

## Step by Step guide to Food Growing

**Step 1:** Complete our [Food Growing Survival Toolkit](#) which will help you audit your environment and resources and it will help you to identify and write actions. You may find this [calendar](#) useful when planning what to grow.

It doesn't matter about the end product it's the process that matters and needs to include lots of key messages, be hands on and fun.



### Plant life cycle message

The plant life cycle looks at the different stages of development of a plant and comprises of the following sequential steps:

1. Planting a seed
2. Feeding and nourishing them regularly
3. Watch the stems shoot up and understand that roots travels down
4. Watching a seed blossom into a young plant, mature plant, flower and then fruit. Watch the size, shapes and colours change
5. Dig and pick the fruit or vegetable
6. Wash, prepare and cook
7. Eat and enjoy!



It is an important message to convey to children as many children do not know the origins of their food. For example, teaching children that potatoes grow from a seed potato planted underground and once harvested can be transformed into a variety of dishes e.g. mash potato.

Doing activities that include looking at different types of seeds and planting would be a great starting point. Here is step 2 of our guide.

**Step 2:** Have a look at [this month's activity ideas](#) that we have linked to our Startwell characters. Write some activities that you will try in each room on your Food Growing Survival Toolkit.

### Parent Engagement

Encouraging parents to deliver consistent messages at home are essential to establishing healthy and sustainable behaviours. Providing activities to do at home will help to do this, see step 3 below for some ideas.

**Step 3:** Send home these simple and fun food growing [home activities](#). Add these actions to your Food Growing Survival Toolkit.

### Skills linked to areas of the EYFS using Growing and Food Exploration.

We all know that Growing is a lovely topic area to cover with young children but now we also have research to back it up. A 2010 study commissioned by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) found that children that took part in gardening became more resilient, confident, and eager to learn and have healthier life styles. It also found that gardening had a positive impact on children's literacy and numeracy development and that it led to a more active, inquisitive approach to learning and improved problem solving skills. This strengthens the role of the Characteristics of Effective Learning. We know children learn best from their experiences, the activities they are involved in and the attitudes of the people around them.

Startwell believe that provision, modelling and activities within our settings should embed healthy lifestyle messages rather than trying to 'teach' them.

We therefore have a responsibility, to provide an environment where children can explore food, growing and gardening in various ways with positive encouragement and support as it also provides endless opportunity for children to be physically active.

### Please remember the: Characteristics of Effective Learning:

[Playing and Exploring – engagement](#)

[Active Learning – Motivation](#)

[Creating and thinking critically – thinking](#)

**Personal, Social and Emotional Development** – Undertaking food exploration and growing activities with babies through to pre-schoolers will aid co-operation skills, allow exploration and interaction with new environments and experiences, allows them to express their own preferences, aids the selection and use of a range of new resources with and without help, gives an opportunity to learn about / safety rules and sharing.

**Physical Development** – Physical awareness including space, body control, bending, core strength, fine motor control, balance and co-ordination are all key skills that young children in Early Years settings need to develop. Gardening and growing provide the perfect opportunities to develop and strengthen these areas as well as developing the connections between their movement, squatting, control of equipment, awareness of textures/ tastes and working as a team to carry larger items.

**Communication and Language** – are essential skills that feed into every other area and communication can be verbal as well as non-verbal. Growing activities will enable children to develop their understanding of items and their uses, copy new words, learn different terminology/vocabulary for items, opportunities to learn and practice body language as they explore, follow simple instructions, and develop an understanding of simple concepts, learn about prepositions, express their own opinions/ feelings, ask questions, hold conversations and use intonation.

**Growing can aid Specific area skills such as:**

**Mathematics** -counting; measuring; comparing sizes; shapes; calculating; space; weight of soil/water; length of canes and strings etc

**Understanding the World** - learning about food and its natural origins; growth and change; weather and seasons; minibeast exploration; similarities and differences; using technology, cause and effect etc.

**Literacy** -writing lists; writing plant labels and signs; reading growing instructions; rhymes; stories; reference materials etc.

**Expressive Arts and Design**- exploration, creation, individuality, imagination, using their senses and full body, responding to steady beats, using instruments to make sounds, opportunities to make believe and to play in groups.