out as follows -
- Fill the hanging basket as normal, using soil-less compost and incorporate slow release fertiliser granules
- Plant the fibre pots in circles, alternating between peas and sweet peas
- Dead head the sweet peas and crop the dwarf peas as they mature
- Don't forget to add more fertiliser as necessary during the season

Baby vegetables –

- Set the seed of carrot, beetroot or lettuce in modules, using seed compost
- When germinated, thin out, leaving the strongest seedlings to grow on
- Fill a deep container with crocks 2" deep, then soil less compost to 2" below the rim
- Water until fully soaked, plant out the seedlings, carrots in the centre, then beet and lettuce around the edge.
- Sow replacements little and often, bearing in mind that most plants will mature in around two months.

Potatoes –

- Choose a deep container, minimum roughly a half barrel or minimum 24" square. Some people use dustbins or large sacks
- Place crocks in the bottom, then 4" of compost Place the tubes on the compost, then cover with 4" of compost
- When the shoots appear, cover with compost and keep doing this until the container is filled to 2" below the rim.
- You can also plant more tubers in layers in the tub if it is deep enough
- Keep well watered, especially when the flowers appear Harvest when the flowers die off

Runner beans and companions –

- Sow the runners in modules or 3" pots, sow morning glory or nasturtium in modules
- When germinated, fill a half barrel container as previously with crocks and compost
- Plant out on a frame or obelisk, train plants up as required. Nip off the growing point when plants have reached the top
- Use a dwarf variety of runner, Hestia or Pickwick are good varieties

Winter vegetables –

- Sow seed of kale, chard and spinach beet in modules in late spring
- Prepare a container 24" square with crocks and compost
- Plant the seedlings out in rows or blocks as you wish, and water well
- The plants will stand through the winter, but can suffer wind and frost burn, so place them in a sheltered area in late autumn
- Harvest by removing leaves, on the kale, take top leaves to encourage side shoots

Beans and peas –

- Sow seeds in modules in spring, when germinated, thin as necessary
- Prepare a window box or trough container about 30" by 10" as previously with crocks and compost
- Plant out the seedlings in rows, fix twiggy sticks for them to climb up
- Suggested varieties include dwarf bean 'Maxi', asparagus peas, borlotti bean "Supremo" or "Borlotta Firetongue"