



## **Eco tips April**

### **Grow your own**

I would love to encourage everyone to grow their own vegetables, herbs and flowers. Watching plants grow is really fascinating. The seed germinates and produces seed leaves, then true leaves and grows into the plant that you desire usually within 10 to 12 weeks. You can buy small plants at the garden centre where the process has been started for you. You can buy many herbs as plants then take cuttings. Summer herbs like basil, parsley, dill and coriander can be easily grown from seed.

How do you start? Find the perfect spot. This can be a reasonably sunny area in your garden. You can have raised containers on a patio or balcony. Potatoes can be grown in pots as can tomatoes. I use seaweed feed to water plants in pots and containers. Organic is always better for the environment. You may want an allotment or try growing vegetables at Grace and Flavour to gain skills.

When can you start? Mid-April is a good time as frosts tend to finish by mid-May. Plant out plug and pot plants in mid-May. You can gradually harden them off by increasing the time outdoors before this. If you sow tender things before mid-May you can cover with fleece on cold nights

What can you start with? Sunflowers and potatoes are fun for children as they grow quickly. Home grown tomatoes have so much more flavour. Strawberries are bought as plants and are best in raised containers to avoid slugs and will need netting from birds. Easier things to grow are runner beans, courgettes, and cut and come again salad leaves. We have autumn raspberries as they produce a continuous crop from August through to mid-October and are delicious! If you grow carrots or brassicas, you will need enviromesh to deter pests.

Why grow your own? Simply your fruit and vegetables are fresher, tastier and grown without chemicals. Adding organic matter to the soil improves its structure. If you choose a no dig method the worms do the work of mixing and aerating the soil. There are no food miles so reducing pollution and carbon footprint. The garden is a peaceful place with wonderful sights, sounds and smells and a great place for worship. Gardening is really therapeutic and generally improves mental health. Having a go, even on the windowsill is worth a try! Go to the RHS website for more information.