



# Organic vegetables in pots

Growing your own vegies at home is both rewarding and great fun. In days gone by it was believed that organic vegetables could only be grown in garden beds. However, with the modern advent of organic potting mix and organic fertilisers, we can now grow organic home grown vegetables successfully in pots.



by Ashley Searle

In fact, I have been doing this myself for quite a number of years and I must say that growing in pots has a lot of benefits over garden beds. Pots are easy to water without wasting water in areas without plants, they are relatively easy to shift around the garden to find the right position and sunlight and if you use decorative pots, they create an extra feature in the garden. You do not need to do heavy digging and turning of the soil and most importantly, vegies grown in pots are very successful and delicious! Here are some simple steps to follow for growing your own organic produce in pots.



Step 1

## Choosing your pots

The first step to success is to use a large pot. As vegies are vigorous growers and require a large amount of soil for their thirsty and hungry roots, large pots are essential. I have found that pots 40cm to 50cm in diameter (across the top of the pot) have proven to be perfect. In fact, a 40cm pot will hold about one 30 litre bag of potting mix and a 50cm pot will hold about 2 bags of potting mix, making it easy to calculate how many bags you will need for your pots.



Step 2

## Which plants?

Almost all vegies can be grown in pots with just a small number of exceptions. The most popular varieties such as tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, cabbage, beans, peas, capsicum, chillies, carrots, celery, bok choy, pak choy and herbs are all great candidates for pots. Basically, vegies that are not too large and cumbersome. For example, I would relegate sweet corn to the garden bed.

What you will need...



- Vegetable seeds or seedlings of your choice
- Searles Fish & Kelp Plus
- Searles Kickalong Organic Potting Mix
- Kickalong Organic Vegetable & Herb
- Searles Bug Beater
- Searles Fruit Fly Trap



Step 3

### Organic potting mix

Recently, Searles have launched a trialed and tested certified organic potting mix, called **Kickalong Organic Potting Mix**. This mix has been developed using the latest organic processes and technologies to provide a premium organic mix ideal for organic growing of all plants in pots. Never use garden soil mix or compost in pots. These products are designed specifically for use in garden beds and when used in pots, they tend to hold too much moisture and do not provide adequate aeration of the soil. This all leads to water logged root systems and less than ideal plant growth. Potting mix is structured to provide ideal aeration and water retention for optimum growth.



Step 4

### Planting

Plant seeds or seedlings according to the directions on the packet or punnet. Seeds work very well in pots as potting mixtures provide good conditions for seed germination. Because seedlings start out so small, a common mistake is to plant them too close together. As the plant matures however, they become crowded and do not perform or taste as good as they would have if they had had plenty of space. Tomatoes will do best with one strong plant per pot. Beans and peas will do equally as well with 2 to 3 plants per pot.



Step 5

### Mulching

Mulch well to save water and keep the potting mix in good condition. Seedlings can be mulched immediately after planting. If planting seeds, wait until they have sprouted before mulching, otherwise the mulch can prevent them from growing through the surface.



Step 6

### Fertilising

Potted vegies can be fed the same way as vegies in garden beds. All good potting mixes will contain a starter fertiliser but for good vegie growth, you will need to apply more fertiliser through the growing period. Apply **Searles Kickalong Organic Plant Food** (Vegetable & Herb) to the soil after seedlings have established and hardened off. You can also apply liquid plant foods while you are watering the pots. Use organic plant foods such as **Searles Fish & Kelp Plus**, a mixture of both fish and seaweed fertilisers. Apply this over the plants' foliage and the soil to drench the roots. I have found that by doing this every 1-2 weeks, I was able to grow vegetables with the absolute minimum of pest problems.

Continue to feed the plants up until maturity of fruit set, then stop fertilising through the plants final stages.



Step 7

### Pest control

This is one area where I find pots of great benefit over garden beds as I have noticed my vegies growing in pots are relatively insect and pest free. Typical culprits like snails find pots less attractive and are easier to spot. If you do notice insect activity, use a soft organic spray such as **Searles Bug Beater** (pyrethrum spray) or flick them off the plant and squash them.

When I have grown tomatoes, I attached fruit fly traps to the tomato stakes above the pots. I killed and caught a host of male fruit fly and had very little fruit damage from the females. The overall result was highly successful and the tomatoes were the sweetest and most delicious I had ever eaten. I ended up with so many that I was bringing in bag loads to work every few days to share them out!

## Recycle & re-use!

After a crop of vegies in pots has finished, you can re-use the potting mix for another crop. It is good practice to grow a different type of vegetable to avoid any potential build up of plant disease. Simply re-invigorate the potting mix with some **Kickalong Plant Food** and start again.

You will find that pot growing is very successful if you make sure you use large pots and adequately water and feed. The plants are very easy to maintain and the results are great tasting, superb organic home grown produce! Bon appetite!