

planting instructions

See
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for more
information on
varieties

CUT FLOWER SEEDLINGS ✿ SWEET PEA SEEDLINGS ✿ CONTAINER PLANTS
PERENNIALS & BIENNIALS ✿ TENDER PERENNIALS ✿ ROSES ✿ SHRUBS
CLIMBERS ✿ KITCHEN GARDEN PLANTS ✿ BULBS IN THE GREEN

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contents

- 2 - 3** Cut flower seedlings
- 3 - 4** Sweet pea seedlings
- 4** Container plants
- 4 - 5** Perennials & biennials
- 5 - 7** Tender perennials
- 8** Roses
- 8** Shrubs
- 9** Climbers
- 9 - 11** Kitchen garden plants
- 12** Salad, veg & herb seedlings
- 12** Bulbs in the green



Cut flower seedlings

Our cut flower and foliage seedlings arrive as young, well-rooted, healthy garden plants full of vigour, ready for planting or potting on, ensuring your cutting patch and vases look wonderful for months. When your plants arrive, remove them from their packaging and plant them as soon as possible following the guide below.

Hardy annuals, biennials & perennials

Annuals such as Ammi majus and Orlaya grandiflora will flower, set seed and die all within one year whereas biennials will tend to flower in their second and final year (e.g. foxgloves); perennials will live for two or more years. All of our **hardy annual, biennial and perennial** cut flower seedlings are sent out ready to flower in your garden this summer and can be introduced outdoors in early spring as they will withstand a light frost. **Soil preparation** Choose a spot in full sun or light shade, ideally with moist but well-drained soil. Prepare the final planting area well by adding plenty of organic matter (such as Orgro or home-made compost) and forking it through your topsoil. You want soil with a fine tilth (or texture) which you can create with a garden rake, picking out any large stones and visible weeds as you go. **Planting out** Remove plants from their packaging and soak for twenty minutes in a bucket or wheelbarrow of water if they look dry. Space your plants around 30cm apart and dig holes deep and wide enough so that the roots are covered and the crown (or base) of the plant is level with the soil surface. Backfill around each plant and firm the soil gently - you should be able to tug gently on the leaves without the plant lifting out of the ground. Water them in well and water again, with a flood, not a sprinkle, every 5-7 days (if no rain) to encourage roots to be drawn down deep.

Half-hardy annuals & tender perennials

Half-hardy annuals (e.g. cosmos and zinnias) and **tender perennials** such as Verbena rigida cannot withstand winter wet and are likely to be killed by the slightest frost. They will need to be gradually introduced to the low temperatures of spring and may need protection from any strong

2 For more details on all our plants see our website

sunlight and air movement for about two to three weeks before they are planted outdoors. This 'toughening up' process is known as hardening off. **Potting on** Remove plants from their packaging and pot them on into 9cm pots using a good quality, multi-purpose, peat-free compost (see our website). Water well and leave them outside during the day in a sheltered but bright and sunny spot, cover them with a horticultural fleece or bring them into a greenhouse at night. Do this for a fortnight or so until the frosts are over. **Planting out** When you are ready to plant them out follow the same soil preparation and planting advice as for hardy annuals. To be on the safe side, do not plant out frost tender plants before the date of the last frost which is usually late spring in the south of England, later in the north and Scotland. Once your plants start flowering remember to keep deadheading to encourage more blooms.

Sweet pea seedlings

Sweet peas are hardy annuals. They are the best climbers for the cutting or vegetable patch, giving you arches, teepees and tunnels to bring a third dimension into the garden, and they produce the most extraordinary and beautiful scents. You want to get your sweet pea seedlings into the garden as soon as possible after they arrive. Pick a mild spell and plant them out. If the frosts aren't over, it is best to unwrap your plants and pot them on, keeping them inside and watered whilst you wait for a frost-free day.

1. Before you plant your sweet peas, create a climbing frame. I like to push a circle of eight hazel branches into the ground, each 2.5m high, sinking them about 20cm deep so they are securely anchored. The circle should be about 1m across. Secure the uprights together at the top with twine.
2. Dig in a barrow load of organic material around its base. Orgro chicken manure is good for sweet peas (see our website). It helps retain water on a freely drained soil and gently feeds these hungry plants. A traditional technique to decrease the need for watering through their flowering season is to add torn up newspaper to the base of each planting hole.
3. Water and plant them (I use a deep trowel), about 5cm away from the base of the support of your climbing frame.
4. Surround the seedlings with slug prevention. I use a foot wide strip of washed inland sharp sand, two inches deep, all round mine. It acts as a path for picking later on and should keep the slugs at bay; alternatively wool pellets are great for growing on a smaller scale (see our website for these and other slug prevention products)
5. As the young plants begin to grow, tie them into the frame – don't leave them to flop around. Jute Twist tie is ideal for this (see our website), but you can use twine. They'll grow more quickly and make stronger plants if tied in regularly, once a fortnight for the first month and then more often when they start to romp away.
6. If you garden on poor soil, feed your plants with a specially formulated Sweet Pea Fertiliser (see our website). Once they're in flower, it's a good idea on any soil to continue to feed to help prolong flowering. At Perch Hill we try to do this every couple of weeks when the plants are flowering at full tilt.
7. Professional growers will tell you to pinch out all the curly stems. They take energy from the flowers, and attach themselves to flower stems and bend them into curves. It's a lot of work on the scale of a tunnel. I try to remove any I see while I pick, but I don't get bogged down.

8. Then just let them get on with it and pick, pick, pick. If you see any seedpods as you're cutting, snip these off as well. You don't want your plants forming seed or it will stop the plants producing flowers.

9. When they come to an end, you can collect some pods and seeds for sowing next year. If you have grown several different kinds, they may have cross-pollinated and you'll end up with a mixed bag, but they should all have good scent.

See the advice pages of our website for how to make your own sweet pea teepee and tunnel.

Container plants

Our container plants, seedlings and rooted cuttings are available in different sizes and quantities, to mix and match amongst your containers. As a general guide, we recommend about 9-10 seedlings or rooted cuttings per 40cm (16in) diameter pot and roughly half as many young plants or 9cm plants to fill a pot of the same size. When you receive your plants it is best to plant them out as soon as possible; remove them from their packaging and water well before planting. **Hardy annuals** (e.g. *Viola cornuta*), **biennials** (e.g. *dianthus*) and frost-hardy **perennials** such as *Erigeron karvinskianus* can be placed outdoors in early spring as they can withstand a light frost. **Half-hardy annuals** (e.g. *arctotis*) and **tender perennials** such as *argyranthemum* should be placed somewhere cool, bright but frost-free and moved outdoors after the last frosts. Most of our container plants prefer a sunny or lightly shaded spot but you can find more information about each variety on our website.

Tips for planting a spring or summer pot

1. Use as big a pot as you can. Large volumes of compost will take longer to dry out and won't need to be watered so often.
2. Put plenty of crocks (e.g. stones or broken pieces of old plant pots) in the bottom to aid drainage, then fill the pot with a good quality, peat-free multi-purpose compost. Mix in some grit for plants that require sharp drainage.
3. Firm your plants in well and back-fill with compost, so there are no bare roots. These dry out very quickly. Water the plants in really well, then back-fill with a bit more compost if the surface has sunk more than an inch below the plant rim.
4. Water and dead-head as often as you can and start a weekly liquid feed after about a month, you can make your own using Comfrey Pellets (see our website).

Perennials & biennials

All of our container-grown perennials and biennials (e.g. angelica, digitalis and hesperis) can be planted out at any time of year (as long as the soil is not frozen or waterlogged), unless they are frost-tender (see page 5). Spring is an ideal time for planting as it allows the roots to get established before the weather turns drier.

Choosing a site Most of our perennials will thrive in full sun or light shade in a moist but well-drained soil but visit sarahraven.com for more details about each variety. **Soil preparation** Prepare the ground well before planting out your perennials to help get them off to the best possible start. Dig over the soil, removing any weeds or large stones and incorporate plenty of organic material

4 For more details on all our plants see our website

such as garden compost or Orgro chicken manure. Use a rake to level the soil and create a fine tilth.

Planting out When you have chosen the best planting site for your plants, mark out the position with a plant label or empty pot – to make sure you space them correctly (see our website for height and spacing information). Remove plants from their packaging and soak them in a bucket or wheelbarrow full of water for twenty minutes if they seem dry. Dig generous planting holes, deep and wide enough so that the roots will be covered. To encourage establishment we recommend covering the root ball and the base of the planting hole with Rootgrow - mycorrhizal fungi (see our website). When placing the plant in the ground ensure the bottom of the crown sits flush with the soil surface, backfill and firm the soil down around each plant. Water well after planting and during dry spells until established.

Bare root perennials

Our bare root perennials usually arrive without leaves in bags with a tiny amount of loose soil to protect the root. Upon arrival you may find some shoots emerging depending on the time of year, these can be pruned to a couple of inches if preferred. It is very important to soak the roots in lukewarm water and plant the dormant perennials as soon as possible after you receive them. If you do need to store them for a short amount of time then remove all packaging and sit them in loose compost in a cool frost-free location. **Planting out** Dig a generous planting hole, so the roots are well spaced and covered. To encourage establishment we recommend covering the root and base of the planting hole with Rootgrow. Ensure the crown of the plant is level with the soil surface with any shoots above ground level. Water in well and mark with a label to remember where you planted it.

Tender perennials

Our tender perennials include alstroemerias, chrysanthemums, dahlias and pelargoniums - they are very similar to half-hardy annuals providing masses of blooms for months on end from summer until the first frosts (or even longer under cover) to give you an extended season of colour into early winter. Tender perennials are often grown as annuals but there is no reason for this since many can be overwintered either by lifting and storing in a frost-free location or by mulching and fleecing through winter – chrysanthemums and dahlias are great examples of this, see below and page 6.

Planting out Tender perennials will be damaged or killed by a hard frost so keep them in a bright, frost-free place or protect them with horticultural fleece until you are sure the frosts are over. Most will thrive in a sunny, sheltered position in moist but well-drained soil which has had some organic matter dug in. **For container-growing** use a quality peat-free compost and feed regularly with an organic liquid fertiliser to keep plants growing until next winter. For more information about each variety visit our website.

Chrysanthemums

Our chrysanthemums are divided into two groups: Outdoor (or early-flowering) varieties are grown in pots or borders outside and should flower from late summer to early autumn; Indoor (or late-flowering) varieties can be grown in pots outside during the summer and brought into a greenhouse in autumn where they will begin flowering until late winter. **Outdoor Chrysanthemums** pot these on into 7cm pots as soon as you receive them using a good quality, multi-purpose, peat-free compost. Water well and place somewhere frost-free with lots of light - a greenhouse

or cold-frame is ideal. They will be ready to go out into the garden when the roots have filled the pot, or around mid-May. **Planting out** Choose a sunny, sheltered spot with protection from strong winds and well-drained but fertile soil that has had some organic matter dug in. Push bamboo canes into the ground at 30-45cm intervals and plant one chrysanth next to each cane. Water generously after planting for 1-2 weeks to help plants get established. **Feed once a month** using a balanced liquid feed (see our website). You can also grow outdoor varieties under cover (see below) protecting them from wind and rain should give a longer harvest of flowers than growing them outside. **Indoor Chrysanthemums** should ideally be grown in a greenhouse or protected growing space of some kind. If you have soil beds in your greenhouse, the rooted cuttings can be planted direct as soon as you receive them, spaced at 30-40cm intervals and watered in well. Alternatively you can grow your chrysanth in large pots, about 35-40cm in diameter, to be move outside in good weather. Fill the pots with a peat-free multi-purpose compost and plant one rooted cutting per pot. Water in well. Provide support by inserting a stake at their side, tying them in as they grow. Water freely throughout the summer and give them a balanced liquid feed every two weeks from midsummer until the flower buds start to appear. If you have moved your pots outside be sure to bring them back indoors before the September gales arrive, and pick the flowers from there. For advice on lifting and storing chrysanthemums visit the advice pages of our website. **Pinching out or disbudding** As with almost every plant you grow for picking, you want stocky, stout rugby players rather than spindly athletes. So once they reach 6-8in, we pinch out **spray chrysanth**s, removing the top growth and taking it down to three or four leaves up from the base of the plant. This promotes formation of side shoots and you'll create a bushier, more flower-productive clump. You can use what you remove as a cutting (see the advice pages of our website for more information). **Single-bloom chrysanth**s If you are growing the large-headed blooms – not the spays – and want one large shaggy flower, you will need to disbud. This is a similar technique to training tomatoes – removing all the side shoots as the plant grows to create one strong stem.

Dahlias

Our potted dahlias are among the lowest maintenance, highest production cut flower and garden plants you can grow. In a good year, they'll flower from late June to early December (particularly in a sheltered spot). **Choosing a site** Dahlias thrive in most sunny situations and do best in a fertile soil, with moisture and good drainage. They need winter protection and should be planted out when the danger of frost is over, usually May to early June depending on where in the country you live. Place them in a light, frost-free place and keep the compost moist until you are ready to plant them outside. **Planting in the garden** Dig a hole deep and wide enough to cover the root ball, add some compost or manure to the base of the planting hole and if you garden on heavy clay add plenty of grit for drainage. You will need a stout stake, not just a bamboo cane, to support each plant and it is a good idea to knock this in first and then place the plant by its side. Once a fortnight, feed them with a liquid balanced feed, you can make your own using Comfrey Pellets (see our website). In a drought it's a good idea to water them once a week, with a good flood not a gentle sprinkle. With the stake in place at planting, tie them in every couple of weeks. If not securely staked dahlias can easily break off right at the base in wind or rain. **In containers** Choose a container which is at least 30cm (12in) in diameter and depth for optimum growth. Dahlias are hungry plants so use a good quality, peat-free compost (see our website) and add a slow release fertiliser for strong growth. Dahlias are also thirsty, during a dry spell you may need to water every

day. If you are growing a tall variety you will need to stake them. **Pinching out** Whether you are growing your dahlias outside in the garden or under cover, you need to pinch out the tips of the main shoot once plants reach a height of about 40cm (16in). Either with a sharp knife, or squeezed beneath your thumb and forefinger, remove the main shoot down to the top pair of leaves. You also need to remove all but five shoots sprouting from the tuber. It feels brutal but pinching out encourages bushy growth that will produce lots of flowers.

Pests Slugs love dahlias, especially when dahlias shoot, so protect plants from the word go. We use Nemaslug, a biological control to get rid of the slugs at Perch Hill. Wool pellets and seaweed granules also work well by forming a harmless barrier around your dahlias, see our website for more information about all of these. **Harvesting** If you don't pick every flower for the house, it's a good idea to have an occasional blitz of deadheading. This will make them look much better and will prolong flowering. Cut heads off, removing the whole dead flowering stem. For more advice on growing dahlias, including how to overwinter them visit our website.

Pelargoniums

A really healthy, bushy pelargonium (also known as a geranium) is a wonderful thing to see, filling a handsome pot during the summer. The varieties grown for their flowers can be arranged top to toe in tiers, from June until November. Then there are the scented-leaf ones, pert-looking, healthy and abundant, whenever you brush past them, they fill the air with scent. They can be grown as bedding outside during the summer months, or in containers, but they are not hardy so must be brought inside before the onset of frost. They also make ideal houseplants and are fantastic decorating a conservatory. **In the garden** Plant in fertile moist soil after all risk of frost has passed. Most cultivars prefer full sun, but regal pelargoniums, e.g. 'Lord Bute', prefer part shade. To prepare them for the garden grow them on in 9cm pots. Once the pelargoniums have filled those, pot on into a 2 Litre pot and sink them into their final growing position or container no earlier than the start of May. **Indoors** Grow in a quality peat-free compost (see our website) in full light, but with shade from hot sun, and good ventilation. Water your pelargoniums sparingly every two to three days during their active growing season. **Feed your pelargoniums** once flowers start to form with an organic liquid plant food rich in potash every fortnight. Deadhead regularly to help prolong flowering and please be aware that contact with the foliage may occasionally aggravate skin allergies. For more information about pelargoniums including aftercare and maintenance visit our website.



Roses

Bare root roses are great value and often stronger growers than pot-grown plants. You can plant bare root roses from March, but wait until there is no frost on the ground, or you can pot them into large, deep containers to grow on and plant them into the garden at any time – as long as you keep them well watered.

Choosing a site Find a spot that has at least half of the day in sun. If you are replacing old roses with new roses, remove as much of the old soil as possible and replace with soil that hasn't grown roses before (the old soil will grow anything else apart from roses). As a general rule, use climbers on walls, fences, pillars and pergolas. Ramblers will grow into hedges, trees, over large arches and may also be used on pillars and pergolas. Shrubs can be planted in amongst your borders. See our website for more information on heights, flowering times and spacing for specific rose varieties. **Planting out** Soak the root in a bucket of water overnight. Dig a generous hole that suits the size and shape of the roots you have to plant, every rose is different, some roots are at funny angles and so will need extra care when planting. Fork the base of the hole over well to break up the soil and add a handful of Organic Rose Fertiliser (see website). Mound a small pile of soil - mixed with a little compost - in the centre of the hole to support the crown of the rose. Sprinkle the base of the planting hole and the roots with Rootgrow - mycorrhizal fungi (see website) and place the rose in the centre of the planting hole. Lay a bamboo cane across the top of the hole to make sure that the 'union' of the rose (ie the union between the root plant and the graft, which looks like a knee) is slightly below soil level. If it isn't, dig the hole more deeply. This is crucial. If the union is above soil level, you promote the formation of suckers from the root material. These may then outgrow the grafted rose on top. Fill in the hole with soil mixed with well-rotted manure (or home-made compost). Firm down with your heel, mulch well and water. **In containers** Roses have a really deep root run, so are not ideal for growing in containers. However, you could try using a 60cm deep (minimum) container pot with a climbing rose - make sure you plant in very good quality compost (specifically for roses). Avoid shrub roses, as you would not be able to give them adequate support as they grow; look out for specially bred varieties suited to growing in containers. Also, as with any plant in a container, make sure it is kept fed and watered. See our website for a guide to training climbing roses and how pruning using the Sissinghurst Method.

Shrubs

A shrub is a long-term investment in your garden so it's a good idea to prepare the ground well before planting, as for perennials (see page 4). Container-grown shrubs can be planted at any time of year provided the ground is not frozen or waterlogged but spring or autumn are good times to get shrubs in the ground. **Planting out** Choose a planting spot that suits the variety you have received, visit our website for more information. Dig a hole deep and wide enough to cover the root ball. You may need to stand the plant in the hole a few times to help you judge it but ideally the top of the rootball should be level with the surface of the soil. **Sprinkle Rootgrow** (mycorrhizal fungi - see website) into the planting hole and around the rootball before positioning the plant into the hole. Backfill with topsoil and firm down gently around the plant. **Water generously** and mulch with compost or well-rotted manure to help retain moisture. Please refer to our website for advice on pruning, aftercare and maintenance of all our shrubs.

8 For more details on all our plants see our website

Climbers

Our half-hardy climbers are all frost tender and will need some protection from cold weather, follow the potting on advice for half-hardy annual seedlings on page 2 before planting outside after the last frosts. Although they are usually grown as annuals many of them are in fact tender perennials and can be overwintered either by lifting and storing in a frost-free location or mulching and fleecing through the winter. See our website for more information.

Hardy climbers, such as clematis and Lonicera, can be planted outside at any time as long as the ground is not frozen or waterlogged.

In the garden Prepare the ground well, as for perennials (see page 4), and make sure that any supports are already in place before planting, it might be tricky to put them in once the plants start growing. When planting next to shrubs or trees, place the hole outside the rain shadow created by their canopies and use canes to train the plant into the shrub or tree. When planting next to a wall or fence, dig the hole at least 60cm away from the wall and train the plant along a cane towards it. Water regularly until established. **In containers** Climbers can make wonderful patio displays in the right pots. Make sure any pots you use for this have a diameter of at least 35cm to give the roots enough space. I love the rustic effect of making wigwams from silver birch, but if you're after a more regimented look, canes will do the job just as well. Either way you need each pole or cane to be at least 2m tall, and there should be one per plant. For aftercare and pruning advice on all climbers, see our website.

Kitchen garden plants

Asparagus

As a rough guide, 10 established plants should yield about 3kg (7lb) of spears, over a six week period each year, for up to 20 years. I have 30 crowns, which produce enough for regular meals for our family of two adults and two children. **Plant out crowns** as soon as possible after you receive them. Prepare the bed by digging in well-rotted manure and, as asparagus likes free-drained soil, add grit if gardening on heavy clay. Remove any perennial weeds. Plant crowns 30cm (12in) apart, with 1m (39in) between rows. Dig a wide trench about 20cm (8in) deep and 30cm (12in) wide. Form a ridge of soil down the centre of the trench, about 10cm (4in) high. Place the crown on the ridge, draping the roots either side. Cover with about 5cm (2in) of soil, then add more soil as the stems grow, aiming to completely fill the trench by autumn. Keep well watered. **Special requirements** It is important to keep the bed free of weeds – they compete with the crowns – so mulch deeply with grit or compost in early spring. **Harvest** Do not harvest spears in the first year after planting, and only a few in the following year. After that, you should be able to cut lots of spears. When the crowns stop producing heavily, they are coming to the end of their natural season. Stop harvesting then and allow the ferns to grow. Give a high-nitrogen liquid feed such as Organic Seaweed Fertiliser (see website) in early summer to encourage the ferns. Cut them to the ground in late autumn when the ferns are brown. **Pests** Watch out for asparagus beetle – a small yellow and black beetle with a red head. They and their buff-coloured grubs eat the ferns, sometimes defoliating them completely and so weakening them. Pick these pests off whenever you see them.

Fig

Planting out Prepare soil well, remove any weeds and add well-rotted manure to the site along with a generous handful of general purpose fertiliser. Avoid planting in to waterlogged, parched or frozen soil. Plant 20cm away from the base of a sunny south or south west facing wall or fence in moist but well-drained soil. Backfill, using enriched garden soil, or with peat free compost (see website). To grow as a fan shape make a support of wires horizontally along the wall or fence to train the fig onto. Harvest August-September. **Maintenance** In late March, cut out dead stems and weak branches before growth starts. Apply a general-purpose granular feed and mulch around the base of plants, with well-rotted organic matter, to retain moisture and suppress weeds. Once the figs appear, apply liquid tomato fertiliser every two to three weeks during the growing season, until they start to ripen. Water well during summer. Remove larger fruits that are not mature enough to ripen at the end of the season, leaving the tiny embryo fruits at the shoot tips, to ripen the following year.

Protect wall-trained figs in winter, after leaf-fall cover with insulation or fleece then remove the insulation in late spring after the risk of frosts. **To grow in a container** Figs do well in containers, choose a pot slightly larger than the one it arrives in and re-pot every two years in March using John Innes No 3 in a pot about 5cm larger each time. Protect during winter.

Raspberries

These one-year-old standard canes will provide bowls of fruit every year (except the first) for the next 8-12 years. Soak them well before you plant them and make sure their roots remain undisturbed as they become established. They are easy to grow and maintain – all you need is space. **Planting out** Plant November-March. Prepare the ground well – they do not like poor soil, so dig in plenty of well-rotted manure. Make a solid support with a wire and post structure. Plant at 40cm (34in) intervals, with rows about 2m (79in) apart. Plant at a depth of about 6cm (2.5in), spreading the roots out. Prune the stem back to 25cm (10in). Harvest July-October. **Maintenance** Water regularly and get rid of weeds. In spring, mulch with a well-rotted manure Summer-fruiting raspberries ('Glen Ample') should be pruned as soon as they have finished fruiting, by cutting back all the fruited canes to ground level and tying in the new canes. Autumn-fruiting raspberries ('Autumn Bliss') should be pruned by cutting all the canes back to ground-level at the end of the winter. Prune all canes again in the spring by cutting back to a healthy bud about 15cm (6in) above the top of the supporting wire.

Rhubarb

When you receive your bare root rhubarb plants Plant in a pot of compost, with the growing point at or just below the soil surface. Grow them on for about a month until the roots have filled the pot well. **Planting out** Choose an open, sunny site with moist but free-drained soil, as rhubarb hates being waterlogged in winter. Avoid frost pockets as stems are susceptible to frost. Choose an area which has not grown rhubarb in the last six years. Rhubarb can also be planted in very large pots at least 50cm (20in) deep and wide. **Special requirements** Don't harvest anything in the first season – mulch your plants (not too close to the crown) and let them grow and establish themselves well. Simply allow the sticks of rhubarb to die back in the first autumn. Spread organic compost around the crown in its dormant winter phase. If a stressed plant should run to seed in late spring due to dry and cold conditions, remove the flowering spike straight away. **Harvest** In the second season (12-14 months after planting), you can start picking when the leaves have fully unfurled and the stems are approximately 30cm (12in) long. Never take more than half of the stems at a time – over-cropping

will reduce the plants vigour. Stalks are harvested by gently twisting the stems and pulling from the base of the plant. **Remember: the leaves are poisonous** to eat but can be safely composted with the rest of your garden waste. **Division** Lift and divide crowns every 5 or 6 years, between November and March while the plant is dormant. Use a spade to lift each crown, split into 3 or 4 pieces and replant separately. Make sure each piece has a healthy looking bud, which will become the growth point for next year's new shoots.

Strawberries

Grow these in the border, in pots, in the veg patch or in the allotment. They are easy to grow and, after a smaller first crop, will provide abundant fruit for at least three years. When you receive your bare root strawberry plants immerse in a bucket of warm water and soak for 20 minutes so the roots can rehydrate. **Planting out** Choose a sunny, sheltered spot and dig in plenty of compost or well-rotted manure. Plant 45cm (18in) apart with 75cm (30in) between each row. Dig your planting holes to the same depth as the lengths of the roots and twice as wide. Spread the roots out in the hole and refill the hole with soil, keeping the crown of the plant where shoots will emerge at soil level. Water after planting and mulch with straw or bark to help preserve moisture. Alternatively, they may also be planted through sheets of polythene which will help smother weeds, retain soil moisture and encourage early cropping by warming the soil. **Special requirements** Strawberries require regular watering throughout the growing season and ripening fruits can be netted against pests. Flowers may need protecting from frosts in spring. Pinch out runners as they appear if new plants are not required. Once the crop has been picked, cut out old foliage from plants, taking care not to damage young leaves. Clear away straw, foliage and debris from around the plants to reduce opportunities for pests and diseases to take hold. Feed with a balanced fertiliser. Harvest May-July, when fully ripe, complete with stalks. Use at once for best flavour.

Tomatoes

Ring culture pots These are special tomato-growing pots, divided into an inner chamber for the feeding roots (which look like green fingers) and an outer, deeper chamber, which connects with the water roots, which are created more deeply in the soil. By using these pots, feeding only into the central chamber, and watering only into the outer, you direct the feed to the right roots and the water the same. This has been proven to increase yield and improve flavour. We have tested these now for several years and they work very well. See our website for more details.

In the ground In a greenhouse prepare the ground by adding well-rotted manure or a soil-based compost like John Innes no.2 or 3 to enrich the soil. Plant 50cm apart in a ring culture pot and stake well. If not using a ring culture pot, plant as deeply as possible. In the soil outside, it's best to wait until June to plant your tomatoes outside in a sheltered spot. Then plant as above. **In a Grow Bag** Plant approx. 40cm apart, ideally in ring culture pots and stake well. **In a pot** Choose a large pot (at least 5 litres) and fill with good quality peat-free compost. Plant the tomato seedling in a ring culture pot placed in the top of the larger pot and stake well with a bamboo cane. **Aftercare** Tie your tomato plants into their canes as often as you can as they grow, and pinch out the side shoots, forming between the main stem and the leaves every week or so. Any side shoot breaking directly from the main stem, not just above a leaf, is a flowering (not a side) shoot and should NOT be pinched. **Feeding** Water and feed your tomatoes regularly. We recommend Organic Tomato Fertiliser with Seaweed. See our website for more details.

Veg and salad seedlings

Most of our veg and salad seedlings are grown as annuals to be replaced each year, for perennial veg such as asparagus, see page 9. **Hardy annuals** can be planted straight out in spring as they will withstand light frosts. Follow the ground preparation and planting advice on page 2 for our hardy annual cut flower seedlings. **Half-hardy annuals** will be killed or damaged by frosts and will need some protection until the weather warms up enough for them to be planted out, follow the advice on page 2 for our half-hardy annual cut flower seedlings.

Different varieties have different spacing requirements, see our website for more details.

For container growing, use a pot that is at least 25cm (10in) deep and wide and be prepared to water daily during dry spells. A feed of a general-purpose liquid fertiliser can be applied every two weeks. If frost is likely, cover plants with horticultural fleece and move to a warm, sheltered spot.

Herb seedlings and plants

Our **hardy annual**, **biennial** and **perennial** herbs can be planted straight into the ground, a window box or container but frost tender herbs (e.g. basil) will need protection before planting out after the last frosts.

Many herbs are Mediterranean in origin and will usually need lots of sun plus a well-drained soil although some will tolerate a damp site in partial shade, see our website for more information about each variety including spacings. Pinch out the tips of clump-forming herbs such as basil and parsley after planting and trim back shrubby herbs such as rosemary and thyme to encourage more side-shoots and a bushy habit. Keep well-watered and if growing in containers apply a general liquid feed every 2 weeks during the growing season.

Bulbs in the green

Bluebells, winter aconites and snowdrops do better planted like this in the spring, rather than in their dormant state. They settle in quickly and should start to flower from the following year.

When your bulbs arrive it is best to plant them out straight away. All of these varieties thrive in moist, well-drained soil that is rich in organic matter and dappled shade, ideally under a deciduous tree, although snowdrops will also do well out in the open. Prepare the soil well by forking over to remove any weeds or large stones and incorporating plenty of well-rotted manure, leaf mould or garden compost to the soil prior to planting. **Dig a hole** deep and wide enough to cover the roots and plant them at the level that they were planted before they were lifted, which you'll see from where the leaves turn white, spacing aconites and snowdrops 6-8cm apart and bluebells 10cm apart. Water in well after planting. Over time they will gradually self-sow and naturalise. Large clumps can be lifted and divided whilst they are still 'in the green' to create large drifts or just leave them to get on with it.

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For more growing advice, Sarah's videos and gardening articles visit our website

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