

BEST FOR KITCHEN GARDENERS  
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# Grow your own

FRESH FOOD FROM YOUR GARDEN

**FREE** BEGINNER'S GUIDE  
TO GROWING VEG  
WORTH £2.99 FOR EVERY READER

**GYO REVEALS**

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**FRESH** ideas for beans,  
peas, tomatoes & herbs

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- BUILD A SEATING AREA
- SPEED UP COMPOST
- SUPPRESS WEEDS, FAST

**EASY GYO GUIDE**

## 10

organic ways to  
keep slugs at bay

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JUICY CUCUMBERS YOU CAN  
GROW WITHOUT A GREENHOUSE

**12-PAGE PULLOUT GUIDE**

## Shady plot?

**18** plants for  
great results

# Allotments

ENJOY BUMPER CROPS WITH OUR TOP TIPS



**GET CRACKING**  
WAKE UP TO FRESH EGGS



**SPICE OF LIFE**  
NEW VARIETIES TO TRY

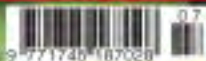


**BUZZ WORDS**  
SAVING ENDANGERED WILDLIFE



**TASTE CHALLENGE**  
WHY HOME-GROWN IS BEST

**THIS MONTH** ■ STARTING A NEW PLOT ■ SEASONAL CELEBRITY RECIPES ■ TIME-SAVING IDEAS FOR LAZY GARDENERS



# Ask the experts

Grow Your Own's panel of gardening pros explain how to stop slugs, overwinter herbs and protect your brassicas from attacks by hungry birds



## Winter herbs

Q "Last year my parsley and tarragon plants didn't survive the winter. Is there any way I can keep them producing leaves during the cold weather, or at least stop the herbs from dying before next spring?"

R Smith, Yorkshire

Lorraine Colebrook says: When overwintering crops it is essential to understand the needs of the plants in question. You'll have the best results if you know which conditions are most likely to keep them healthy. Parsley likes deep, rich, moist soil and the plants (massive curled and French plain-leaf) are hungry eaters, so a generous layer of well-rotted compost could be added as a mulch this autumn. Take off any flowering stalks and discoloured leaves as this will encourage them to remain vigorous. Keep harvesting the leaves to create air space, stopping when the weather turns colder. Leave the plants to rest until the new foliage begins to grow in spring.



Tarragon, on the other hand, enjoys rather poor soil and needs a well-drained dry, open site with winter protection. It will not be happy if it is waterlogged. Tarragon is a perennial herb and dies down at the end of autumn. At this time, spread some sandy compost around the plant, but take care not to dig around the roots in case you break the tender underground shoots that will be growing through the soil. During the winter, protect it with straw or horticultural fleece.

## Cabbage root fly

Q "The sprouts, cabbages and broccoli on my small plot seem to be infested by cabbage root fly. How can I get rid of the pest and stop them coming back?"

M Ambrose, Norfolk

Chris Beardshaw says: It is the larvae of the cabbage root fly (*Delia radicum*) that do the damage to your plants. These grubs feed on the fibrous roots systems under the soil. The cycle begins with the adult flies laying their eggs in the cracks and crevices in the earth around the base of the host plants. You can have as many as three generations of flies born over one season so your crops are almost always going to be vulnerable to attack.

To try and avoid damage some people suggest sowing early, before the flies are active and start laying their eggs, or in-between generations so that the young plants can become well-established and are therefore less vulnerable to attack. Alternatively, place collars around the neck of the plants. These cover the soil, preventing the flies from reaching the base of the plants. You can also try securing a layer of fine netting over the top of the brassicas; when the pests are active this will act as a physical barrier, stopping the adults from laying their eggs. If you have suffered this season, I suggest you dig over the ground during autumn to expose any remaining pupae and give hungry birds a tasty cold-weather snack.

## Protection from birds

Q "Pigeons keep eating my brassicas. Is there a humane way I can keep them away from the veg plot, without stopping all birds from visiting?"

K Hubble, Worcestershire

Jason Gaskell says: An increase in pigeon attacks on allotments and gardens could be attributed to the large-scale cultivation of oil seed rape. The birds will feed happily on this plant until it's a certain height. After this point the pigeon population needs something else to eat, and may turn to gardeners' home-grown veg!

Bird scarers, such as CDs on a string, or scarecrows, can provide a temporary solution, but the pests soon end up using them as a convenient perch. Even commercial bird scarers tend to become less effective over time. The only sure way to keep them out is netting. A simple wooden frame covered in chicken wire would do the trick, but make sure that the net doesn't sag too much when the pigeon lands on it, bringing your veg back in reach of its beak. Check your plot regularly to ensure the birds haven't become tangled or trapped.



## Forcing chicory

Q "I've heard that chicory is tastiest when forced. How should I go about doing this to my plants?"

F Dewson, Essex

Chris Beardshaw says: The act of forcing chicory essentially cuts out the light so that the stems become blanched and tender. If you left the plants to grow outside as normal they would become very bitter-tasting. You can buy dormant chicory plants now or, if you already have plants in the ground, cut back the existing growth, leaving short stubs just higher than soil level, then lift them. Pot up the plants in multipurpose compost and place in a dark, warm place with an upturned pot covering them. The sweet chicory will be ready for late winter salads in about four to six weeks and you can keep repeating this process until spring.



## meet our experts

### WRITE TO US AT

Ask the Experts, Grow Your Own, 25 Phoenix Court, Hawkins Road, Colchester, Essex CO2 8JY

### OR EMAIL

experts@growfruitandveg.co.uk

Here at *Grow Your Own* we'll do our best to send an individual reply to any gardening questions you put to us. Unfortunately the huge numbers of emails and letters we receive mean a personal response cannot always be guaranteed.

LUCY HALSALL



is editor of *Grow Your Own*. Raised at her parents' small holding, Lucy studied horticulture before becoming an RHS advisor and then gardening editor of a weekly gardening magazine.

GUY BARTER



studied horticulture at Bath University. He is currently head of the RHS' Horticultural Advisory Services, which helps the Society's 350,000 members with their gardening problems.

CHRIS BEARDSHAW



is an RHS gold medal winner, and is well known for his TV show *The Flying Gardener*. He is working with landscaping firm Bradstone to offer a design apprenticeship to a competition winner.

CHARLES DOWDING



has operated a 99 percent no-policy for 25 years. He is the author of *Organic Gardening*, *Natural No-Dig Way* and *Sal. Leaves For All Season: Organic Growing from Pot to Plot*.

PIERS WARREN



is the author of *How to Store Your Garden Produce*. *GYO* readers can order a copy for the special price of £5.95 (saving £2) by phoning 0845 458 9910 and quoting 'GYO offer'.

JASON GASKELL



is head of People and Wildlife at Northumberland Wildlife Trust. For more information about gardening to benefit native species or to find your local trust visit [wildlifetrusts.org](http://wildlifetrusts.org).

PAT FOX



from Aralia Garden Design only used food crops in her entry for the 2009 Chelsea Flower Show. She created a kitchen garden and an edible living wall. For more details go to [aralia.org.uk](http://aralia.org.uk)

LORRAINE COLEBROOK



is the kitchen gardener for the National Trust property at Knightshayes Court in Devon. To find out more about the organisation go online to [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://nationaltrust.org.uk)

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