



## Do it yourself kitchen gardening!



The opportunities for growing food plants from regular old kitchen scraps are phenomenal AND fun!

### Herbs

Many herbs will develop new roots when a stem is placed in water. This tends to work better with perennial herbs (those that live for many years, like mint, lemon balm, stevia, rosemary, basil\*, or oregano) than with annual herbs (those that live a single year, like parsley or dill).

- Choose a healthy looking stem that does not have any flowers. If a plant is thick or woody, select a young stem that's still soft.
- Using clean scissors, cut it at an angle below a leaf node (the point where leaves meet the stem)
- Remove the lower leaves and place the stem in a glass of water
- Leave the cutting in a warm place, in indirect sunlight, and change the water every couple of days



*Photo: Learning Herbs*

Roots will form after a couple of weeks, and the plant will continue to grow. Feel free to enjoy the herb 'as is', or to plant it into a pot or into the garden.

*\* Basil is an annual herb in our climate, but can often be coaxed to root nonetheless!*



*Celery finding new life (Photo: PlantInstructions.com)*

### Re-growing veggies from their base

Use the following technique to grow a whole new plant from the base of veggies like romaine lettuce, celery, cabbage, fennel, or bok choy:

- With a sharp knife, cut off the plant's base about 5 cm above the bottom (cut off the entire plant, not an individual stalk of leaf)
- Place in a shallow dish, and pour water up to about 2/3 the height of the plant base
- Leave it in a warm area, and change the water every couple days
- Watch your plant re-grow, and either trim and eat, or plant it into a pot or a garden

## **Sprouting onions and garlic**

Green onions, scallions and garlic are fun to play with, in part because they grow so fast! The process is quite similar to that above:

- For all except the garlic, cut the base (or the “rooty” part of the stalk) about 3-5 cm from the end
- Place in a glass or jar, fill water partway up the stem, and leave in a sunny spot
- Change the water every couple days, and enjoy the green shoots that will quickly start growing!
- For garlic: take a single clove and place it, root side down, in a shallow dish of water
- The clove will produce more roots and a green shoot (this sometimes happens on its own on my kitchen counter, without the water!)
- Trim and enjoy the shoot as a nice garlicky herb, or plant the whole clove to get another garlic bulb



*Green onions (Photo: Thekitchn.com)*



*Garlic (Photo : MyHeartBeets.com)*



*Chickpea pods contain 1-2 peas each (Photo: BotanyOne)*

## **Dry beans**

Beans that are sold for cooking (e.g. dry chickpeas, mung beans, lentils etc.) will often germinate. This not only shows us what such a plant looks like, many can produce food within a season! Be warned that if you choose to plant them in a garden, they take a fair amount of space to produce a relatively small amount of food (but I find they're worth it just for finding out about new plants!)

Hint: mung beans are particularly quick to germinate and grow

## **Germinating fruit seeds**

Have you ever fancied an avocado, pear, or mango tree in your home? Many seeds from store-bought fruit will readily germinate and grow!

### **A: Fruits from far away:**

Some tropical fruit plants are surprisingly easy to grow at home:

- Germinate seeds by placing them in moist paper towel, in a peat pellet, or in a small pot of moist soil
- Cover them with a plastic cover to conserve moisture
- When seedlings sprout, remove the plastic cover (to ease the transition poke holes in the plastic first, then remove completely a few days later)
- Plant them into a larger pot filled with moist potting soil

### **A few tips:**

- Some seeds germinate and others don't- always try germinating several at a time to increase your chances
- Our team has had good success with citrus fruits including lemon, mandarin, clementine, and grapefruit
- Dates will germinate but plants grow slowly- consider co-potting it with another plant, unless you have an abundance of pots, soil and sunlight
- Avocado is best started by soaking the base of the pit in a glass of water, and using toothpicks to support the top out of water

### **B: Temperate Tree Fruits:**

Seeds of Canadian-grown fruit like apples, pears, plums or peaches are adapted to experiencing cold winter temperatures prior to germinating in the spring. To mimic this, and to signal to seeds that it's time to germinate, seeds should be chilled prior to planting:

- Clean the seeds and allow them to dry
- Place into moist (not wet) sphagnum moss, paper towel, finished compost or sand, and keep in a sealed jar or bag in the refrigerator for about 2 months
- Make sure to label the jar or bag with the date and species!

**Managing expectations:** Growing food this way can be fun & fruitful, but:

- Some store-bought fruits or vegetables have been treated with substances that inhibit germination, and won't grow
- Not all seedlings resemble their parent plants, the fruits often taste quite different
- While most tropical fruits won't bear fruit in our Canadian climate, they will be lovely houseplants, and allow us a peek into the world of tropical food crops that we don't often get to see!



*Clementine, lemon and grapefruit seedlings*



*3-year old date seedling!*



*Sprouting avocado (Photo: Pennington)*



*Cold stratifying apple & pear seeds (Photo: Philadelphia Orchard Project)*