

TOP Kitchen Garden TIPS

- In my experience the easiest and most productive way of growing vegetables is in raised beds.
- If at all possible keep grass paths and grass borders away from your vegetable beds. Use wood chip or shredded bark for all paths and surrounds; this is a major deterrent to slugs and snails.
- Always try to rotate your crops to avoid build ups of pest and diseases in the soil and to avoid potential nutrient deficiencies.
- When incorporating manure or other organic material, try to get it on to your plot before the turn of the year. My method is to clear the ground, put a thick layer of the material on the surface and then cover it with weed fabric and weight it down around the edge. Let the worms, warmth and moisture do the work before unwrapping it in Feb/Mar and working it into the surface.
- If space allows try to keep an open trench on your plot. It makes a great receptacle for waste vegetation and organic matter which can form the foundation for your peas or beans the following year.
- Keep plans of your plot showing the current years planting scheme, so that you can refer to it when working out your seed order for the following year. I find this helps to jog the memory when the crops are cleared in the autumn.
- Each year try something different. A new variety, a new technique or a vegetable you have never grown before. Never stop experimenting and learning.
- Keep a diary; register the weather, planting times and varieties used. Note your successes and failures; this is particularly useful for beginners to gain experience and ensure you grow what you like eating when you want to eat it.
- Do not rush everything at the beginning of the season, watch the weather forecasts. Plant and sow to suit your needs, avoid gluts but ensure continuity, particularly with salad crops. Don't fill the plot in May; remember to leave space in the summer for those overwintering crops such as Brussels, Sprouting, Kale and Leeks.
- Always keep your plot tidy and weed free. In my experience a clean, well managed plot is always the sign of a good and productive grower.

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