



Growing in your street

Like lots of growing movements around the world we want to do something visible. Grow something people can eat, grow it somewhere public, tell people what it is, tell people why you are doing it – simple.

At Incredible Edible our take is about the act of propaganda gardening. Propaganda is the act of creating a conversation to help people think. Our conversation is about public space. Who does it belong to and who has the right to make it beautiful, or make it grotty? When we grow in public spaces we do a number of things.

We connect people with their physical environment so that people start to feel proud of where they live.

We connect people with their food system and help people think through the long term sustainability of the way we grow food. This isn't about growing enough food to feed the whole town but

starting a conversation about how we understand ourselves as food citizens.

Connecting people with each other. Growing in a public place helps people to see that there are a bunch of folk out there that really care about the place and are prepared to give their gifts to help make it beautiful and productive.

Our propaganda gardens are about helping people who pass by to hear the story that a group of people in their community feel that they can build a kinder, more connected, more confident community through the power of food and the public growing space is a visual reminder of that vision.

It doesn't need to be flash, or amazing, it is just the power of small actions.

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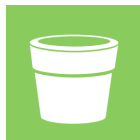
Resources

Getting started



Choosing your site

There's lots of things to consider when choosing your site, so it's important to think about practicalities and people...
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Starting small and temporary

Show and tell is a great way to start your growing activities - keeping it small and nimble to showcase what Incredible Edible is all about

[Read more](#)



Practicalities on your site

Now you've got your site, how are you going to prep your site and what are you going to grow?

[Read more](#)



Getting beyond your first growing season

You've had a great first year and then winter comes... It's important to keep your group engaged and interested so year two can be even more Incredible...

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Pollinator friendly growing

Growing food can be great for both us and the insects around us...

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Digging deeper



Growing from seed – how and where

Seed saving and growing from seed is a cost effective way to fill your plots, here's some great tools to help you out...

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Choosing your site

Things to consider:

Permissions – who's on your side and will easily give you permission to grow? It's surprising how many landowners there are so choose a site with a friendly landowner in the first instance. Have a look at the [Working with your local council](#) for more information on finding out who you need to talk to.

Space – Best to start small and work your way towards world domination! Pick a space that feels manageable and if that means taking half of what you would really like, be sensible because you can always take on the rest later. But be super honest about your time constraints and make sure the whole group agrees to the space and it's size. You might like planters dotted through the town centre, but think about the logistics of carrying tools and watering cans between sites – it might be better to focus growing planters in one or two areas and then it's more likely that they will all get tended and watered.

Footfall – Ensure your garden is near where people will walk past so they can see what you are doing, maybe join in and more importantly be able to access the produce. It's amazing the interest you'll get from passers-by while you're working on the site, especially if you've stopped for cuppa! See the [Communicating in the real world](#) section for ideas about signage

at your site which is guaranteed to stop passers-by in their tracks. **Water** is the most challenging thing when growing in the public realm so before you enter into the world of site permissions work out where your water source is and how you can best go about ensuring that the site collects water for use.

Storage – plan for where you are going to keep your tools – are you going to keep them on/near the site or will there always be a volunteer with a car who can bring tools to the site?

Who's nearby? Who do you want to engage with your plot? If you're interested in encouraging children there's no point in putting sites in the business district, but if you want to engage big business then this might be ideal.

Natural partnering – think about who could support your sites and set up near them – for example a local business who will commit to watering your planter during the summer. If your long term plan is to set up a walking route, consider where local food businesses are and plant near them.

What else might be planned for that site? If an option for the site is a children's play area, you might want to move on and find somewhere else

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Starting small and temporary

Growing food in public place is at the heart of Incredible Edible – we think it's really exciting and transformational. However, sometimes it can be difficult to explain that excitement – which is why temporary, or meanwhile, planters can be a good way to start your Incredible Edible activities. It might be that you can't get permission to start growing or it's hard to find people to get involved in your new group. This is when using the children's approach of show and tell is really useful, avoiding investing lots

of time, money effort on something which may not be permanent. By planting up small, moveable – meanwhile – planters, you create the opportunity to show how great it can look and tell the stories about how people have responded to your mini-growing space. This can help convince the powers that be to give you permission to take on a more permanent growing space or just to start connecting up with Incredible people in your area.

Experience from Incredible Edible Conwy



Incredible Edible Conwy started this way, with a few meanwhile planters which are still being used years later. Celia Williams, lead at Incredible Edible Conwy takes up the story... "The decking square planters (pictured above) were made from old decking re-purposed into planters. They are what we call our 'little moveable feasts' as we have now relocated them three times due to either initial wrong choice of location or because we have had to move them due to building work going on in the area. They are small enough to be able to use a sack truck to move them however it is still necessary, because of the weight, to remove the plants and half the compost beforehand. This does enable the compost to be enriched and to plant fresh plants to replace any straggly or spent ones."

Any container that's safe for food use could be used for meanwhile gardening but one of the issues to think about is how easy will it be to remove them at the finish? Will you have the physical power or machinery to do so? Recycling, re-purposing or re-using to create beds out of waste materials is the meanwhile gardener's friend – see our [Recycling and upcycling](#) section for lots of practical ideas. It's also important to make it clear to your group members that it's only temporary, so people don't get disheartened or feel upset when the garden has to go – ideally it doesn't have to go completely, and can just move to another

space!

For established groups looking for new growing sites, meanwhile growing ideas can still be of use, especially if you've got land you've got temporary permission to grow on, maybe a year or two. You can grow in skips or ton bags, and we've also heard of portable orchards with trees in movable containers – always plan how you'll move it at the end of your meanwhile growing site.

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Practicalities on your site

Whatever you decide to grow, make sure your group has the capacity to look after it, water it and make sure it looks beautiful as well as being productive.

That might mean compromising on what you are growing, but be really honest about what time everyone can give to the project and design your space around those time constraints.

Plant familiar foods – depending on where you are, the people walking past the site might have never heard of chard before, or might use it in loads of their favourite dishes. See the [Crop planner](#) for ideas for different crops and information about when to sow, plant and harvest them.

Harvesting from your sites – consider when your crops will be ready to harvest and make sure you've grow plants which will be available to pick and eat for as long as possible, rather than all being ready at once. For information on when to harvest and eat your crops, see the [Foods in season](#) fact sheet.

Year round planting – consider plants which look attractive all year around. Sometimes planters which look bare in winter can attract litter, so see our [Extending the growing season](#) fact sheet for more information on plants which will still be productive later

in the growing season.

Watering – most plants need regular watering, even during a UK summer, so consider how you'll get water to your site, sometimes the council have a tap you could use, or you could ask a local business. In Dunstable the rain water is collected from the local shopping centre and pumped to the site. Also consider what plants you grow – don't grow really thirsty plants (e.g. lettuces) unless you've got someone nearby who will water daily. Some plants don't need much watering, like Mediterranean herbs. Set up a timetable for watering so you can spread the load among your volunteers – and make sure everyone gets thanked for their contributions.

It's a good and safety conscious idea to get your soil tested. Most local councils will be able to point you in the right direction to get this done.

When first clearing your space chat to your local council waste team and find out what to do if you find things you can't deal with such as hypodermic needles. Make sure they know what you are up to and ask them to collect the rubbish. Then look at compost bins in order to manage on site green waste and feed your garden with the resulting compost – see the [Composting and Wormeries](#) section for more information.

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Downloads

[Crop planner](#)

[Foods in season](#)

[Extending the growing season](#)



Growing from seed – how and where

As you develop the number of sites you're cultivating you might want to consider growing from seed.

First have a look at the [Seed saving](#) fact sheet for information on how to save your seeds. Then use the [Growing from seed: tips on propagating your plants from seed](#) fact sheet for information on when and how to plant the seeds.

You will need to consider space for growing your seedlings, which Incredible Edible groups have found some great solutions for. Incredible Edible Conwy have taken on a garden share in the grounds of a large house where they've got some poly tunnels. The group cultivate their seeds there before planting the seedlings out in their different sites in town. The garden share helps the owner (they get to pick the crops for free and have some great company each week) and gives the group a perfect

site for doing additional growing. There's a simple agreement between the house owner and the group, and as long as everyone is respectful of this agreement (e.g. the group will meet potential new members away from the house, so there aren't strangers turning up at the gate) then it's a great example of positive reciprocity in action.

For Incredible Edible Dunstable, the haul of loads of slightly out of date seeds from a local seed company was a great bonus, but the group didn't have a place to cultivate them. So they gave away the seeds to their members, the local brownies and anyone else who was interested in a few packs of free seeds. But there was a catch... Everyone who took free seeds were asked to bring a few of the seedlings back to the Incredible Edible Dunstable site for planting there. That way everyone wins!

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[Seed saving](#)

[Growing from seed](#)



Getting beyond your first growing season

Your group is likely to be really busy outside at your sites in spring, summer and autumn, however it's important to keep that motivation going during the winter season.

Think about activities your group can get involved with over the winter to help keep everyone interested and involved. It's the perfect time to have planning sessions, arrange talks or to start recruiting and inducting new volunteers. Or just to meet up for a social get together! Whatsapp is also a great tool for your group to feel connected without the need to step outside on a cold winter's evening.

Think about how you're going to start up again after the winter, especially if you're a new group. You might want to arrange a social gathering before starting outside with growing activities, just to remind your group members about the connections they have with each other and the passion everyone has to use the power of food to create your kind, confident and connected community.

Remember there are things you can grow over winter and even if it's a small amount in comparison to what you usually grow, it

tells a great story about food growing and how it can be a 12 month activity – see the [Extending the growing season](#) fact sheet for more information.

Winter is the ideal time to meet with businesses and other local organisations to talk about how they can be involved. Incredible Edible isn't just about growing, so this is a great time to start building those relationships and talking to business about buying local – see the [Working with local business](#) section for more information and inspiration.

You might also use this time to plan some activities with schools or local uniformed groups for once the weather improves and the days get longer – starting those conversations in the winter could prove productive just as your growing sites start to flourish again. Have a look at the [Working with schools](#) section for more information.

If you're going to hibernate, tell social media and keep posting the occasional thing so people know you are still about but just resting! See the [Communicating online](#) section for more information about using social media to support your group's activities.

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[Extending the growing season](#)



Pollinator friendly growing

Of course the majority of Incredible Edible groups, if not all of them, grow food without pesticides and with nature in mind so we thought it might be a grand idea to put together some thoughts on what vegetables you can grow that the insects will love in a healthy way, rather than in a destructive way. When it comes to fruit it's ever so simple as all fruit need pollinators but what else is there in the vegetable beds that we can do to support a hopeful turnaround of insectageddon as it seems to have been named by the press?

First of all we can suggest growing fruit that we actually think about as veg. Cucumbers, squash, pumpkins and courgettes, tomatoes, peppers and aubergines all need pollinators in order to fruit and so are fabulous to grow for insects and for people. And then a special mention must go to beans and peas, all of which need pollinating and which, if you sow successionally, it is possible to have flowering for several months of the year. Autumn sown broad beans will begin to flower in March and the bees that are just starting to emerge, will flock to them, and as they fade, early spring sown will start to flower, along with early peas, adding to the nectar bank of any garden. Moving on, both climbing and French beans will follow and can easily be kept cropping through to the first frosts, so supporting pollinators all through the season, as well as providing beauty to the garden with their flowers and productivity with their harvest. It's also worth mentioning that broad beans in particular are some of the

most sweetly scented flowers there are! Have a look at our downloadable tools [growing from seed](#) and [planning your crops](#) for further practical advice.

There are also some perennial vegetables that are fabulous for insects. Both globe and Jerusalem artichokes produce stunning flowers that are filled with pollen and are adored by bees of all varieties as well as hoverflies and some tiny wasps. Ground nut (*Apios Americana*), Yacon and many varieties of perennial onion are all fabulous for insects when they flower and interesting crops to grow too as they bulk up year on year mainly and are often a real talking point in a garden.

And what can we do about the annual veg that we all love so much and are central to our growing each year? Well the simplest way of ensuring we are feeding both people and insects is to set aside a few plants for pollinators. Allowing some of your brassica crops, onions and root crops such as parsnips and carrots to flower, also gives the opportunity to allow them to go to seed, which of course is collectable and creates the beginning of your own seed bank, which is always a joy. And it's a simple way to ensure you are supporting nature and the planet.

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[Growing from seed](#)
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