

# Groovy Growing

There are thousands of wonderful and useful plants to grow in the garden. The following have been specially picked because they are:





easy to grow;

have sensory appeal (colour, taste, touch, smell);

do something interesting and




can be used for a fun activity.

## Courgettes (zucchini)

-  The big seeds are easily planted and they grow quickly (seed to harvest is about 6 weeks).
-  They have huge, rough leaves and yellow, white, green or stripy courgette fruits (mixed variety seed packets are good value).
-  Fruits get noticeably bigger after just one warm day! Measure them and see! Can you grow a giant?
-  Fun for children to harvest. Fruits can be eaten raw in salads or lightly fried in butter. Small ones are the tastiest. The yellow flowers can be eaten too.






## Potato

-  The large tubers are very easy for children to plant. They can be grown in containers and do best if grown in fertile soil or compost. Potatoes grow rapidly and shade out weeds.
-  Excitement guaranteed when children dig up potatoes for the first time! Frogs, toads, caterpillars and spiders can be found amongst the leaves.
-  Home grown potatoes taste wonderful. Bake them, boil them, mash them, enjoy them!



## Honesty

-  This is a flower that grows easily from seed. It has attractive flowers and interesting transparent seed cases which rattle when blown.
-  The flowers attract butterflies. The orange tip butterfly lays its eggs on this plant so you may have caterpillars too! Bullfinches come to enjoy the seeds.
-  Seed cases are fun to play with and for decorating home made cards.



The best of these for a windowbox are sunflowers, lavender and snapdragons.

## Sunflowers

- They have large seeds that are easy to sow, in pots or in a seed bed (dwarf varieties can be grown in windowboxes).
- They have huge, bright yellow flowers that also provide nectar for bees.
- Sunflowers follow the sun. They keep their heads and their leaves turned to face the sun as it moves across the sky.
- One sunflower seed produces 1000s more if the flower head is left after the petals fall. Birds will come for the seeds or you can eat them or plant them next year.
- Create a hiding place for children by planting a row of sunflowers behind lower bushier plants.



## Snap Dragons

- They are very easy to grow from seed.
- The flowers are velvety soft, brightly coloured and shaped like a dragon's mouth.
- Nectar guides (patterns of changing colours & spots) guide bees into the flower like the lights at an airport guide the planes to the landing strip.
- Squeeze the sides of the dragon's mouth inwards and see the mouth open up. Watch bees having to push their way in and come out dusted with pollen.



## Lavender

- Buy as a young bush, grow from seed or from a cutting.
- Leaves are silvery green and soft to touch. Flowers and leaves have a lovely smell. Lavender is known for its relaxing properties.
- Both bees and butterflies are attracted to lavender.
- Mix lavender leaves and flowers with a few other herbs (lemon balm, marigolds, roses) to make a simple, fun and very satisfying potpourri.
- Lavender bags, for going under a pillow or in a clothes drawer, are easily made using muslin and lavender flowers and leaves.



## Willow

- Willow is very easily grown from cuttings. Keep cutting back if a plant grows too big – it will just produce fresh new shoots.
- Stems are pleasing to touch, easy to bend and there are many different shapes and colours of leaves and stems. Catkins in March are a sign of spring.
- Cuttings grow so fast and are so bendy that they can be planted in shapes such as wigwams or tunnels and within a few years you will have a robust living play house.
- Willow shoots can be woven together to make hoops for throwing, star shapes, and baskets.



## Teasels

- Seeds are sown in trays or directly onto a seed bed. The sturdy seedlings can be planted out by young children.
- The leaves have a rough texture with soft prickles. The flower heads are an unusual shape and the seed heads are prickly.
- The dried stalks and seed heads are beautiful when frosted in winter and are ideal places for spiders to hang their webs. The flowers attract butterflies and other insects.
- Dried seed heads make bodies for model hedgehogs. Stalks & seed heads make autumn / winter / Christmas decorations .
- Birds will drink from water trapped in the leaf forks.
- Make a squirrel teaser. Cover the teasel heads in a bird cake mix and hang from feeders. Squirrels don't like getting prickled feet but the birds do not mind.

