



Making Everything Easier!™

Growing Your Own Fruit & Veg

FOR
DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Create a thriving vegetable patch, however large or small your plot
- Plan your planting calendar to enjoy delicious crops all year round
- Cultivate and harvest your fruit and vegetables
- Grow organically

Geoff Stebbings

Gardening writer, editor and broadcaster



***Growing Your
Own Fruit & Veg***
FOR
DUMMIES®

by Geoff Stebbings



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About the Author

Geoff Stebbings got hooked on gardening at the age of eight and soon knew that he wanted to make it his career. He had weekend gardening jobs while at school, as well as working for a greengrocer. He trained at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and has worked in garden centres and in a specialist nursery before becoming a Head Gardener, restoring a historic garden. It was while working here that Geoff became closely involved with the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens and he had responsibility for the National Collection of Award-Winning Iris.

In 1989, to try and get others interested in gardening, Geoff became a gardening writer and worked for *Garden News*, *Garden Answers*, *Practical Gardening* and *The Garden* – the journal of the Royal Horticultural Society. He then worked as a freelance writer for ten years and has written several books, including *The Gardener's Guide to Growing Irises*, *The Year-Round Garden* and *Spring Bulbs*.

Geoff also lectures widely and is a member of the Garden Roadshow, which travels around the country visiting major flower shows and answering people's problems. He is a keen gardener and grows a wide range of plants in his garden, greenhouses and on his allotments. His passions are iris and growing tasty food – especially tomatoes – but he says that he could never be a specialist because he loves growing anything and everything – except pampas grass!

Geoff is currently Editor of *Garden Answers* magazine.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to everyone who wants to discover the satisfaction of growing some of their own food. It's a voyage of discovery that never ends.

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We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

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Introduction

Gardening is an exciting journey. Every year is different: growing something new, experimenting with new varieties, and experiencing all that the British weather can throw at you (perfect weather one year and rotten weather the next!). No matter how many years you spend in the garden, you never get to know everything and you can always improve. But with every year you gain more experience, and the successes you have make your yearning for knowledge get even stronger.

Growing your own crops gets you outside in the open air and gives you plenty of exercise. More importantly, growing crops gets you back in touch with the seasons and with nature – something that modern living has moved us away from. You experience the near miracle of seeds germinating. You nurture your seedlings and young plants, do your best for them, battle against their enemies, enjoy the abundance of your plants, and finally feed your body with food that's fresh and richer in nutrients than anything you can buy.

Growing crops is fun and rewarding for all ages. Traditionally the domain of the retired, allotments are gaining more and more popularity with younger people. Children usually enjoy gardening where the results are quick and dramatic – fortunately many vegetables fit this description. Kids can also be proud to help provide food for the table. Gardening provides them with so much that they can't discover in the classroom.

Whether you've decided to grow your own crops because you want to know what you're eating, because you care about food miles, because you want to appreciate the differences in the seasons, or because you want to save money, you're bound to enjoy the experience. You'll never know everything, but after all, the journey and not the arriving is the real pleasure.

About This Book

Growing Your Own Fruit & Veg For Dummies enables you to get started in the adventure of growing your own food. I've packed each chapter with the information you need to get the best results and avoid common mistakes. I've written the book so that even if you've never grown anything before, you're able to get started, understand what you're doing, and know what to expect.

Gardening is a huge subject and the plants in this book are as varied as any in the flower garden, but getting to grips with the principles of growing fruit and veg stands you in good stead for growing anything. You can grow plants in as many different ways as there are gardeners and because most plants simply want to grow, sometimes very odd methods give good results. A book like this can't possibly deal with all the different ways to grow plants, so instead I concentrate on tried and trusted ways to sow, plant, grow and prune. As you become more experienced you may discover that you can cheat sometimes and still get good results, but follow the tips in this book and you're well on your way to success. Treat this book as an experienced friend guiding you as you enter the exciting world of growing your own food.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you get the most from this book, I follow a few conventions:

- ✓ *Italic* emphasises and highlights new words or terms that I define.
- ✓ **Boldfaced** text indicates the action part of numbered steps.
- ✓ `Monofont` text displays web addresses.
- ✓ I give all measurements in metric (so that's centimetres and metres rather than inches and feet).

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, I made a few assumptions about who you are:

- ✓ You may be completely new to gardening, and don't know a propagator from a pumpkin! Or maybe you do, but just don't know where to start. Don't worry if you're a beginner. Everyone has to start somewhere and even gardeners who've been growing for decades are beginners with plants they've never grown before.
- ✓ You may have some experience of gardening, but of the flowers and shrubs kind, and want to get clued up about fruit and veg.
- ✓ You may have been growing your own food for years, but want to try something new.

- ✓ You don't have a garden the size of Wembley Stadium; you may not even have a garden at all.
- ✓ You have a stronger-than-usual fondness for mulberries and have noticed that I include them in this book!

As you can see, even seasoned gardeners can find what they need to know to grow unfamiliar crops within the lovely yellow and black covers of this book.

How This Book Is Organised

I've organised *Growing Your Own Fruit & Veg For Dummies* into five parts. Each part covers a range of subjects to get you growing your own food and is split into chapters to help you easily find the information you want.

Part I: Getting Going with Growing

Before you even consider sowing a seed you need to know certain basics. This part helps you to understand why growing crops makes sense and to identify what tools you need to do it; it teaches you about the soil and the different places you can grow crops (including containers, raised beds and in the greenhouse); and it explains what to look for when buying plants and seeds and the best way to plan your plot for health and efficiency.

Part II: Prepping Your Plot

Here I tackle the basic principles you need to understand to get the most out of gardening. Feeding and watering and pests and diseases are all here. I start by looking at soil: how to work out what type of soil you have, how to test and improve it and how to make compost. I go on to explain the various types of fertiliser, what they do and how to use them, and the secrets of watering and why your crops may need extra water. I put forward the case for organic gardening, looking at the advantages and disadvantages and considering whether going organic makes sense. Lastly, I look at what gardeners dread – all those pests and diseases that seem bent on destroying your crops – along with ways to keep the damage to a minimum.

Part III: Growing Tasty Veg

From the mundane and everyday to the exotic and unfamiliar, this part covers the delicious vegetables you can grow. I look at leafy vegetables that crop all year round, and which are packed with good things to make you healthy. You can also read about the root crops that people traditionally enjoy over winter, although you don't have to wait for the cold weather to arrive before you enjoy them. To add a dash of sunshine, this part goes on to look at summer crops that can make you believe you live in the Mediterranean. I then take a look at the useful and productive pods and grains that are the joys of the summer plot, many of which are easy to grow in the smallest garden, before exploring some of the more unfamiliar veg that you can grow on your plot.

Part IV: Growing Your Own Fruit Salad

With all the fruits that I guide you through in this part, you can soon find yourself throwing together the most varied and exotic fruit salad you've ever eaten! I start by helping the impatient gardener, who wants something tasty to eat in the shortest time, to avoid going hungry! You can then find advice about growing the soft fruits, currants and berries that really are the taste of summer, as well as the fruits that you can plant for the future – trees and shrubs that will feed you for many years to come and still be cropping for your children. Finally, I take a look at fruits that feel the cold and need the sunniest, most sheltered spot in your garden or a cosy indoor spot in a greenhouse or conservatory.

Part V: The Part of Tens

At the back of the book, I offer up a couple of fun chapters with some projects for you to try out and some tips for growing those herbs that some meals just can't do without!

Icons Used in This Book

Scattered throughout this book are icons to guide you along your way. Icons are a handy *For Dummies* way to draw your attention to special bits and pieces of information.



Keep your sights on the target for tips and suggestions from one who knows!



Remember these important points of information to stand a better chance of success on your plot.



Plenty of things can go wrong in the garden – from insects that are even more partial to your crops than you are, to weather conditions that can play havoc with your plans – and these icons help you to identify the potential spanners in your works.



You grow food because you want to eat it, right? This icon lets you know where I have some tasty ideas for using your crops in the kitchen: not recipes – just suggestions.



Fruit and veg are good for you: fact. This icon lets you know when I'm telling you just how good.



Maybe you became interested in growing your own fruit and veg because you're interested in the idea of organic gardening. If so, keep an eye open for this icon, which highlights places in the text where I have some info for you.

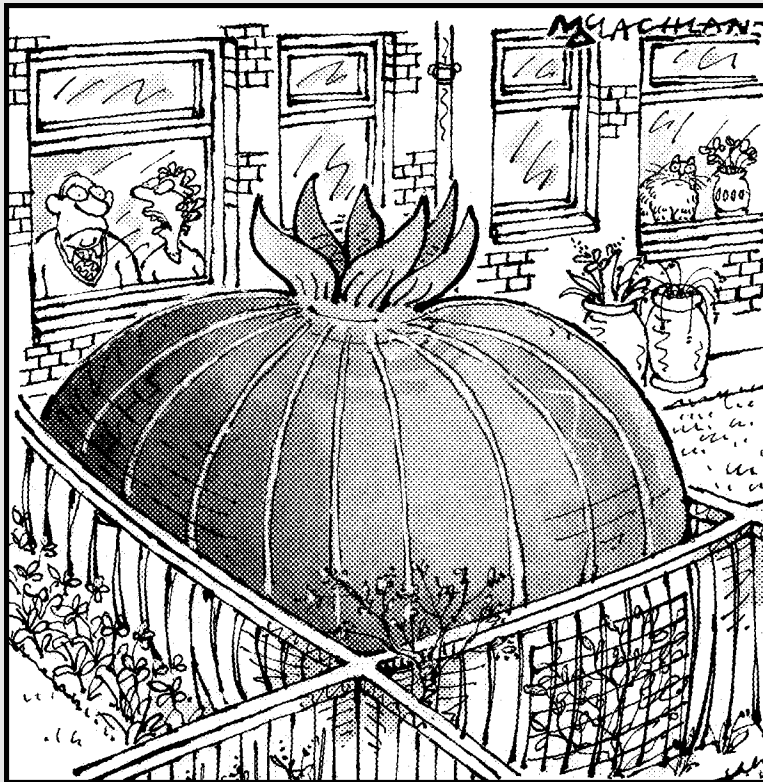
Where to Go from Here

I've organised this book so that you can just dip in and out of it as you like. You can read it from start to finish if you prefer, but you can also look up what you want to read about in the Table of Contents and jump straight in at that section. You can use this book in whatever way suits you best. If you're not sure where to start, you may want to turn to Part I. It gives you the basics for getting started from scratch, and points to places later in the book where you can go for more detailed information.

Good luck, and happy gardening!

Part I

Getting Going with Growing



'Small garden, giant vegetables,
just doesn't work, Ernest!'

In this part . . .

As with any new subject that you tackle, the first problem you're likely to come across is that you don't know where to start. You've decided that you want to grow some of your own food but want to get off on the right foot without making any silly mistakes. Well, gardening is all about discovering and although some firm rules need to be followed, others are more flexible.

You may have lots of reasons for wanting to grow your own fruit and veg, but whatever your reason, this part is all about the basics. This aspect includes having reasonable ambitions to start with and working out what you can reasonably grow in the area you have and what crops grow best where.

Just as importantly, you need your armoury of tools. You may be tempted to go out to a garden centre and spend a fortune, thinking that you need a wide range of tools to stand a chance of being successful. The truth is that you need surprisingly few tools, and that you end up rarely using half the tools you buy whereas the other half get worn away in no time!

Last but not least, you need to understand what you're growing and how some of the crops are grouped together – in this book and by gardeners – so you can find them in shops and catalogues. When you've grasped this information, you're ready to grow!

Chapter 1

Becoming a Grow-Your-Own Gardener

In This Chapter

- ▶ Reaping the benefits of growing your own
 - ▶ Gathering the tools you need
 - ▶ Assessing your plot
 - ▶ Deciding what crops to grow
-

So you've decided to grow your own fruit and vegetables. Congratulations! Few activities in life are more rewarding than producing your own food. You'll discover that nothing beats the satisfaction of picking a sun-ripened tomato and popping it straight in your mouth, or sitting down to lunch knowing that you grew all the veg yourself.

As you start down the road of growing your own, be prepared for a few twists and turns, and some highs and lows along the way. You may find some plants more challenging than others, and not everything will go to plan. But if you start with the simple things and follow the basic rules – which is where this book comes in – your successes are sure to outweigh any failures.

First of all, though, you need some real reasons to get growing – incentives to help you through the tough patches, a few tools, a plot of land, and an idea of what you want to grow. Let's go.

Recognising the Advantages of Growing Your Own

More and more people are becoming aware of the different benefits of growing your own fruit and veg. These vary from reducing your food costs and improving your health and diet to doing your bit for the planet through lower *food miles* – the distance food has to travel between where it grows

and where it's eaten. People are acting upon this awareness, too; just look at the ever-growing waiting lists for allotment plots and the increasing sales of seeds of edible plants. Even people without access to a large plot are now discovering that their own gardens and patios can produce useful crops.

Saving money

Many people decide to grow their own fruit and veg because they think they're going to save money. Think carefully if you're one of these gardeners. Whether you actually save money depends on where you live and what access you currently have to fresh produce. For example, if you have a local market selling fresh produce you may already be able to buy cheap veg.

How you think about growing your own has a bearing on saving money, too. If you see it as a chore and cost in your labour, your fruit and veg may work out expensive. However, if you enjoy pottering, digging and generally being out in the open air, you can forget about including labour in with the costs.

For most people, and with careful planning, growing some types of crop yourself definitely can save you money. For example, you pay the same amount in a supermarket for a bag of salad leaves as you pay for a packet of seeds that produces dozens of bags of leaves. And because you can grow most vegetables from seed, doing so saves you more than if you buy them as plants.



With some crops, such as asparagus, you can choose between growing them from seed and buying a ready-grown plant. With other vegetables, however, such as Jerusalem artichokes or potatoes, you don't have a choice other than to buy them as ready-grown plants, roots or tubers.

Similarly, fruit trees won't save you time or money, at least until the tree is well established. For example, if you buy an apple tree to grow in a pot, the tree doesn't start turning a profit for many years because it can carry only small crops.

Eating fresh

Without a doubt, the fact that you can eat fruit and veg as fresh as nature intended is a huge benefit of growing your own. Picking and eating crops within minutes not only feels good, but it's also healthy for you.

Fruits that are fully ripe don't just taste great; they're packed with nutrients, too. Some crops, such as apples and pears, don't deteriorate much as they're transported and stored, but most do start to lose nutrients as soon as you pick them, especially leafy, green vegetables that contain a lot of vitamin C.

Some crops, such as chard, deteriorate so quickly that shops rarely sell them. Sweetcorn, too, loses its sweetness quickly after harvesting and growing your own is the only way to discover its raw sugary tenderness. Soft fruits such as currants, raspberries and strawberries also travel badly and are worth growing yourself. Similarly, the longer you store fruit and veg and the more they're processed, the more nutrients are lost.

You are what you eat, as the old saying goes, and so eating produce fresh from your own garden gives you the nutritional best from your crops, and your body is much better off as a result.

You'll also discover just how much tastier fruit and veg can be when *really* fresh. For example, did you know that when ripe, gooseberries aren't hard and acidic but soft and sweet? And have you ever eaten a peach fresh off the tree when the flesh is so juicy you need a napkin? Or have you eaten an apricot just as it's perfectly ripe, with flesh as sweet and juicy as a peach? All these treats, and many more, are yours to experience when you grow your own.

Growing food metres, not miles, from your doorstep



With concern about the welfare of the environment at an all-time high, you have a huge environmental advantage in growing your own fruit and veg. You can sidestep the issues of over-packaging, chemicals, fertilisers and *food miles* – where crops are flown and driven around the world – and reduce your own negative impact on the environment. You may not be able to grow all your needs but you can produce at least some crops within metres of your back door. Aside from keeping Mother Nature happy, just think of the convenience of being able to pop out and pick fresh tomatoes, salads or herbs.

Experiencing more variety

You rarely see certain crops, such as leaf beet, Swiss chard, purslane, mizuna and many more in the shops. They just don't travel well enough. If you're lucky enough to have a good farmers' market near where you live, you may be able to find some of these crops there when in season, but you can do without the risk by growing them at home. Many other crops, such as sprouting broccoli, rocket and asparagus peas cost a fortune if you do find them, and yet you can easily grow them yourself.

Strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and redcurrants are also expensive to buy, and are often damaged when you buy them. Because of this, soft fruit really is worth growing yourself, and you can grow different and often better varieties than you find in the shops. Did you know, for example, that gooseberries come in red and yellow as well as green? Commercial growers pick

their varieties based on how consistent they are in size and shape, whether they have heavy crops, and whether they travel well. They often pick fruit unripe in order to transport it, and so you can never buy some fruits that are fully ripe. You can, on the other hand, choose varieties that have the best flavour, need fewer chemicals to produce (or none at all), are resistant to disease, or crop out of season, extending the time you can eat them.

Feasting without chemicals



In recent years consumers have become more concerned about additives and chemicals in food. Growing your own returns power to the consumer – you have the choice of what chemicals to put on your food or you can choose to grow crops entirely without using chemicals. You can grow some crops easily without having to spray them with chemicals, but others are more difficult. The cabbage family, for example, can be a challenge to grow well without resorting to some chemicals, but at least you choose what you apply to your crops and what you use. You can also select varieties that are resistant to disease so you have an easier time when growing organically.

Looking at the broader picture

Growing your own isn't just good for your finances and for the planet; growing your own is good for you, too! Gardening is a healthy activity, and helps to keep you fit. (An hour of digging can burn 500 calories, so just a little active gardening each week can boost your health in more ways than just providing vitamins!) You also get out in the sun (at least, when it comes out to play) and you're more in touch with the seasons and seasonal produce – qualities that are impossible to cost, but are really priceless.

Tooling Around: Kitting Yourself Out

Like any activity, gardening is more rewarding and a lot easier if you have the right tools and equipment. Choose wisely, and remember the old saying 'buy cheap, pay twice'. You may be able to pick up bargain tools, and some cheap tools can be good value, but well-made tools serve you better in the long run. Nothing is more annoying than setting aside time to hoe or dig and your tool breaking halfway through the task.



Always inspect tools before you buy. Check handles for balance and smoothness. Check the materials and the weight – you may find working with light tools easier. Buy tools that suit your size and build. Never be afraid of buying a smaller tool if you can't manage a large one – you work faster and more efficiently when you're comfortable.

Certain tools you need only once or twice a year, and so try not to get carried away filling your shed or garage with a huge armoury. Here's a rundown of the basic essential tools.

- ✓ **Spades and forks:** You can buy two basic sizes: the *digging* and *border* (or *ladies*) sizes. The digging versions do as their name suggests. The border versions are great for general planting and soil cultivation, where their smaller size is an advantage.
 - **Spade:** You need a spade mainly for digging, but also for planting, harvesting some plants, and moving soil around. Prices vary hugely, as does design, but expect to pay around £20 for a decent stainless steel spade. Shaft length varies as well, so pick up and test the 'fit' of the spade before you buy. Some have treads on the blade, where you put your foot, to make digging easier, and the bottom edge of the blade should be sharp. Make sure that you see no rough splinters or protruding metal where the shaft fits into the *ferrule*, or tubular socket, on the blade because these may cut your hand. I recommend buying stainless steel spades – their highly polished blades don't just look the business, they're easy to clean and use, too, especially in heavy, clay soils.
 - **Fork:** You need a fork for digging, breaking up *clods* (lumps) of soil, loosening the soil surface in preparation for planting, and digging up plants and root crops such as carrots and potatoes. Forks are especially useful in soil that's very heavy (for example, clay soils) or full of stones, where getting a spade into the soil may be tricky. The fork to buy is the general digging fork that has four, evenly spaced *tines* (spikes). You can also buy a 'potato fork', which has broad, flat tines that are less likely to 'spear' the tubers as you lift them, but this is a luxury. A good fork costs about £20.
- ✓ **Rake:** A garden rake (not a grass or wire rake) is essential for levelling soil and removing stones and large lumps from the surface when preparing seedbeds and for evenly spreading fertiliser. You can purchase rakes as part of a multi-tool system. Prices start from as little as £10.
- ✓ **Measuring line:** You need a line of string for making sure your lines of seedlings are even and straight. You can buy a line or use two canes and some string. Nylon string is less likely to rot in use than natural twine.
- ✓ **Hoe:** You need at least one type of hoe to help you control weeds. The two basic, popular designs are the *Dutch* or *push hoe* and the *French* or *draw hoe*. If you buy only one hoe, and unless you're growing potatoes (which you can easily 'earth up' with a French hoe), the Dutch hoe, with a straight, sharp blade pointing away from you, is the most useful and versatile. When using, you keep the blade as horizontal as possible and push it just under the soil surface to chop the tops off weeds, which should then wilt and die. The French hoe has a curved 'neck' so the blade, tucked under the head of the tool, faces you and cuts through the soil as you pull the hoe towards you. With a French hoe, you can easily

control the path of the blade and weed more accurately, with less risk of chopping off and damaging plants. Prices start from about \$10.

- ✓ **Trowel:** You need a trowel for planting. A trowel is like a small spade with a pointed blade to make planting holes. Thin trowels are useful for weeding but most have the same basic shape. When choosing a trowel, make sure that the handle is comfortable and not sharp or rough. The only time you may be able to do without a trowel for planting is when you plant brassicas, because those plants prefer well-firmed soil, and a *dibber* (a solid, usually wooden shaft with an angled handle) is therefore better. You can pick up a good trowel from as little as \$5.
- ✓ **Multi-headed tools:** Many systems offer a range of interchangeable handle lengths and tool heads. These enable you to have a variety of tools without buying lots of handles. Be aware, though, that you usually can't mix 'n' match tools and handles from different systems, so make sure that you choose the system offering the tools you need before you start to buy and commit yourself. Prices vary enormously but expect to pay \$10 for a handle and about the same for most small tools.
- ✓ **Sprayer:** A good sprayer is useful; even if you intend to garden organically you're probably going to need to use some organic sprays to control common pests. *Trigger sprayers*, where each pull of the trigger releases a burst of spray, are cheap but hard work to use if you have to spray a lot of plants. *Pressure sprayers*, where you pump the handle to produce pressure in the container to produce a continuous burst of spray, cost more but are far easier to use.

Buying a sprayer means that you can buy and dilute concentrated chemicals. You don't have to buy ready-to-use chemicals, which, although convenient and handy when you start growing your own, are the most expensive way to buy chemicals. Ready-to-use chemicals also involve a lot of waste because you're buying diluted chemicals and a spray bottle with every purchase.
- ✓ **Propagator:** A propagator is useful for raising seedlings earlier than you can outside. A basic propagator consists of some sort of waterproof tray and a transparent lid. You can easily make your own but most gardeners buy one. Unheated, basic propagators, however, have limited use. Light is essential for seedlings so you need to place an unheated propagator in a greenhouse or on a windowsill, and without extra heat you're limited in what you can successfully grow. An electrically heated propagator without a thermostat is useful because it provides constant heat, but the temperature inside depends on the outside temperature, which is a problem when the weather's cold at night and too hot on a sunny windowsill. Heated propagators with a thermostat are considerably better, and can help to avoid overheating and damage to seedlings. Prices start from about \$25 for a good thermostatically controlled propagator.



- ✓ **Pots:** The variety of pots and trays you need depends on what you intend to grow. You can sow many crops directly into the soil outside but you need to sow others, such as courgettes and other squashes, some brassicas, tomatoes and cucumbers, in pots and place them to start growing in warm conditions such as on a windowsill or in a propagator. For most purposes, 8-centimetre pots are ideal for sowing small quantities of seeds and for growing tomatoes and so on. Small seed trays are also useful for sowing seeds and growing micro-greens such as cress. Cell trays, divided into 6 or 12 individual cells, are also useful for sowing seeds individually and growing seedlings.

Use clean or new pots and trays for sowing seeds to reduce the risk of fungal diseases that harm seedlings.

- ✓ **Compost:** Potting compost comes in three basic types but don't confuse them with the compost from the heap at the bottom of your garden. Garden compost has its uses but is far too variable to use for sowing or growing in pots and best kept for mulching and use in the open garden.

Throughout the book, when I refer to compost in the context of raising plants, I mean one of these types of potting compost:

- **John Innes compost** is the traditional choice, available in four grades from seed sowing through Nos 1, 2, and 3 for plants as they get progressively bigger. John Innes composts are based on sterilised loam (soil) and contain some *peat* (partially decomposed organic matter with minimal plant nutrients). Their quality varies according to the loam and they aren't 100 per cent recommended for growing young plants. But No 3 is excellent for any plant you're growing in a pot for more than one year, such as fruit trees.
- **Multipurpose composts** were, until recently, based on peat, but with environmental concerns coming to the fore, most are now 'reduced-peat'. These composts are ideal for seed sowing and growing young plants but they contain enough nutrients for only a few weeks of growth, and so you then need to give them some supplementary feed.
- **Peat-free composts** are increasingly common and popular but they vary enormously, depending on their origins. Many are made of recycled products, and others are based on *coir* (coconut husk). You can achieve satisfactory results with most of them, but many contain less nitrogen, among other nutrients, and you may need to alter your watering and feeding regimes if you're used to peat-based composts. Peat-free composts are probably not ideal if you're just starting out with growing, especially for more difficult plants such as peppers and basil.



Buying cheap compost can be false economy. Buy from an outlet that stores compost under cover and never buy bags that have faded print or are soaking wet: use only fresh compost for seed sowing.



✓ **Clothing:** You can buy a range of clothing for gardening but in most cases old, stout clothing suffices. However, you do need gloves – especially when pruning thorny fruit such as raspberries and gooseberries – and stout footwear is essential when digging.

Be sure to use gloves and goggles when you're using a *line trimmer* (for trimming grass and vegetation), and when spraying always wear protective clothing as the product manufacturer recommends. Garden accidents are regrettably frequent but with some common sense you can avoid getting in harm's way.

Getting the Plot

Now you've decided to grow your own fruit and veg, you need to decide where to grow them. How much space you have doesn't matter, in fact, a big plot can sometimes be overwhelming. Whether you have a patio or a field you can make a start right away. All you have to do is make sure that what you want to grow and how you intend to do it suits your circumstances.

Back garden

People are sometimes put off growing their own fruit and veg because they think they need a lot of space or have to give over their attractive flowerbeds to vegetable plots. The fact that you don't need a dedicated vegetable garden to grow your own crops may come as a surprise. Having a dedicated plot does make things easier for you, and simplifies *crop rotation* (avoiding growing crops in the same soil every year), but isn't essential, and you can grow many crops among flowers. Nor do you need a large space – you just have to be more selective in what you choose to grow. Winter and spring crops usually occupy the ground for the longest periods so you may want to concentrate on fast-growing summer and autumn crops. What's more, you don't always have to sacrifice a good-looking garden when growing your own: fruit bushes and trees are often almost as attractive as ornamentals so you can easily incorporate them into your borders.



If you can give over an area of your garden to grow fruit and veg, a convenient way is to make raised beds. Chapter 2 tells you all you need to know about creating them.

Pots and containers

Maybe your garden is just too small to have flowerbeds or perhaps you've paved it over. Maybe you live in a tower block with just a windowsill available