



## Growing vegetables in containers outdoors

## How to simply grow lettuce on your terrace

If you do not have a garden and would like to grow your vegetables outside, there are plenty that can be grown in containers. They can be put on a sunny balcony, on back steps, or anywhere with some space and some sun light.

### What you need to know

**Vegetables that grow well in containers outdoors:** beetroot, broad beans, carrots, dwarf French beans, peas, radishes, rocket, runner beans, salad leaves, tomatoes.

**Timeline:** the growing season in the UK is from early Spring to Autumn. For most vegetables, the seeds need to be sown indoors and then transferred to their final container and moved outside.

**Containers:** they should be at least 45 cm wide and deep. Larger plants need plenty of soil to grow in so make sure the containers are big enough. There should be holes at the bottom of them to allow for good drainage. Buckets are a cheap option, you will just need to drill holes at the bottom (with help from an adult).

**Soil:** use potting mix, preferably one that already contains fertiliser.

**Location:** choose a location that is exposed to sunlight at least 6 hours a day and sheltered from the wind if possible.

**Watering:** make sure that the plants are watered regularly and the soil does not dry out.

## Growing lettuce

**Timeline:** lettuce does best in cool weather. It should be sown two to three weeks before the final frost date (in Somerset you would need to sow towards the end of February to early March). Loose-leaf lettuce is the quickest to grow as it matures after only 40 to 45 days.

**Container:** it should be at least 15-20 cm wide and deep. Its length depends on how many plants you want. They should be planted at least 10 cm apart.

**Location:** lettuce likes sunlight but when the temperatures rise it is best to move them to a partly-shaded spot (sun in the morning and shade in the afternoon is best).

### Step by step:

1. Lettuce seeds can be planted directly in their final pot. Sow them about 1 cm deep (they can be close to each other), then cover them with a thin layer of soil. Keep the soil moist until the first leaves appear.
2. As the leaves start to appear, keep the healthier looking leaves in the soil and remove the less healthy ones (they can be washed and added to salads so do not bin them). The ones you keep should be about 10 cm apart from each other.
3. Check your lettuce daily to see if they need water: put your finger in the soil about 5 cm deep. If the soil is dry, then water the plant (enough for the water to reach the roots but not enough for the soil to be soaked).

**Harvest:** lettuce leaves are ready for harvesting when they are 10 to 15 cm tall. Some varieties are called “cut-and-come-again”, meaning that you can pick the outer leaves when they are the right size and more leaves will grow.

