

The garden that's good enough to EAT!

EASY IDEAS FOR THE NO-TIME NO-SPACE NO-FUSS GARDENER!

Growing your own veg is deliciously easy, and the results are fresher, tastier and much cheaper than those in the shops. These days you don't need green fingers – just ready-to-grow baby plants and simple-to-sow seeds – and you'll get a garden that is both pretty AND productive, says Pattie Barron

Great balcony idea
 ❖ MAKE SMALL-SCALE HANGING GARDENS when space is tight. Tiered baskets, secured with string, make excellent salad containers: fill with baby plants from a garden centre or mixed packs of growing lettuces from the supermarket, planted into the compost. Grow easy, trailing tomatoes such as Tumbling Tom Red and Yellow in colanders for impromptu hanging baskets; interplant with supermarket pots of basil for instant antipasto.



Hanging basket heaven: frilly lettuces look as good as flowers



Container plantings of tomatoes, peppers, thyme, marigold and nasturtium all add up to an edible feast for the eyes

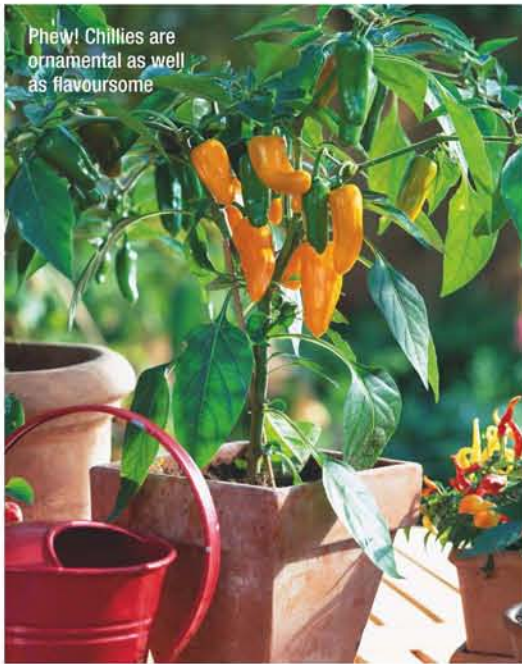


Beans make as pretty an arch as sweet peas

Make one yourself! ADD AN ARCH
 CREATE VERTICAL GROWING space by putting up an inexpensive arch across a path or border. Settle two ready-to-grow young plants such as classic runner Painted Lady at each side and you will have red and white flowers to rival any sweet pea, closely followed by a cascade of green beans at the right height for picking. Another ornamental option is the Italian borlotti bean, Linguo di Fuoco, which has glamorous crimson-flecked pale green pods and coordinating beans. You can buy young plants, but in early summer it's easy enough to push the fat seeds – or beans – into the ground and wait for them to sprout.

Great short cut!
CHEAT A LITTLE
(NO ONE WILL KNOW!)

GARDENERS TRADITIONALLY grew vegetables from seed, but now you can save time and energy by buying baby plug plants or next-stage young plants that just need potting up into the ground or a container. Buy them from garden centres or, for the best choices, from online specialist companies that will send them securely through the post (see Your Garden Directory on final page).

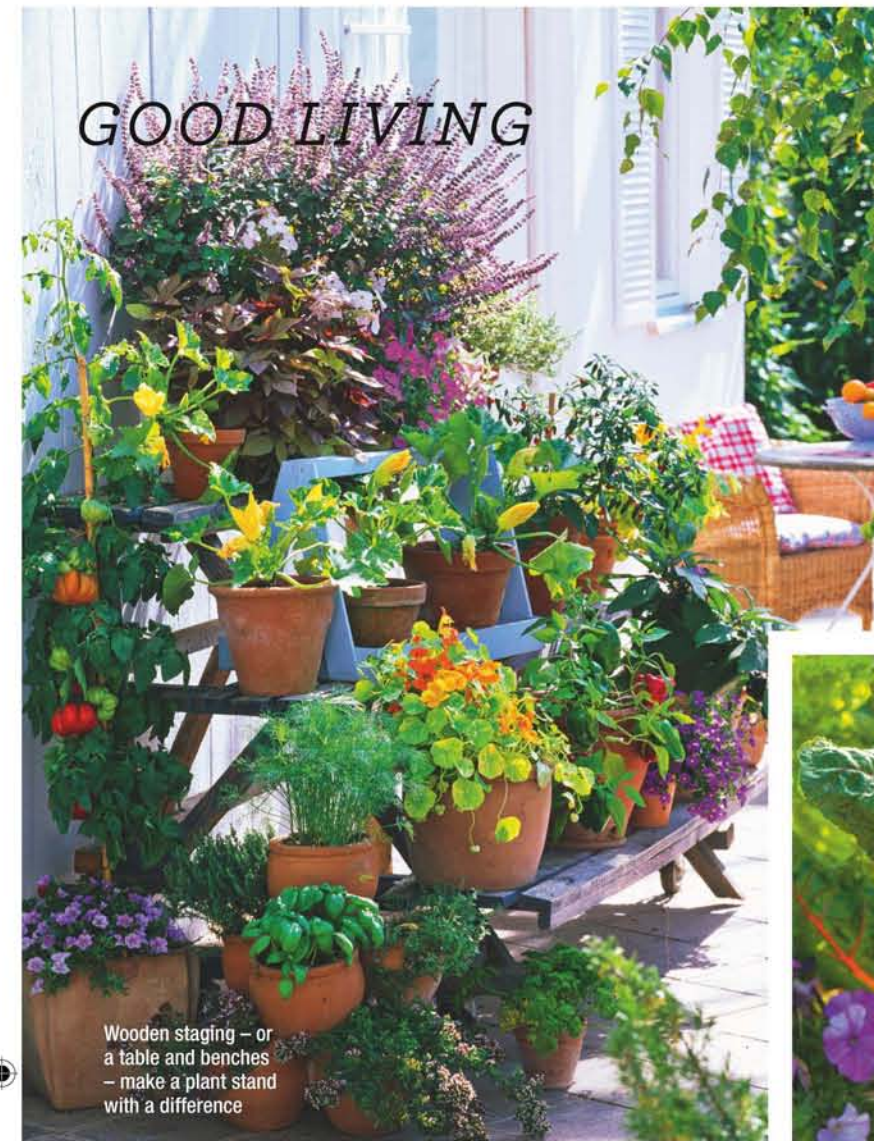


Phew! Chillies are ornamental as well as flavoursome



GOOD LIVING

Ratatouille, anyone? Aubergines offer a taste of the Med



Wooden staging – or a table and benches – make a plant stand with a difference

GOOD LIVING

TASTY TIPS THAT GET DELICIOUS RESULTS

- ❖ CONTAINERS MUST HAVE GOOD DRAINAGE, so ensure there are holes in the base. Add an inch or so of drainage material such as polystyrene pieces.
- ❖ FOR BEST RESULTS, use a multi-purpose, soil-based potting compost.
- ❖ MIX WATER-RETAINING GEL OR CRYSTALS into compost before planting.
- ❖ FEED FRUITING VEGETABLES with dilute tomato fertiliser, and leafy vegetables with a dilute seaweed fertiliser.



Sunny delight: rainbow chard stems stand out in the border

Great space filler!
BREAK FOR THE BORDER

❖ TUCK BABY BEETROOT plants with their showy, plum-tinted foliage – and frilly, decorative lettuces such as burgundy Lollo Rosso – into spare corners of the border, scattering a few organic slug pellets around to keep them nibble-free.

- ❖ RAINBOW CHARD can be bought as baby plants, and rivals any border ornamental: place the plants where the sun will light up their colourful stems.
- ❖ ADD HEIGHT AND COLOUR to a border with a wigwam of purple-podded peas with ravishing lilac flowers. Or plant a statuesque artichoke – they look almost too beautiful to eat.



Petit potager: wicker conceals boring plastic pots

Patio idea
BRIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL

❖ CANDY-COLOURED rubber tub trugs, with holes made for drainage, are deep enough for carrots and spring onions (the latter keeps carrot root fly from the former) and wide enough for a courgette. Trugs can also support a trio of canes, tied at the top, to make a wigwam for beans.

❖ INVEST IN SMART willow baskets (see those, right, from Burgon & Ball) to hide drop-in plastic planters – pushed together they make a handsome mini-potager. Use them to grow everything from rocket – which grows like weeds from seed – to showcase veg such as aubergine and chilli.

❖ ROOMY WICKER shopping baskets, or wine and grocery crates, can be lined with plastic with holes poked into the base.

YOUR GARDEN DIRECTORY

❖ For young veg plants: Delfland (www.organicplants.co.uk); for seeds and plants, including grafted cucumber Passandra: Suttons Seeds (www.suttons.co.uk) and Gardening Direct (www.gardeningdirect.co.uk).

❖ For coloured rubber tub trugs: Faulks & Company (www.faulks.co.uk).

❖ For willow basket planters and planting pockets: Burgon & Ball (www.burgonandball.com). See its Home Allotment planters in action at the Five A Day Garden at RHS Wisley

Plant Centre, and at the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, 5-10 July.

❖ For rings to display pots on wall: Spanish Rings (www.spanishrings.com).

❖ For organic herbs by post: Jekka's Herb Farm (www.jekkaherbfarm.com). □

PHOTOGRAPHS: GAP PHOTOS; PHOTOGRAPH OF POTAGER BASKET: BURGON & BALL

A DAINTY MORSEL

DWARF VARIETIES of vegetable plants and seeds – from small round carrots such as Parmex to dwarf runner beans such as Hestia – are ideal for containers. Alternatively, sow or plant normal-size veg more closely together than recommended for veg that will stay small, such as beetroot the size of ping pong balls. Picking veg young ensures the best flavour and will free up space faster, so you can grow more intensively.



Herbs will thrive on a sunny wall, where they'll be well drained

CLIMBING THE WALL

❖ USE EVERY INCH OF WALL SPACE. Herbs require good drainage and sunshine, so where better to site them than in free-draining pots, on a sunny wall, dropped into metal rings, Provence style? Or hang them from butchers' hooks on a trellis panel.

❖ ON A SHADY WALL OR FENCE, you can grow salad leaves that prefer cool conditions. Try pocket planters: vertical panels of polypropylene that have several pouches, one beneath the other, to hold varieties of salads, herbs or flowers. Hang them on the wall, fill the pockets with compost and pop in the plants.

❖ PUT UP A PANEL OF TRELIS and you have a climbing frame for small, crunchy cucumbers such as Passandra, which is grafted into a strong rootstock to make it extra vigorous. Or turn the trellis over to a few nasturtium seeds, pushed into the ground at its base. That way you can have a supply of edible flowers, too, to scatter on salads.

