

## **GARBAGE GARDENING (or KITCHEN SCRAP GARDENING)**

Did you know that you can grow plants from kitchen scraps? Scraps are all the leftover stuff from preparing fruits and vegetables for meals. Scraps include things like carrot tops, the bottom core from lettuce or celery, even a sprouted and wrinkled potato that was overlooked in the back of the pantry. If you have ever sprouted an avocado pit suspended in a jar of water, then you're already a successful garbage gardener!

With the right care, many fruits and vegetables will sprout and give you lovely plants to enjoy. The results might not produce anything edible but you'll still end up with a nice houseplant and learn lots of cool stuff along the way.

Start your new plants in a warm, sunny spot using water, pebbles, soil or peat as a growing medium. Be sure to take photos or sketch your results as your scraps sprout and grow. Measure their progress and add the details to a journal, chart or graph to see just how fast (or slow) and tall (or wide) they grow.

**CARROTS** will quickly sprout new leaves. Place the carrot tops on pebbles covered in water on a pie plate and keep them moist. They're also fun to grow suspended by toothpicks over a container of water so that you can watch the roots as they develop.

**CELERY** stalks are used in many recipes, but save a base of about three inches after cutting off the stalks. Place the celery base in a glass or bowl of water. Change the water every other day. In a few days the outer stalks will start to dry up while the inner leaves grow and turn a rich dark green. In 7-10 days, remove your celery from the water and plant in a pot, window planter or in the ground if the weather is warm.

**CITRUS** (lime, lemon, oranges, grapefruit) don't seem to mind home temperatures and dry, indoor air. Soak the seeds in warm water first. Then fill a pot with soil, poke holes about a ½ inch deep and drop a seed in each hole. Put multiple seeds in a pot and keep the soil slightly moist. Watch for the seedlings to appear.

**GREEN ONIONS** are super easy to grow from scraps. Once you've chopped up a green onion for cooking, submerge the white end with the roots in a container of water. Leave the top of the plant above the water's surface. The onions will begin to grow roots and the green part of the onion will grow back. When you need onions for cooking, harvest only the green tops and the base of the plant will continue to grow. Change the water periodically to keep the plant healthy.

**SWEET POTATOES** produce beautiful vines. Put the narrow end of the sweet potato into a jar filled with water, find a sunny spot and watch the roots emerge first, followed by shoots of leaves. Transplant into a larger pot, and it will continue to grow and produce new vines.

Here are some great resources that offer excellent information about garbage gardening:

<https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/2071/2013/12/Garbage-Gardening.pdf>

<https://extension.illinois.edu/blogs/flowers-fruits-and-frass/2020-03-27-kitchen-scrap-gardening-regrow-your-fruits-and-vegetables>

<https://growforit.ces.ncsu.edu/2018/10/garbage-can-gardening/>

For more information on gardening for kids, visit these websites:

<https://kidsgardening.org/>

<https://gardenerspath.com/how-to/beginners/gardening-children/>

<https://lancaster.unl.edu/hort/youth>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/gardening-with-kids-how-it-affects-your-childs-brain-body-and-soul>

<https://learn.eartheasy.com/guides/gardening-with-children/>