

## Growing vegetables with no garden

Contributed by Selfsufficientish

So you want to downsize, but you haven't got three acres to play with. Maybe you haven't even got a garden. Don't despair – you can still enjoy the fruits of an organic life-style from a very, very small holding. Andy (Selfsufficientish) explains how you can get started in a flat with just a couple of window boxes. At under a tenner, his suggested downsizing starter kit is not only compact, it's also readily affordable.

Eating organic on a budget Food scares are becoming common and consumers are starting to question what is going into our foods. We are also told to reduce salt and sugar in our diets and to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Well, I say 'Don't panic eat organic' (A tacky little phrase I know but it does its job). 'Too expensive' I hear you shout, well yes, I agree. Last March I decided that the only way I was going to be able to eat a diet of organic foods was to grow my own. As I live in a small flat in the centre of Bath, this at first seemed impossible. I had a quick look online and found that for just £13.97 a year I could rent 125sq feet of land...I had joined the cloth-capped old men, the Arthur Fowlers of this world - I had myself an allotment! What still surprised me was how many young people had also done the same, it certainly seems to be a 'growing' trend. I also thought that buying two window boxes to grow herbs for the kitchen was a good idea and so far, it has been!

Growing your own food So how easy is it to grow stuff? I must admit I was totally unsure about how I would fare as a gardener as I have killed flowers by putting them in a vase until now. I was spurred on by the words of Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall who said, 'plants want to grow, all you have to do is put a seed in the ground and most of the time it will grow'. There is some truth in this, the beetroot that I grew last year needed very little attention for example, and the same goes for the beans, courgettes and most of my other vegetables.

Window box gardening The allotment is not for everyone I understand, many with strong work commitments might not be spending too much time at home, but for most a window box can be an excellent start into the gardening world. You need not spend a fortune on getting set up either. I picked up my two window boxes from the co-op for a little less than £5 each. The next step was to drill a few 2cm drainage holes in the bottom; this can be done with a simple steak knife but take great care and use a proper drill if you possibly can.

The next consideration is the compost that you wish to put in it. If like me your compost bin is two miles away on your allotment then this means buying a bag from the local garden centre. I also do not own a car and my transport is my pushbike. I have developed a technique of transporting heavy compost bags; the bag will happily rest on the handlebars stretching over the seat and as long as you don't have to go down a steep hill it is pretty easy to push a big bag home in this fashion. A 60-litre bag will be enough for two window boxes and two buckets with some left over for single pots of herbs. Always use peat free compost as peat is a non-renewable resource and much of the UK's peat bogs have been destroyed.

### Vegetables for containers

This year I am experimenting with some cherry tomatoes, mini beetroots and some radishes that I am growing in one of my window boxes. I drilled some holes into the bottom of the box and cover with some bits of broken plate (next time you go to a Greek wedding, bring a bag). Then I filled it with some peat free compost. I planted the seeds and I water them every day or two, now and again I give them a bit of liquid feed (organic seaweed feed). That is about all I have to do. The other window box is happily sitting on my windowsill and it contains dill, three types of parsley, rue and coriander. I also have a few other herb plants in pots around the flat, some on the inside windowsill and some on the outside. Every last bit of space is being used up. There is something quite magical about leaning out of your window and picking herbs whilst you are cooking. I have also grown a window box full of herbs for a good friend's birthday, that was almost two years ago and he is still using it. I think it worked out as under £10 for the whole shebang, so a bargain present and a way to get others to grow things too.

I also have a courgette plant and a huge tomato plant happily sitting in buckets facing two of my three windows. With a bit of imagination most people can grow stuff in the smallest of spaces, so why not have a go.

For a related article on growing vegetables in a tiny garden, [click here](#)

Why not have a quick look around my site Selfsufficientish for a host of information for the small and very, very small holder.

