

PART 2



30-minute veg plot

Now is the perfect time to plant out your favourite veg for crops all summer, says **Alex Mitchell**. And it only takes 30 minutes a week

With young kids and a busy work schedule, I appreciate any shortcuts I can find when it comes to veg gardening. Follow this time-saving guide to creating a packed summer veg bed, starting now, and you'll have plenty to harvest this summer even if you can only spare 30 minutes a week.

It's not too late to start growing vegetables this year. In fact, it's the perfect time because you can just buy ready-grown plants and pop them into the soil – no fiddly seed sowing or worrying about late frosts. Next month, I'll show you how to keep the harvests coming all autumn and winter.

Where to grow

A raised bed is the perfect place to grow vegetables, because you can fill it with a good quality soil and compost mix. But if you don't have one spare, or yours is already full with veg from last month's feature, pots will be fine. Tomatoes and courgettes need a large pot, about 40cm wide (or use a grow bag) and herbs will be happy in a windowbox or smaller pots.

MISSED PART 1? Download a pdf from gardenersworld.com/30-minute-veg or buy a back issue, complete with 2 for 1 gardens to visit card at gardenersworld.com/2-for-1-gardens/order-now

Your vegetables to start now



1 A close-up of hands tying a tomato plant stem to a bamboo cane. **2** A close-up of hands pinching a shoot from a tomato plant. **3** A woman in a pink shirt holding a ripe tomato in a garden.

Tomatoes
A summer staple, these are easy to grow if you buy plants now. Four tall plants will give you lots of fruits in a fairly small space.

- 1** Make a wigwam 40cm wide, to support your tomatoes with four 2m tall bamboo canes, secured at the top with twine. Plant a tomato plant at the base of each cane and water well.
- 2** As the plants grow, tie the main stem to its cane. As shoots form in the joint between the stem and leaves, pinch them out with your fingers. When the plants have grown to the height of the wigwam, chop the tops off. Find out more on p143.
- 3** Water well and feed the plants with a tomato feed every two weeks once you can see small fruits forming. Pick individual tomatoes as they ripen from the lower trusses of the plant first.



A close-up of hands using scissors to harvest basil leaves from a bushy plant.

Basil
Perfect to grow with tomatoes as they like the same conditions. Buy a plant from the garden centre or supermarket.

Plant in a sunny spot at the edge of the bed, water in well and don't allow the plant to dry out. Pick leaves little and often by snipping or pinching out the stems with your fingers back to a pair of new leaves. This way the plant will keep producing new leaves and stay bushy not leggy.

Now risk of frost is past, you can plant tomatoes, courgettes and herbs outside, to romp away. You're skipping the time-consuming process of sowing seeds and protecting seedlings under cover, and these larger plants are less at risk from slugs and snails too. Choose cordon (also called indeterminate or vine) tomatoes and compact, bush courgettes.



1 A courgette seedling in a pot. **2** A hand pouring red liquid fertilizer from a jug into a green cap. **3** A hand using a knife to cut a courgette from its stem.

Courgettes
Trouble-free and prolific, two courgette plants will feed a family. Give them plenty of space as these are big plants.

- 1** Choose a sunny position. If in a raised bed, plant about 40cm from the edge so it can grow outwards and tumble down the side, saving precious space within the bed for other crops. Water in well to settle the soil around the plant.
- 2** Feed with a tomato feed every two weeks once flowers have formed and don't let them dry out – these are thirsty plants.
- 3** Pick courgettes regularly when they're about 10cm long, cutting through the stem at the base with a sharp knife. Don't leave them or they will turn into marrows, seemingly overnight!



A close-up of hands using scissors to harvest chives with purple flowers.

Chives
Buy a plant now from the garden centre or supermarket and plant out for years of pickings, as your chives resprout each spring.

Plant in a sunny spot and water in well. To harvest, snip a bunch of leaves with scissors at the base. They will then regrow. Cut off flower stems to encourage new leaves. Eat the flowers in salads. Water when the soil looks dry. Don't panic when it dies back in winter, this is normal.

PHOTOS: SARAH CUTTLE; PAUL DEBOIS; GETTY/PETER TSAI PHOTOGRAPHY; JASON INGRAM; TIM SANDALL

Key tasks to keep harvesting

When time is tight, it's important to use it wisely. Use our at-a-glance guide to help you plan the key jobs for this month and the coming months. In the next issue, you'll find more advice, so you can keep your plot on track.

June



Keep a can full of water handy for quick watering



Feed tomatoes and courgettes every two weeks

Watering Get in the habit of refilling the watering can every time you use it so you always have a full can ready for a quick morning watering session. One full, large watering can should be enough for a raised bed 2m x 1m. Another in the evening may be necessary on warm days. If your can has a rose (sprinkler head), remove it so you can direct water to the roots where it's needed, rather than spraying the leaves.

Feeding Jot a reminder note in your diary or phone every two weeks after flowers have appeared on your tomato and courgette plants. Then feed both crops at the same time, using the same tomato fertiliser, so it only takes five minutes.

FIND MORE advice for a new veg plot at gardenersworld.com/basics

July



Keep watering



Feed tomato and courgette plants



Keep picking basil and chives



Plant kale for winter crops

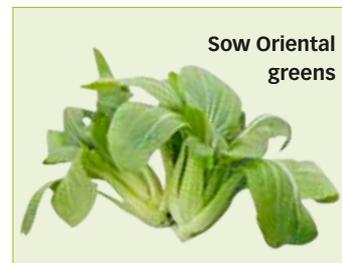


Sow winter salads

August



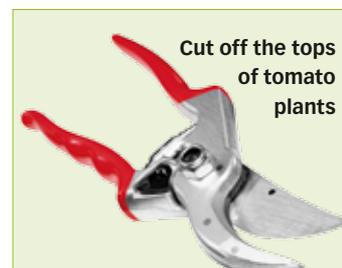
Start picking courgettes and tomatoes



Sow Oriental greens



Keep watering and feeding with tomato fertiliser, which is high in potash



Cut off the tops of tomato plants



Discover how to keep your plot productive all through autumn and winter in next month's issue

Where to buy

- **Dobies** 0333 240 5933, dobies.co.uk
- **Mr Fothergill's** 0333 777 3936, mr-fothergills.co.uk
- **Marshalls** 0844 557 6700, marshalls-seeds.co.uk
- **Rocket Gardens** 01326 222169, rocketgardens.co.uk
- **Sarah Raven** 0345 092 0283, sarahraven.com

NEXT MONTH How to keep harvesting until winter