



Sprouting 

Sprouting is one of the easiest ways to have a constant supply of fresh, nutrient-rich produce. All you need is a large jar ...you may eventually wish to progress to sprouting trays, a little bit of space for it, the dry seeds, beans or grains and fresh water.

A Note of Caution

Before reading on, especially if this is new to you, be aware that not all seeds, legumes, and grains lend themselves well to sprouting and indeed since most sprouts are eaten raw, some must not be sprouted, most notably red kidney beans which contain a toxic substance if eaten raw.

Purchasing Seeds etc

Starting is especially easy if your first purchases are packets of seeds etc intended for sprouting. These are available in most health food stores and sometimes even in supermarkets. This way you know that what you're buying should work well. Once you're happy with the process, you'll probably find it cheaper to buy larger bags of say, beans or grains and proceed as outlined over the next few pages.

The following descriptions and photos outline 3 different ways of sprouting and a few of the things to be aware of.

Using a Jar

Any small seeds that are suitable for sprouting can follow this process, this includes clover, radish, kohlrabi, alfalfa and these, broccoli seeds.



This batch took 4 days from start to finish but timings will differ depending on what you're sprouting, how warm or cool the room is and how green you want them to be. Broccoli seeds are said to be particularly nutritious if they're harvested very early on, ie before they put all their energy into growing bigger and turning green.

If you're new to sprouting, the jar method is a really good starting point. It doesn't have to be a purpose-bought jar, anything that creates a mesh effect and can be fixed to the mouth of the jar should work. Some people use muslin cloths for this along with an elastic band.

Step 1 - pour a layer of seeds onto the base of the jar, making sure to avoid 'overcrowding'.



Step 2 - cover them well with clean water and leave to soak for around 8 hours or overnight.



Step 3 - drain the water off, leaving the jar upside-down for a few minutes to ensure they're properly drained. If you don't have a jar like the one in the photos, leaving it upside-down and at an angle on a draining rack should work fine.



Step 4 - rinse and drain again about 8 hours later. Repeat twice each day until the seeds look ready. NB if you see a white 'fur' on the sprouts, don't be put off. If your seeds were properly drained each time, it's highly unlikely that this is mould, but rather root hairs and they're perfectly safe.

Step 5 - remove the sprouts from the jar and rinse them in a sieve, let them drain then put them in a container, eg a glass jar, and store in the fridge. They should keep for at least 4 days.



Broccoli Sprouts are a very easy and nutritious addition to salads and they work well in wraps or sandwiches. Broccoli sprouts in particular have earned some acclaim in recent

years for being an exceptionally good source of the antioxidant glutathione which plays an important role in some of the well known health challenges of our time.

The Tray Method

If you have a sprouting tray, then you'll find you can make bigger batches of sprouts than in a jar. Sprouting trays typically consist of 3 layers and anything you can sprout in a jar, you can sprout in a tray whether in just one, two or all three layers at once. We find the trays particularly good for sprout-able legumes, such as chickpeas, mung beans, peas and lentils.



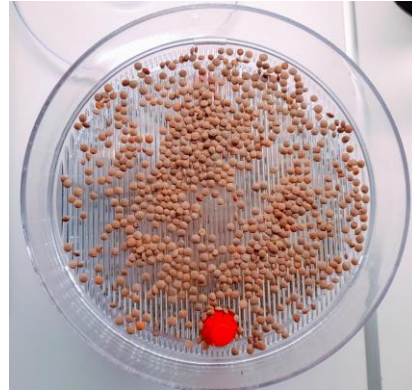
If you have a set of trays that look like the ones pictured above, you'll notice there are little red removable caps on top of the draining channels. They should be properly in place for use, but not too tight. They can be removed after use for washing. A set of trays like this typically has a drainage tray which goes underneath the trays you're using and a lid on top.

Steps for Sprouting using Trays:

1. Sprinkle a layer of beans or seeds on each of the trays. We have chosen a combination of 3 different legumes, but equally we could have sprouted just one type in all 3 trays.

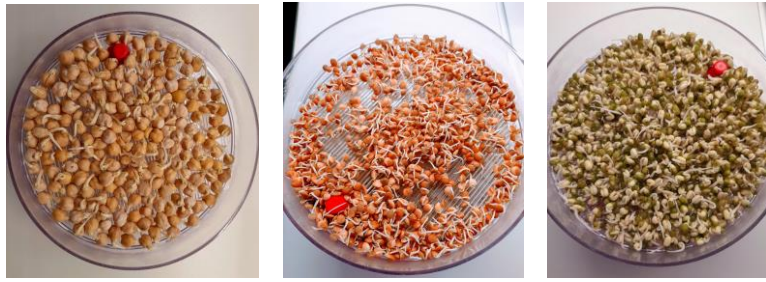


2. Place the first tray on top of the drainage tray, then another tray on top of that one, making sure the red caps are at opposite sides, rather than one on top of the other. Then, if you're using 3 trays, place the last one on top, again ensuring that the red cap is opposite the one beneath it.



3. Pour enough clean water (we choose filtered water for this purpose) into the top tray to cover the red cap, then put the lid on and let the water run through each of the trays and into the collection tray at the bottom. When all the water has passed through, pour it away and leave the beans to start doing their magic. Then rinse again about 8 hours later. NB using the tray method means there's no need for pre-soaking. This first rinse covers the pre-soaking requirement that we saw with the jar method. Rinsing then continues twice a day as for the broccoli seeds in the jar. The beans below have been in the sprouter for a couple of days and are growing well.





4. Continue rinsing twice a day until the sprouts are ready. The sprouts pictured in the trays above will soon be ready. Those pictured below have slightly longer 'tails' and are ready for harvesting.



5. Collect the sprouts that are ready in a sieve, rinse them and put them in a container in the fridge to use whenever you want them.

A few notes about the legumes we've used here:

Mung beans tend to sprout the most quickly of these 3, but the lentils follow sufficiently quickly to be harvested at the same time and, in fact we often mix the two together to store them.

Lentils sprout best if they are the bigger ones. Small lentils don't always sprout, meaning that there are a few tiny but very hard lentils in amongst your sprouts.

Chickpeas are challenging on the digestion for some people, despite the sprouting process, but this is easily remedied by steaming them for between 5 and 15 minutes before use. The length of time depends on how soft you want them to be. Of course this will diminish any enzyme activity gained from the sprouting process, but most nutrients, especially minerals, will remain largely intact, and as sprouting increases nutrient values, we maintain that it is better to steam them briefly if that makes them easier to eat, rather than to avoid them.

Uses:

Bean sprouts are a great addition to all sorts of dishes, from salads to soups and fillings for wraps. Sprouted and steamed chickpeas make a very good hummus or they can be added to any bean casserole, curry, or chilli dish.

Another Tray Method

There are even simpler trays available that work very similarly to the circular trays referred to previously. The process is every bit as simple as for the other tray method.

The seed used here, buckwheat, sometimes makes it into the category of 'grain' although it's at best a pseudo-grain. As a pseudo-grain, along with others such as quinoa and amaranth, it's completely free from gluten or any of the other similar true-grain proteins that prove difficult for some people. These, and the gluten-containing grains such as wheat and rye, are sproutable and the sprouting process can make grains more digestible for some people.

The steps for these trays are very similar to the previous tray method. There are no draining channels with caps in these trays, it's simply a case of gently pouring water across the whole tray and thus across the trays below and into the green drainage tray. There is no lid to this set of trays, but we choose to cover it with a plate between rinses.



Buckwheat germinates very quickly, typically within 2 days. It's ready when there are little tails forming as in the third picture above. Buckwheat is more about texture than flavour so it can be used in / on sweet or savoury dishes and if you happen to have a dehydrating oven, sprouted buckwheat can be turned into crunchy little sprinkles for breakfasts or desserts. And a final word about buckwheat: look carefully at the packet before you buy it as raw and roasted buckwheat look quite similar, ie they both look like the seeds in the first picture above. The raw seeds are a little bit lighter in colour and these are the ones you need for sprouting.

We hope you've found this little guide useful and that it will be the catalyst for your own year-round kitchen garden,

Annette & Graham