

Creative Ways to Grow Your Vegetables

by Martyn Cox

Martyn Cox, an award-winning garden writer and inventive hands-on gardener, gave a most interesting and practical talk to the Gardeners' Club on numerous clever ways to grow vegetables, even in the smallest of gardens. The big seed companies now provide vegetable seeds for growing in containers, examples of which are the courgette 'Black Forest', a climbing variety; salad potatoes; dwarf runner beans such as 'Hestia' (18" high) that has ornamental white/scarlet flowers and masses of beans; mixed salad leaves which grow quickly and can be picked constantly; the round shaped carrot 'Romeo'; the tasty radish 'Bacchus' with a deep purple skin; the compact turnip 'Sweet Ball' which can be grated straight into a salad; and tumbling tomatoes, such as the variety 'Hundreds and Thousands', grown in a hanging basket.



Courgette
'Soleil'



Dwarf Runner Bean
'Hestia'



Carrot
'Romeo'



Tomatoes
'Hundreds and
Thousands'

Although there is an abundance of classic pots available at garden centres, Martyn said that shabby chic planters of all descriptions can be found online, including many for securing to walls. Old items such as weathered zinc pots obtainable from reclamation yards, wooden wine crates, rattan baskets, colanders, saucepans and stone troughs are also ideal. Don't forget to drill drainage holes in old pans! He then introduced the idea of Square Foot Gardening, invented by Mel Bartholomew in the USA in the late 1970s. It is more efficient, friendlier to the environment and easier to look after. Essentially it involves constructing a 3ft x 3ft wooden frame secured around four corner posts and placed on a soil bed or patio. Fill with a 50:50 mixture of multi-purpose compost and top soil and then divide the frame into 9 squares using either string or thin wooden dividers. Each 1ft x 1ft square can be used for growing vegetables or flowers, or a mix of the two.



Chard
'Bright Lights'



Kale
'Redbore'



Kale
'Nero di Toscana'



Chilli Pepper
'Purple Flash'

In a small garden you may want to grow attractive vegetables such as chard 'Bright Lights' with its orange stems and crinkly glossy leaves; courgette 'Soleil' with its yellow fruits; dwarf French bean 'Purple Queen'; Brussel sprout 'Rubine' with purple sprouts and leaves; kale 'Nero di Toscana' which is very bold, upright and tastes good or 'Redbore' featuring feathery

purple leaves and an architectural shape; cucumber 'Crystal Lemon' with bright yellow fruits the size of an apple; and the chilli pepper 'Purple Flash'. Martyn ended by emphasising the need to make use of vertical space, maybe with a small garden arch with a squash plant, or similar, growing over it.

Written by Robert Blake

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