

Gardening club



with DAVID DOMONEY

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Q&A



Are my fruit plants all in need of feed?

Should I feed all my fruit plants? Gillian, Stockport.
DAVID: Yes! Regular feed can help a fruit plant to produce a strong crop and most plants will benefit from a potassium rich fertiliser applied three times in the growing season – once in mid spring, then mid-summer and a final dose in late summer. Follow the instructions on the packet.



Help save animals from watery grave

How can I prevent wild animals falling into my pond? Sam, Exeter.
DAVID: Hedgehogs, mice and other small mammals are at risk of falling into ponds, but this can easily be prevented. Simply incorporate a gentle slope, such as a plank with grips, into one side of the pond, or create a shallow area with pebbles. This will likely attract birds to bathe as well.

TIP of the week

Growing bags are great for tomatoes but can also be used to grow fiery chillies and succulent cucumbers, or as a mini herb garden.

GET IN TOUCH

For loads more hints and tips on gardening visit daviddomoney.com or follow me on Facebook at @DavidDomoneyTV or on Twitter @daviddomoney

'Edible Britain' will be the focus of National Gardening Week this year to nurture our love of homegrown food, and to inspire the next generation

Join the country's biggest celebration of gardening – and share your love of edible produce when National Gardening Week starts tomorrow. It's easy to join in with these low-key concepts for a plentiful patio.

GARDEN GARNISH

As more people begin reconnecting with the source of their food, we're turning to growing at home for food we can trust and many of us are bursting at the gills with bright planting ideas. And rightly so – your garden can be a non-stop source of nutrition, a treasure trove of untapped resources you can unlock for a tastier teatime.

All these great gardening efforts will have a wider impact too, benefiting the local community by encouraging people to take steps towards better mental and physical health. Likewise, through gardening we're helping local wildlife as well as supporting efforts towards greener spaces and reduced waste – both steps help care for the environment.

NATIONAL NOURISHMENT

The truth is that everyone has space to grow something delicious to eat. You don't have to become an expert at cropping to make a start, why not get

Beetroot trumps all container crops, even its leaves are edible

involved at your local community garden or project? Don't fret if you're low on time, there are heaps of ways to join the craze from the comfort of your own home: from weird and wacky weeds to wild and wonderful approaches to patio planting. Take part in harvesting at home to not only experience the joy of growing but reap the rewards of fresh food you've foraged for free.

PATIO INSPIRATION

A well-stocked patio will give access to homegrown harvests at arm's reach – visit pavestone.co.uk for piles of patio inspiration, but simple pots are fabulous little space savers. Plus there's the added benefit that they're not a permanent fixture, so you can take them with you when you move. Take a crack at these care-free container crops: Radishes, carrots and tasty tomatoes can all be grown in pots and will add a healthy dose to your diet. But, for me, beetroots truly trump



EAT-YOUR GREENS Leaves are lush and full of nutrients

CAN'T BEET IT Root vegetables and rhubarb are great for growing



GET RAD Choose care-free options



Eats of nature



CREAM OF CROP Strawbs are simple

all the other container crops as they're loaded with antioxidants – and you can even eat the leaves as a spinach substitute. If floor space is limited, just grow vertically instead. Sow lettuce Lollo Rosa in intervals, with one or two seeds to a pot less, sown an inch deep. Once your confidence is climbing, try your hand at crunchy cucumber

or satisfying squash like Tromboncino for the ultimate trellis test. It's always an idea to plant for purpose. Mint is one of my favourite herbs because it's so versatile, can be grown in window boxes and will lift lamb dishes a treat. Pre-sown seed mats can be a simple way of getting started – take a look at my Mr Fothergill's Herb Collection

mats for a blanket of basil, coriander, chives, mint and parsley seedlings that sprout within a month. For fruit fanatics try cherry, pear and peach trees such as self-fertile Bonanza cultivar, positioned on a sunny patio, for a deck decorated with ripe fruit for the picking. Strawberries are also great for kids because of their bright red colour, juicy

texture and sweetness – you can even get planting them in hanging baskets. **UNUSUAL EDIBLES** 1 Nutritious nuts: Did you know that peanuts, hazelnuts, sweet chestnuts and walnuts can be grown in the UK? There's a nut out there for every soil type and you can plant peanuts now

– they'll be ready to harvest in 120 days. Or go nuts with low-maintenance hazel trees, which like a sunny spot that's partially shaded. Almonds can produce crops of nuts when trained against a sunny structure. 2 Funky flowers: Grow edible flowers such as pansies and calendulas to add to salads or drinks – or crystallise them to decorate cakes. Violas bring a mild sweetness and pretty embellishment to any dish, while the bright blooms of Tropaeolum majus (nasturtium) have a peppery flavour much like watercress. 3 Unknown uses: Some lesser-known parts of plants can be a surprising source of goodness. For instance, flowers from citrus trees add a unique lemony nuance to stir fries.

Spud tubs helping to open children's eyes



HERE WE GROW Matthew and kids

Here at Cultivation Street, we are lucky to have a network of ambassadors ready to get stuck in and share their passion with their local communities. Each one is unique, finding their own way to help local organisations. Matthew Lewis, of The Old Railway Line garden centre in Brecon, Wales, is a perfect example. One of Matthew's projects, an annual potato growing contest, is a great example of his inspiring work. Matthew visits one class at each school taking part and demonstrates how to plant a tub of potatoes. This class then helps the rest of the school

plant their own class tub. At the end of summer term, the garden centre hands out prizes for the largest crop. Explaining how a simple yet exciting project can educate children about the world around them, Matthew says: "The children really enjoyed this challenge and were enthusiastic to get gardening. It's fascinating for them to see where their food comes from. It's great for confidence – children become the

teachers when planting with their fellow classmates and pass on tips for growing the best crop. Using only one seed potato, they could produce enough for a family meal." Louise Simms, head of Archdeacon Griffiths CIW Primary School, said: "This type of project enriches the curriculum, and teaches lifelong skills. We can't thank Matthew and The Old Railway Line garden centre enough." Cultivations Street's annual contest, sponsored by Callope®, is open to schools and communities up and down the country. For more information, visit cultivationstreet.com.

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OFFER of the week

These miniature fruit trees are perfect for growing in pots on the patio, or where space is limited. Their maximum mature height is two metres, and during spring they produce delicate white blossoms. We have selected three for our Patio Fruit Tree Collection, priced at only £29.98 – that's 1 FREE. You will receive one each of Apple Redspur, Apple Golden Spur and Pear Lilliput. Or buy them singly at £14.99 each. Supplied in 1.5 litre pot plants, delivery is within 14 days. To order by debit/credit card, call 0843 922 5000 quoting **SMTGO22**. Or send a cheque payable to Garden Offers (using blue or black ink), to Patio Fruit Trees Offer (SMTGO22), PO Box 64, South West District Office, Manchester, M16 9HY or visit mirrorgardenoffers.co.uk.

GADGET

Bee bricks are a really lovely new product, designed to provide safe nesting places for solitary bees – whose population is declining. Positioned as a freestanding bee nest in the garden or allotment, or built in as an integral part of a building, they will add new habitats for bees. Each bee brick – designed and made in Cornwall from polished concrete – contains cavities for solitary bees to lay their eggs. Place in a warm sunny spot, preferably south-facing with no vegetation in front of the holes, around one metre from the ground. From £15.29 for smaller versions, via waitrosegarden.com.