

## Edible Gardens – Creating your own plants

Growing your own food is a wonderful experience for so many reasons. One of the real wonders of gardening is actually creating your own plants. Whether it be planting tomato seeds or dividing clumps of mint, we can easily grow our own food from scratch. This fact sheet gives you some basic information on the major forms of plant propagation that you might use in your edible garden.

Although not really a form of propagation, planting out seedlings may be the most practical form of growing plants for some people with a disability.

If you wish to take the next step of creating your own plants, you have a number of options based on the types of plants you wish to grow.

### Seeds

Growing plants from seeds is not only cheap and fast, but can be for free if you collect some seed from your previous crop for planting out in the next season.

Most seeds need 3 major ingredients to germinate.

- Moisture
- Warmth
- Soil (or Potting mix).

All seeds have slightly different needs so it is important to read the seed packet for how and when to plant each variety. In general a seed needs to be buried to the same depth of soil as the size of the seed itself. Therefore very small seeds will only need a sprinkle of soil to cover them. However if a seed is 1 cm long, make sure it is covered with 1 cm of soil.

The following is a rough guide to the spacing needed for some common food seeds

Seed	Seed Size	Spacing
Beans	Large	20 cm
Capsicum	Medium	50 cm
Celery	Very small	30 cm
Chives	Very small	5 cm
Corn	Large	40 cm
Cucumbers	Medium	50 cm
Lettuce	Very small	20 cm
Parsley	Very small	20 cm
Peas	Large	20 cm
Pumpkins	Large	70 cm
Silverbeet	Small	30 cm
Sunflowers	Large	30 cm
Tomatoes	Small	50 cm

### **Cuttings**

This is simply cutting a piece off an existing plant and placing it in potting mix to create a new "clone" which will grow into another new plant. This method of propagation usually only works well with certain types of perennial plants. (i.e. plants that grow from season to season and don't die off after flowering).

One particularly easy group of plants to grow this way are the lamiaceae family which includes rosemary, lavender, sage, mint, thyme just to name a few. Vietnamese mint can be very easily propagated by leaving a cutting in a glass of water until it sends out roots, then plant in the garden or in a pot.

### **Dividing plants**

Clumping plants like mint, tarragon, oregano can be divided into smaller clumps and transplanted, thus creating a new plant.

Probably the easiest is dividing a potato into segments and planting these.

### **Runners**

Many plants send out shoots that run across the ground and will take root where they touch a bare patch of soil. You can easily turn these into separate plants by cutting off the runner and planting it separately. A good example of this type of propagation is the strawberry plant.

Try a variety of methods. Remember some might not work out, but that's part of being a gardener.

Above all else, have some fun trying and enjoy your garden.



This fact sheet was developed by the Horticultural Therapy Association of Victoria