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Opening extract from

Gardening for Beginners

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GARDEN PESTS

Some animals love to eat your plants, and can damage or destroy them completely in a short space of time. Here are some of the most common pests, and tips to help keep them away.

SLUGS AND SNAILS

Slugs and snails love to munch their way through plants with juicy leaves, such as lettuce.

Every time you see a slug or snail on or near your plant, pick it off and put it in an open area of your garden. Then, birds, and other animals that like to eat slugs, will find them.

Snails and slugs need a smooth surface to crawl over. Put down something dry and rough, such as grit, sand or broken up eggshell around your plants. This may deter them from crossing it.

Slugs and snails don't like garlic or strong-smelling herbs, such as chives. Grow these plants next to plants they like to eat.

CATERPILLARS

Caterpillars feed on the leaves and flowers of many plants, especially Asian leaves, nasturtiums and some salad leaves.

Look for holes in the middle or around the edges of leaves and petals.

If you find caterpillars on young plants, pick them off and leave them in a place for birds and other animals to eat them. Older plants shouldn't be too bothered by a caterpillar attack.

It's best to leave some caterpillars in your garden. They turn into butterflies, which are important for pollinating plants.

Caterpillar eggs look like this:

APHIDS AND WHITEFLIES

Aphids and whiteflies are tiny insects that swarm onto the leaves and stems of some plants. They suck out sap – the liquid inside a plant – and keep it from growing properly.

Blackfly

Greenfly

There are lots of different types of aphids. The most common are greenfly and blackfly.

Whitefly

You can help to keep whiteflies away by growing companion plants (see pages 52–53).

Aphids will attack plants, such as climbing beans. But they like nasturtiums more. If you grow a nasturtium near to a bean plant, they might swarm onto the nasturtium instead. Find out how to grow nasturtiums on pages 22–23.

Gently wipe off any aphids you see using a sheet of paper towel.

Lacewing

Hover fly young

Ladybird

Hover fly

Fill a clean spray bottle with water. Spray a jet of water onto an area covered in aphids. The jet will blast the aphids off the plant.

Companion planting (see pages 52–53) can help to encourage bugs that eat aphids and whiteflies, such as ladybirds, and the young of hover flies and lacewings.

FLEA BEETLE

Flea beetles are tiny beetles that chew small, round holes in the leaves of some plants.

Flea beetles attack the leaves of Asian greens, such as this pak choi leaf. They also like to eat potato and radish leaves.

Keep plants well-watered, as the beetles prefer drier conditions. Also, cover young plants with horticultural fleece to stop beetles from landing on them. Older plants should survive an attack.

CATS

Cats won't eat your plants. But they might dig in your compost to use it as a toilet, and uproot plants at the same time.

Orange, lemon or grapefruit peel, or garlic- or onion-smelling plants might help to keep them away.

SPEEDY VEGETABLES

Vegetable and herb plants can take months to grow. But some can be ready to pick and eat in as little as one week.

Micro-leaves can be picked after their first leaves grow. Spring onions and radishes will go from seed to fully-grown plants in around 4-5 weeks.

MICRO-LEAVES

YOU WILL NEED:

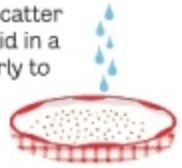
- ★ a packet of seeds that can be grown for micro-leaves (see below for suggestions)
- ★ a jar lid
- ★ paper towel

SOW: ANY TIME OF YEAR

HARVEST: 1-2 WEEKS AFTER SOWING

SITE: SUNNY INSIDE

1 Press a sheet of paper towel into the jar lid. Sprinkle water onto it until it feels damp. Then, scatter the seeds over it. Put the lid in a sunny place. Water regularly to keep it damp.



Micro-leaves don't ever grow very big, so they're ideal for a small container, such as a jar lid.

You can grow lots of different vegetable and herb seeds as micro-leaves.

This is kale.

The micro-leaves are ready when the plants have grown their first leaves. Cut away a few plants at a time, just above their roots. They're great as garnishes, or you could put them in sandwiches.

Buy packets of micro-leaf seeds, try the varieties on this page, or any of these:

- Greek cress
- Pea
- Coriander
- Salad rocket
- Beetroot
- Sorrel
- Amaranth
- Fenugreek
- Chard
- Thai basil

FAST GROWERS

YOU WILL NEED:

- ★ a packet of seeds from a spring onion variety such as White Lisbon or Deep Purple
- ★ a packet of seeds from a radish variety such as French Breakfast, Cherry Belle, Amethyst or Globe Mix
- ★ a planter 30cm (12in) wide and at least 15cm (6in) deep, filled with multi-purpose compost, and if growing inside, a drip tray

SOW: APRIL-SEPTEMBER

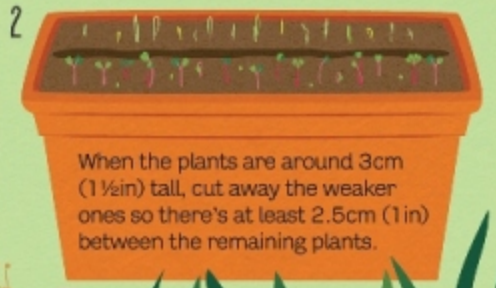
HARVEST: 4-5 WEEKS AFTER SOWING

SITE: SUNNY INSIDE OR OUTSIDE

1 Mark a line in the compost halfway across the planter. Water well. Then, sow the different seeds (see page 9).



2



When the plants are around 3cm (1½in) tall, cut away the weaker ones so there's at least 2.5cm (1in) between the remaining plants.

Flea beetles, slugs and snails may attack radish leaves and roots. The onion smell of spring onions might help to keep any pests away.

To harvest the plants, gently pull them out of the compost.

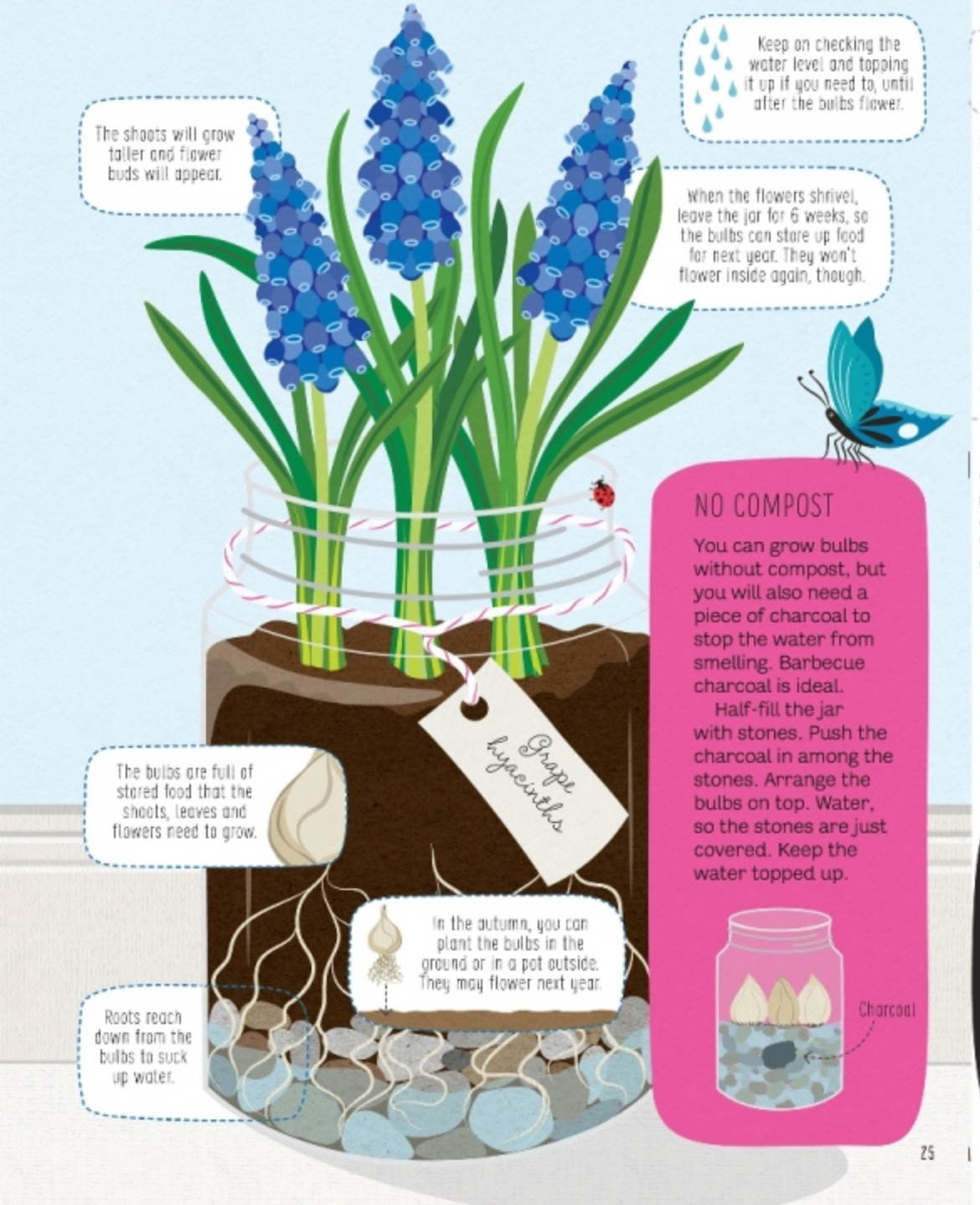
Water the plants every other day to make sure the compost doesn't dry out.

Spring onion

Radish

Spring onions will grow thick stems with slightly rounded bottoms.

Radishes grow as small, round roots just under the surface of the compost.



NO COMPOST

You can grow bulbs without compost, but you will also need a piece of charcoal to stop the water from smelling. Barbecue charcoal is ideal.

Half-fill the jar with stones. Push the charcoal in among the stones. Arrange the bulbs on top. Water, so the stones are just covered. Keep the water topped up.

BULBS IN A JAR

Some flowers grow from bulbs – bundles formed of fleshy leaves. Bulbs are easy to grow. In the autumn you can buy bulbs that have been treated so they will flower inside in the winter. These are known as 'forced' bulbs.

PLANT:	FLOWERS:	SITE:
AUTUMN	3-5 MONTHS AFTER PLANTING	INSIDE, DARK THEN SUNNY

YOU WILL NEED:

- ★ around 3 or 4 small flowering bulbs labelled as 'forced' or for indoor flowering, of varieties such as grape hyacinth (Muscari), crocus, dwarf daffodil (also called Narcissus) or dwarf iris
- ★ a small to medium-sized glass jar
- ★ some small stones or pebbles, or some gravel
- ★ multi-purpose compost
- ★ gardening gloves

Arrange a layer of stones or gravel at the bottom of the jar. Add compost, so the jar is half full. Put the bulbs in the middle, with their pointed ends up.



Wear gloves, as bulbs can irritate your skin.



2 Add more compost, so the bulbs are covered, apart from the very tips. Add water until it comes halfway up the stones. Keep the water topped up to this level all the time.

3 Put the jar in a cold, dark place such as a shed, basement or cool cupboard. Check it every week and water it if it feels dry. In 6-10 weeks, you should see pale shoots.



4 When the shoots are 4cm (1½in) high, move the jar to a warm, bright place inside – a windowsill is ideal. Keep checking the compost, and water it if it feels dry.

