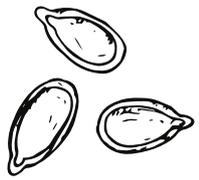


CONNECTING
JUNIOR 
GARDENERS
PROGRAM



THREE WAYS TO 
START A GARDEN

CONNECTING JUNIOR GARDENERS PROGRAM

The Connecting Junior Gardeners Program is a four-part educational gardening resource developed by the Victorian Schools Garden Program (VSGP) for primary aged school children. The Program consists of a suite of videos, fact sheets and activities, developed to inspire and excite children to discover the joys and benefits of gardening together. As well as learning some of the foundations of gardening, children will be able to enjoy physical exercise, a connection with nature, being mindful and sharing the whole experience with their peers.

The Connecting Junior Gardeners Program has been funded through the Victorian Government's Let's Stay Connected Fund.



This resource was created by Grassroots Sustainability. The Program is managed by Nursery and Garden Industry Victoria.



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Teacher Resource

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways to start a garden. You don't need much and it can provide you with ongoing fulfillment. This activity will demonstrate three very easy and effective ways of getting a garden going at home. Learn how to make a self-wicking pot out of up-cycled materials from around the home. Then we will look at three methods of growing in your pot - from seed, from cutting and from root stock. The best part? You'll get start a garden and watch as it grows!

Year 2 - Year 6 Activity

BENEFITS

- Provides a cheap way of starting a garden
- Reduces unnecessary plastics (pots), when buying plants
- Repurposing waste items (plastic bottles)
- Cheap way of starting a garden and saves money on groceries
- Can be done in confined spaces, decks, balconies or even on window sill
- A great way of sharing your existing plants and gardens with others
- Is a whole lot of fun!

MATERIALS

- Potting mix
- Seeds
- Cuttings
- Roots
- A plastic bottle (1-2 litres) with a lid
- Some old material (tea towel, sock
- anything that absorbs water)

THERE ARE THREE PARTS TO THIS ACTIVITY:

1. Whole class
 - How to make a self-wicking pot
2. Group work
 - Group 1 - Planting from Seed
 - Group 2 - Planting from Cuttings
 - Group 3 - Planting from Roots
3. Observation
 - Students are to observe their plants over the following few weeks

STUDENT RESOURCE

HOW TO MAKE A SELF-WICKING POT

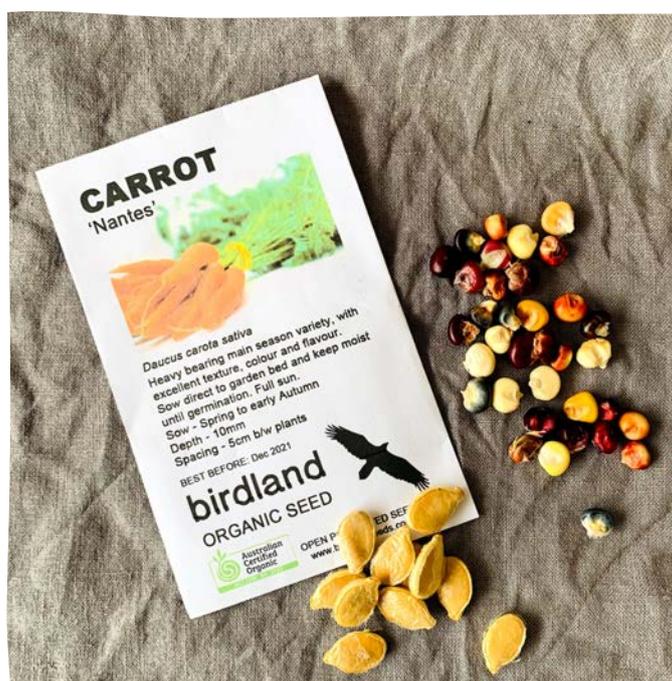
A self-wicking pot is really quick and simple to make and makes growing plants really easy. Why? Because you don't have to regularly water them! They work on a similar principal to a self-watering planter in that they have a bottom reservoir that holds water. Wicking pots use a piece of material as a wick to move the water from the reservoir up to the soil, effectively becoming a 'bottom-up' watering system. You don't need to water it every day, as the reservoir will last for several days. And the best part? You can make them out of waste materials. Win-win! Here's what to do:

1. Give your bottle a good rinse out, especially if it's a milk bottle. Keep the lid.
2. With a permanent marker, draw a line around your bottle about two thirds from the bottom.
3. With some scissors, carefully cut along the line so you have two parts - a top and a bottom.
4. From your piece of old material, cut a wick approximately 15-20cms long.
5. Poke your wick through the lid of your bottle and thread it through far enough so the middle of the wick is at the lid hole.
6. Reverse the top of the bottle and insert into the bottom of the bottle - you should be left with the top part as being a vessel to hold the soil - lid pointing down - and the bottom part as a reservoir for water, with the wick in both parts.
7. Fill the top part with some good potting mix and ensure the wick runs up the side of the pot. You're now ready for planting!
8. After you've planted with your preferred method below, fill the water reservoir - you can do this by pouring water over the top, which will ensure both the soil and the wick are wet. The excess water will drain through to the reservoir and then the wick will bring up more water when needed.



GROUP 1 – PLANTING FROM SEED

Growing plants from seed is a great way to start a garden! You can watch and learn over the whole life of the plant and it's a great way of getting your veggies started early in the season. They're also really cheap. Because each plant has unique seed-starting requirements, it is best to start small by growing just a few varieties. Some seeds such as broad beans, tomatoes and marigolds are especially easy to start indoors. Other good choices for beginners are radishes, lettuce and nasturtiums. Following a few simple steps, you'll have a garden in no time!



1. Read your seed packet

- When planting seeds from scratch, the idea is to have your seedlings ready to go outside when the weather is just right for that particular plant. The best way to find this information out is by looking at the seed packet, which should tell you the best time to plant. It will also give you great information about depth, shade/sun requirements, spacing, etc.

2. Select your potting mix

- It's really important that you choose a soil that is specific for seed raising. Don't re-use soil from old pots or that you've collected from the garden. Starting with a fresh, healthy and sterile mix will ensure you grow disease-free seedlings. Once you have your potting mix, moisten it, ensuring you don't make it sopping wet. Then you're ready to fill your containers/pots, packing the soil firmly to eliminate gaps.

3. Start planting

- As a general rule, larger seeds need to be planted deeper, while smaller seeds planted shallower. Using this as a guide along with the information on the back of your seed packet, place your selected seeds on the surface and use a pencil to push the seed in to the required depth. When planting, it's a great idea to plant *double* the amount of seeds in any given space, giving you a better chance of success. Once the seeds germinate, you can remove any excess.

4. Water

- It's best to water your seeds with a spray bottle or mister so you don't disturb them too much. To speed up the growing process you can cover the pots with an old plastic bag, which acts as a greenhouse and helps to keep the seeds moist and warm. When you see the first signs of green, remove the covering.

5. Nurture

- It's really important your plants get the right treatment. Ensure they get:
 - Adequate water - with your mister or spray bottle is ideal
 - Sunlight! At least 8 hrs of sunlight a day
 - Nutrients through a liquid fertiliser - once a week, once they have germinated
 - Good airflow - you don't want them becoming stagnant as they may get sick

6. Hardening off

- Once your seedlings are established, you need to prepare them for planting. It's not a good idea to plant your seedlings straight away. As they have been in a protected environment, there needs to be a transition before you plant them outside. This process is called 'hardening off'. About a week before you want to plant your seedlings, place them outside in a protected spot - partly shady and out of the wind. For best practice, put them back in their protected environment at night. After a week, it's planting time!



GROUP 2 – PLANTING FROM CUTTINGS

Growing from cuttings is a great way to start a garden as it can give you full-grown plants in half the time it takes to start from seed. Many common garden plants can be grown from cutting and, with a little love, you'll have a garden in no time! There are several types of cuttings you can use to propagate plants - so this method is a pretty standard way to suit most types.

1. Select your plant

- To start your cuttings, select a healthy branch or stem between eight to 12cms long. Using a sharp pair of scissors or secateurs make a clean cut at the bottom. If the stem is damaged through tearing or crushing, it will make it difficult for new roots to develop.

2. Remove the lower leaves

- Carefully clip or pinch off the leaves on the *lower half* of the shoot so you have a bare stem. It's important that the stem isn't damaged when the leaves are being removed.

3. Optional: rooting hormone

- If you have some available, you can dip the end of your stem in rooting hormone. This is a powder that helps many cuttings to take or root effectively. Honey or molasses can also be used as an alternative.

4. Planting your cutting

- Immediately poke the bare end of your stem into moist potting mix. You can even use a stick or a skewer the same diameter as the end of your stem to poke a pilot hole before you stick the cutting in. Keep your cutting humid by loosely wrapping it in an old, clear plastic bag.



5. Nurture

- It's really important your plants get the right treatment. Ensure they get:
 - Adequate water - with your mister or spray bottle is ideal
 - Sunlight! At least 8 hrs of sunlight a day
 - Nutrients through a liquid fertiliser - once a week
 - Good airflow - you don't want them becoming stagnant

6. Some handy hints:

- Be patient. On average, it takes four to six weeks for cuttings to root and become established enough that you can plant them.
- The best time to do your cuttings is early morning. Plants usually have the most moisture in them at this time, so your cutting will have the best chance to succeed.
- Plant your cuttings straight away. Keep your cuttings cool and moist until you've potted them up and avoid exposing the cuttings to direct sunlight.
- Many cuttings root faster if they're kept warm and humid, so misting the cuttings frequently can help them grow.



GROUP 3 – PLANTING FROM ROOTS

Planting from roots is the easiest and quickest way to start a garden. It also has the best success rate. There really isn't much to it!

1. Select your plant
 - Find a plant that sends out runners - mint, strawberries, berries, oregano, etc.
2. Prepare your plant
 - Cut the runners so you have an individual stem, with roots and leaves attached. This will become a whole new plant.
3. Get planting
 - Plant your runner into a pot of moist potting mix and press down firmly around its stem.
4. Nurture
 - It's really important your plants get the right treatment. Ensure they get:
 - o Adequate water - with your mister or spray bottle is ideal
 - o Sunlight! At least 8 hrs of sunlight a day
 - o Nutrients through a liquid fertiliser - once a week
 - o Good airflow - you don't want them becoming stagnant



OBSERVATION

My name: _____

Date Planted: ___ / ___ / ___

What I planted: _____

| Week | What you did | Observations |
|------|--------------|--------------|
| 1 | | |
| 2 | | |
| 3 | | |
| 4 | | |
| 5 | | |
| 6 | | |

OBSERVATION

My name: _____

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