

# Let's Grow at Home! // Activity Pack

For the last ten years Southwark Park Galleries has run a popular gardening project for pre-schoolers and their families.

Under normal circumstances our bountiful allotment would be seeing families return weekly to grow and harvest food, explore the amazing wildlife in Southwark Park and get stuck into craft activities.

This is a project close to our heart as it is the start of a learning journey into growing together and caring for our environment.

So during these challenging times, our community gardener Frances Ward has put together fun and engaging ideas to grow at home, and to create some nature-inspired craft activities. The activities in this pack are suitable for all ages and for growing in window boxes, window ledges, balconies or gardens.

Share...

Let's Grow at Home!

Tag us in your posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram:  
use the hashtag **#SPGletsgrowathome**  
or email photos of your work to **learning@southwarkparkgalleries.org**

*Websites for buying seeds and young plants:*

[www.thompson-morgan.com](http://www.thompson-morgan.com) // [Rocketgardens.co.uk](http://Rocketgardens.co.uk) // [Jerseyplantsdirect.com](http://Jerseyplantsdirect.com) // [Dobies.co.uk](http://Dobies.co.uk)

# 1 // Growing Plants from Pips and Stones



How to grow an avocado plant:

First, choose a stone from a very ripe avocado and soak the stone in tepid water for 48 hours. Then plant the stone in soil, making sure it is the right side up because the roots grow from the base and the shoot emerges from the pointed tip.

You can also germinate the stone in water. To do so, choose a jam jar to grow your avocado stone in. You will also need a couple of toothpicks jabbed into the stone to support it. The base of the stone must be just submerged in the water, which is topped up to keep it at that level. Germination may take anything from ten days to four or five weeks. Finally plant the stone in soil and watch your plant grow.

## Growing Tips //

**Other pips and seeds to grow:**

**Oranges & lemons - citrus pips need to be soaked for two days and then you can plant them in a pot of compost.**

**Apple seeds - save your apple seeds and plant them in a little pot of compost.**

**Remember to water regularly!**

## 2 // Sowing Seeds

This is the perfect time of year to start growing your own fruit and vegetables. Fresh, crispy salad leaves are the easiest edible crop to grow. Some varieties will be ready to harvest in just a few weeks!

Fill a seed tray with damp compost, sprinkle the seeds, lightly cover with compost and the leaves come up in a few days. Just cut with scissors as and when you want to eat them.

Seeds can be sown directly into small plant pots or seed trays or you can recycle toilet rolls or egg trays to start your seeds off. You can grow vegetables in window boxes, pots or grow bags. These need to be big enough not to cramp a plant's roots. Small pots will dry out quicker so bear this in mind when potting up your plants. The greater the soil depth the better, although a minimum of 15cm is enough for salads. Vegetables will grow best in a sheltered and sunny spot.

Other vegetables that are easy to grow from seed are lettuce leaves, rocket, spinach, radishes, turnips or French beans (tall and dwarf varieties are available).

You can buy young plants online such as tomatoes, chillies, strawberries, courgettes, or cucumbers.



### Growing Tips //

**Don't forget to feed your plants throughout the growing season (April - September) with fertiliser. Make sure plants are moist before you feed them otherwise you can damage the roots.**

**You can also use the water you cook your veggies in as a fertiliser. Once it's cooled down, just add it to your plants.**

### 3 // Supermarket Herbs

Supermarket herbs are easy to buy but can be hard to keep going. However, the majority of these, such as basil, coriander and parsley, are actually a collection of seedlings crammed into the pot rather than a single established plant. You can use this to your advantage and it can be an easy, convenient way to get a lot of herb plants.



#### Here's what to do:

**Basil:** cut the plant down to about half height. Divide it up into individual 3-inch pots, and put these in a sheltered place outside and keep them watered. Wait 2-3 weeks to see which start putting on new growth, and then plant them out or keep them as kitchen herbs.

**Chives:** Cut down to 2 inches above the soil. Plant the trimmed chives into a new pot or a bed. Don't bother dividing until next year or the year after.

**Coriander:** A bit more tricky - cut down to about 2 inches above the soil, then plant out into a bed or new pot as-is (or divide if you dare!) and see what comes out. We have tried transplanting individually but they just go straight to seed as they don't like being disturbed.

**Dill:** Divide up as per the basil. They will look really straggly when you get them separated. Have faith ... ours grew to 3ft high last summer, with huge heads of yellow flowers!

**Parsley:** Cut it down to half height and divide it. Stick it straight in a 12-inch pot outside.

**Mint:** Cut to about 2 inches above the soil. Put in its own pot outside (12 inch). No need to divide, it will spread beautifully.

### Growing Tips //

Once you have divided your herbs, most of them like sun and well-drained soil. Keep in mind the type of climate the herbs come from; basil, thyme and rosemary like more sunshine and drier soil than shade-loving, thirsty mint and parsley.

## 4 // Build a Lacewing Lodge



### What you need:

A clean, empty plastic bottle (with the lid on)  
Some corrugated cardboard, string, scissors and a hole punch

### How to make it:

Cut the bottom off your plastic bottle and use the hole punch to make 2 holes in opposite sides of the bottle near the bottom.

Roll up your cardboard and stuff it into the bottle (remember to leave a gap at the bottom). You could even put a bit of straw or hay in to make it extra snug but remember not to cram things in too tightly – you have to leave room for the lacewings to get in!

Thread a piece of string through the holes at the bottom to make sure the cardboard doesn't fall out. Then tie a piece of string around the neck of your bottle so you can hang up your lodge. Make sure you have left the lid on your bottle to stop the rain getting into the lodge.

Lacewings are natural pest control heroes as well as keen pollinators, so they are great to have around if you're a keen gardener. They munch their way through thousands of aphids and other pests. Give them a home to keep them safe through the winter and they'll do their bit to keep your garden looking nice in Spring.



## Tips //

Hang your lodge from a branch, on a hedge or on a fence. It's best to have them at about head height. Lacewings are attracted to lights, so sometimes it can be good to put them near your windows.

They start looking for a winter home in August, so make sure your lodge is up towards the end of summer to increase the chances of lacewings moving in.

This activity pack is brought to you by  
Southwark Park Galleries

[southwarkparkgalleries.org](http://southwarkparkgalleries.org) // 020 7237 1230

We look forward to seeing you again soon!



SOUTHWARK PARK  
GALLERIES



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

