



## DIY SEED RAISING IDEAS

Turn your household waste into an edible garden

### Ingredients

- Egg cartons, moulded strawberry trays and used takeaway coffee cups.
- Seed raising mix
- Seeds

### Method

- You can start by punching small drainage holes in the bottom of the containers with a pen or chopstick. We didn't do this but it will still work perfectly well without.
- Fill the egg cartons and trays to the top with your seed raising mix. You can fill the takeaway coffee cups to about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full.
- Use your index finger or a poking tool like a pencil to make small holes in each section of the egg carton and to evenly space the seeds in the trays.
- If you are planting large seeds like beans, pumpkins and corn, only place one seed per hole. If you are planting medium size seeds like chard, beetroot or kale then you can plant 2 per hole. For smaller seeds like herbs and lettuce then sprinkle a pinch of seeds into each hole.
- Lightly cover the seeds over with more soil.
- Water them in with a fine holed watering can, spray bottle or even an old single-use bottle with holes pierced through the lid. You can water the seeds up to twice a day to avoid the containers drying out, especially on hot days.
- Don't forget to label your seeds and date them.
- After a few weeks, your seeds will sprout.
- Because the cardboard is biodegradable, you can plant the seedlings out directly without pulling them up and disturbing the roots. Just make sure the cardboard is well soaked and the bottoms are cut open when planting.

### Handy Tips

- Source seeds from your local seed library, friends, neighbourhood house or sustainability group. There is one in the Macedon Ranges [mrs.org.au](http://mrs.org.au)
- Local cafes often leave out egg cartons for customers to takeaway and use or just ask if they can put them aside for you for collection.



## DIY SEED RAISING IDEAS

**With these simple newspaper seedling pots you can reduce the need for plastic and create your own biodegradable version instead.**

### Ingredients

- Newspaper
- A large takeaway coffee cup or glass jar
- Seed raising mix
- Seeds (use fast growing species such as zucchini or peas)

### Method

- Take a whole spread of newspaper and fold it in half for a large pot. Fold it into thirds for a smaller pot.
- Lay the cup or glass jar over the folded newspaper, so the open end of the cup or jar sits about two thirds of the way up the paper. The overhanging third of the paper will fold inside the cup, so position the cup so the neat, single fold will wrap around the cup and the loose ends will be tucked inside.
- Roll the paper around the cup - not too tightly or it will be hard to remove the cup
- Try to keep the top of the cup as straight as possible
- Push the loose folded third into the cup and then carefully pull out the cup
- Use your hand as a tamp to flatten the bottom on the inside of the pot. If there are gaps or holes at the bottom, don't worry. This will be great for drainage.
- You can also secure the loose edge of the paper with a paperclip or fold it over slightly and give it a good crease.
- Fill your pot with seed raising mix and plant your seed into the pot.
- Give it a good water.
- These newspaper pots will generally only last four to six weeks and will begin to break down after that.
- Plant the seedlings in the garden directly in the pot to avoid transfer shock. The newspaper will break down into the soil.



## DIY SEED RAISING IDEAS

**Grow fresh micro-herbs or sprouts all year round by using glass jars as your seed raising pots. Place them on a windowsill that gets the warm winter sun. This method is great for growing beetroot sprouts, sunflower sprouts, chives, parsley, watercress, thyme and coriander. Don't be afraid to experiment with other varieties too.**

### Ingredients

- Glass jars with a wide opening like jam jars or masonry jars. Today we're using instant coffee jars we had in the cupboards here at Kyneton Community House.
- Seed raising mix
- Seeds

### Method

- Make sure your jars are cleaned and sterilised by washing them in boiling soapy water.
- Fill your glass jar with seed raising mix about  $\frac{3}{4}$  full.
- Sprinkle a generous amount of seeds on top the soil.
- Cover the seeds with another thin layer of soil.
- Delicately water them in, being careful not to flood them as there are no drainage holes.
- Place jars in a sunny spot on the kitchen bench or widow in the cold winter months and watch them grow in front of your eyes.
- Cut the microgreens directly, or pot the seedlings up into larger pots when they're ready!

### Handy Tips

This is a great method to get kids interested in growing their own food. Kids can watch the roots develop through the clear glass and also see the plants grow. Keep a growth chart for them to fill in each day.





## RECYCLED GARDEN BEDS

**Rise to the challenge with this recycled raised garden bed which is great for herbs and small leafy vegetables and greens such as basil, parsley, chives, kale, baby spinach, lettuce, rocket, spring onions, radish and any other micro-greens or herbs you love to eat. The polystyrene is a great insulator and can be re-used time and time again for this purpose.**

### Ingredients:

- Polystyrene box with holes
- Newspaper (flat and shredded)
- Brown leaf litter
- Rich soil

### Method:

- Lay a bed of newspaper at the bottom of the box
- Sprinkle your partly decomposed brown leaf litter on top, which will add a humus layer to the soil when broken down, adding rich nutrients for the plant roots.
- Spread out a layer of shredded paper for aeration and carbon balance.
- Fill the polystyrene container almost to the top with your rich soil mix.
- Press the baking tray into the soil to create an evenly spaced dent for perfect seed distancing.
- Dig a deeper hole in each indented section to plant your seedlings into. Don't overcrowd the container as the plants will compete for water.
- Plant your larger plants at the back and space out the smaller herbs at the front or use multiple boxes to grow individual crops in each.
- Today we're planting spinach, parsley and coriander.
- Carefully arrange straw around the seedlings to keep the roots warm and keep the soil moist.
- Water your seedlings and then watch them grow.
- Harvest and enjoy!

### Handy Tip:

You can source polystyrene boxes from your local greengrocer, butcher, fishmonger or transfer station.



# RECYCLED GARDEN BEDS

## The 'Dig-in' Recycled Garden Bed

**If you have sections of your garden with poor quality or sandy soil, this handy garden hack will help you make the most of your space. So quit whinging and let's get digging with this simple and very quick recycled 'dig-in' garden bed.**

### Ingredients:

- Moulded carton from large white good packaging.
- Mix of seed raising and potting mix
- Seedlings
- Straw

### Method:

- Ideally you should dig and prepare the hole making it bigger in dimensions of the moulded carton before assembling.
- Assemble alongside or near to the area where you are planting your 'dig-in' garden bed.
- Fill your carton nearly to the top with your mix of seed raising and potting mix.
- Today we are planting a mix of strawberries and basil. These two plants compliment each other when planted together.
- Plant the strawberries at the front as they are the bigger plants and the basil at the back.
- Make a well with your hands in the soil or use a small trowel.
- Carefully scoop or tip out the seedlings from their trays or pots being careful not to damage the delicate roots.
- Place seedlings in the well and cover them over with soil, pressing the soil down gently around the plant.
- Carefully arrange the straw around the plants.
- Time to place our 'dig-in' garden bed into the prepared bed.



# SIMPLE DIY GREENHOUSE IDEAS FOR RAISING SEEDS

**Plastic tubs are a perfect resource to use as a mini greenhouse. They not only let sunlight in to help plants grow while keeping them warm and out of the wind, but you can also easily transport them to move your plants to the most optimal place around your garden.**

## Ingredients:

- Plastic tub with lid (can be broken)
- Lid of a polystyrene container (optional)
- Seed raising trays
- Seed raising mix
- Seeds

## Method:

- Lay the polystyrene in the bottom of the plastic container. This will help stabilize the bottom and create a flat surface as well as provide some insulation to keep the warmth in. If you can't source one, don't worry, it's not crucial.
- Fill your seed trays with the seed raising mix. Seed raising mix has higher nutrient levels and holds onto more water. It is also finer and lighter in texture which is perfect for raising plants from seed. Place the trays in the container.
- Poke a hole at the top of each individual pot, or seed tray section.
- Sprinkle your seeds or place one to two larger seeds in each hole and gently cover them over with the soil. You can always add more soil on top if you think you need.
- We are using lettuce in one tray and chard in the other. But use what you like to eat and make sure it is seasonal.
- Write what you have planted on an icy pole stick and date it so you can keep track of the germination period.
- Sprinkle the seeds with water but don't soak them. Keep watering regularly especially if the soil surface is looking dry. You need to check them every day.
- After several weeks, your seedlings will be ready to plant out into the garden.



# SIMPLE DIY GREENHOUSE IDEAS FOR RAISING SEEDS

**As an alternative to the plastic container method, polystyrene boxes are another cost-effective DIY greenhouse solution that also repurposes a single-use material that would otherwise end up in landfill.**

## Ingredients:

- Polystyrene box (with no holes preferable)
- Plastic sheet or bubble wrap
- Newspaper
- Seed raising mix and potting mix
- Seeds
- Heavy duty tape

## Method:

- Lay a bed of newspaper on the bottom of the container. This helps for the roots not to stick to the bottom.
- Pour in the soil mixture about a quarter of the way up the box. You can mark a line (like a measure) to guide you.
- We're using an old baking tray found at the tip shop. Press the tray into the soil to create an evenly spaced dent for perfect seed distancing. Use this hack on bigger garden beds too.
- Simply sprinkle your seeds where you've made the indents and cover with soil over the top.
- Give it a good water. Water will sit at the bottom to keep the moisture circulating around.
- Cover the top with a plastic sheet or bubble wrap and tape it down. This creates a sealed, humid environment where the greenhouse will be self-watering.
- The germination time for the seeds should be about one week to ten days.



# NO DIG GARDEN BED

**Make your own No dig garden bed that won't cost the earth**

## Ingredients:

- Rich soil
- Leaf litter
- Compost – food scraps and manure and worms!
- Newspaper
- Grass clippings
- Coffee grounds

## Method:

- Start with a clear patch of earth. It needs to be weed free. It should be a minimum of one meter by one meter to maximise the variety of food you can grow.
- Start with a sprinkling of brown litter (autumn leaves are great). It's best if the leaves have broken down for a few weeks before hand to speed up decomposition.
- Sprinkle about a centimetre thick layer of compost over the leaf litter. Think about icing a biscuit. Our compost is a mixture of food scraps, manure and green and brown litter and of course worms.
- Spread out the shredded paper over the top of the compost. The spaces in between will allow oxygen to aerate the soil, also allowing water and nutrients to penetrate the plant roots.
- Next, add your layer of used coffee grounds. Fertilising with coffee is a great way to make use of something that would otherwise end up in landfill. Coffee grounds help to add nitrogen to your soil or compost.
- Time to add the green litter or grass clippings to our layers. Fresh grass clippings are high in nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, which is very beneficial for your soil or compost. They break down quickly too.
- Now a thick layer of rich soil needs to be added to complete the garden bed. Make sure it's a generous layer as the soil sink over time.
- Finally, add a mulch layer of straw to help suppress weeds and keep the layers of ingredients warm so it begins to break down. Give it a good water and leave for a few days to a week before planting directly into the bed.
- Make sure you plant edibles for the right season and climate!