

## Gardening in Spain

### Eat better & save money by small scale vegetable growing

By Clodagh and Dick Handscombe who have been growing vegetables for a combined 125 years, 50 of those in Spain. Now also gardening authors and broadcasters.

#### Small scale can grow a lot

We had sprouted radish and soya seeds with our lunchtime salad yesterday. Even in the winter with no heating in the kitchen they had only taken a week from placing the seeds in a sprouter and doing nothing except to pour water over those grown in a stack of shallow seeding trays and doing absolutely nothing with a sprouting pot that automatically waters the seeds every half hour.



In a space of less than an A4 sheet of paper 150 grams of seed had become a kilo of sprouted seeds ready for salads, home made Chinese style spring rolls or a sandwich filler. That kilo a week could be 52 kilos a year if we used the sprouter every week.

Last week we harvested the third crop of oyster mushrooms from a plastic sack filled with spawned straw/compost. It had taken up the space of two A4 sheets of paper since last October.

We have just potted up four early tomatoes in pots to keep on the south facing terrace - it being too early to put them on the vegetable patch. Four plants on a four A4 sheet space against a sunny wall.

If you look through our best selling book 'Growing Healthy Vegetables in Spain - From sprouting seeds to giant pumpkins' you will find photographs and instructions for other low space ways of growing wholesome vegetables.

Ranging from the sprouter to a tier of four window boxes hanging one below the other on a wall to an old bath - good for carrots and even rice! - three or four 60 to 100 centimetre pots on a terrace and our concept born in the book of a 'Ten Tub Vegetable Garden'. The latter consisting of two rows of five large tree tubs or pots.

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All ways of growing your favourite vegetables with little space or effort and never having to get your boots muddy or break your back using a fork or spade.

The above ideas are not gimmicks, they work and are gaining popularity in Spain as well as Northern Europe.

In Spain there is even more incentive to do so for we have two springs - the spring and the autumn.

One can now buy or build your own 70cm by 100cm 'growing tables' that allows you to grow vegetables while standing up even on apartment terraces. There are some photographs of this in our new book to be published next month 'Mediterranean Apartment Gardening' so the Spanish coast line can be re-greened this summer rather than looking less colourful than apartment blocks in London or Glasgow.

### Why bother?

If you are not yet persuaded there are nine good reasons.

1. You can harvest your own vegetables daily 365 days a year. If not all you need at least a useful contribution.
2. If someone arrives unexpectedly you only have to walk a few metres to be able to prepare a salad without rushing out to the local shop.
3. With the now wide availability of ecological fertilizers and insecticides you won't need to wash off chemical residues on the surface.
4. Mail order seed catalogues now sell specially prepared seeds for growing in small spaces - not only cut and come again salad leaves but mini carrots, beetroots and cauliflowers etc.
5. If you hunt around you are able to obtain the seeds of heritage and heirloom varieties that were grown locally and were never commercialised or are no longer sold commercially due to the costs of registering seeds within the EU.
6. By growing them naturally the maximum taste is achieved. No longer will you be tempted by water swollen giants that maximise the yields of commercial growers but often lack taste.
7. The satisfaction of being at least partially self sufficient.



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8. Almost daily we are being told by health and fitness experts we are told that it would be beneficial for us to eat five to nine portions of fresh fruit and vegetables a day as a natural source of the vitamins, minerals and fibres essential for good health. Now you have them to hand.
9. Most of the farmers markets that exist are weekly, supermarket packs can be on the shelves for a week and organic produce delivered to health shops often looks very sorry within a few days.

So why not have a go? It takes little space and requires little time and energy!

### **The many possibilities for growing more**

Naturally vegetables can also grow well in Spain in any type of garden on a larger scale. How to do so in raised beds, vegetable plots, strips between your fruit trees or allotments is described in 'Growing Healthy Vegetables in Your Garden in Spain' for over a hundred vegetables that we have grown in Spain.

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