

Growing Competition



Brief description

This is an activity that can take place throughout the year and is based on who can grow the largest, tallest or heaviest plant.



What you may need

- An area for planting and growing
- Standard garden tools
- Seeds
- Measuring stick or tape measure

Benefits

- Planting and growing is a latent skill in many people and it brings with it many benefits.
- Social horticulture therapy is increasingly acknowledged as being a very effective way to improve mood and wellbeing as well as enhancing concentration and self esteem.
- Conversation can flow naturally when planting is taking place and may well draw on familiar experiences from the past.
- The competitive element can help this activity have a focus even for those who do not have gardening in their background and it allows the skilful to demonstrate their abilities and be proud of what they can achieve.

Things to remember

- Ideally participants will wear gardening gloves to protect from injury and contamination. On occasion these will need to be removed when handling small or sensitive plants, do be sure that hands are washed at the end.
- Use of tools should be demonstrated and supervised.
- Soil should be of vegetable growing quality.
- Seeds should be sourced from a reputable supplier such as a local garden centre.
- Avoid planting poisonous plants for this competition.



How to



Many people love a competition and this is a great activity that can take place all year round.

- Decide what to plant and where – everyone can be involved in this planning stage.
- Make sure that your growing area is well prepared. It is best to start with loose, slightly moist soil. Alternatively you could start seeds in pots and transfer to your growing area once plants are established.
- Plant the seed twice as deep as it is wide (tiny seeds can be sprinkled over the soil)
- Make a hole first, or simply press the seed into the soil
- Cover the seed with dirt, and gently pack it down
- Water your seeds (if the soil isn't already damp)
- Keen gardeners will know that regular tending of plants leads to strong and vigorous growth.
- Start each type of plant off at the same time for fairness and agree a judging date, make sure the plants are clearly marked with the competitor's name, once planted.
- Different plants grow at different times – you can differentiate challenges by setting some of the competition around Winter crops such as leeks, some brassicas and early potatoes.
- Traditionally sunflowers are a great plant to grow and measure but large vegetables such as pumpkins and squashes are also very satisfying and can contribute to the kitchen afterwards.
- If you hold a sunflower growing competition, harvest any sunflower seeds for your bird feeders and to plant again next year.
- You can include some fun categories such as 'most knobbly carrot' or 'most strangely coloured vegetable' and aesthetic ones such as 'prettiest hanging basket'.
- When it comes to judging why not invite someone in from the local gardening club or allotment society. Display plants/fruits/vegetables washed and on plates and let the judging commence! Do make sure that you have agreed judging criteria in advance!
- An amusing alternative to this activity is to plant bulbs in the shape of patterns or words and watch them come up in the Spring.

To find out more visit: www.ltl.org.uk
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