



Grow your own tips

By HF Leader Christine Walkden

- If your soil is poor, enrich it with as much organic matter as possible. If well rotted horse or farmyard manure is not available, grow bags are an inexpensive alternative, as is old compost from pots that contained last years bedding plants.
- Once sown, ensure that the seedlings and plants never dry out. Drying out can cause a check to growth resulting in bolting, poor growth and poor results. Water once or twice a week well and not a little every day.
- If you haven't much space, select varieties that are suitable for growing in containers, as these will produce great crops without an enormous amount of foliage which takes up useful growing space. Some garden centres sell these seeds otherwise order them through a seed catalogue.
- Growing plants up wigwams and along a fence can save a lot of space, Peas, beans, cucumbers, courgettes, miniature pumpkins and squashes all do well when grown up wigwams, and will not smother the ground taking up useful growing space. It also means that the crops will not be covered in soil due to rain splashing soil onto the fruits.
- Start with the easier to grow crops such as salads, radish, onions (from sets, not seed), cabbage, leeks and potatoes; leave the sunworshippers such as tomatoes, aubergines, peppers and chillies until you have a bit of experience and know what your growing conditions are like.
- Do not start too early in the season. Cold winds and low night temperatures will not help seed germinate and young plants to grow. Wait until there are signs of growth such as hedges starting to turn green, buds swelling and weeds starting to grow. The soil will be warmer then, ensuring better results.

Meet the Leader: Christine is a freelance plantswoman and horticulturist. She is a national and international lecturer, TV and radio broadcaster, author, botanical guide, trainer, garden designer and photographer. Christine is a Lancastrian living in Hertfordshire with her dog Willow. She began gardening at the age of ten and now gardens in a cottage garden style with a keen interest in alpines, herbaceous plants, trees and shrubs. She has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate from The University of Essex for her contribution to horticulture. Christine is much loved following her highly successful BBC 2 TV series Christine's Garden.