

Let's **Grow** Outside!

With Kildare County Childcare Committee



Hi Everyone,

This is a really busy time in the garden, Spring has sprung and everything is bursting into growth. If you look closely you can see buds bursting on trees and little shoots poking up out of the ground. Hopefully by now you have at least had some seeds germinate!

We would love to hear how things are going with the outdoors in your service:

What are the children enjoying at the moment?

Do you have seedlings emerging?

Have they enjoyed sowing seeds and other activities?

Photos of growing or outdoor activities / areas would be most welcome! (email jane@kccc.ie)

We also hope to set up a discussion area where people can share ideas and questions in the coming weeks.

Grow On!! 😊

Here is our video for Week 2: <https://animoto.com/play/mt8fiNpeRR9V5HasfNHSIQ>

GROWING SUGGESTIONS

*For those in **ECCE services** you will be having your Easter break next week, so you will be ready to catch up on growing after that!*

***School Aged Childcare:** Older children will love these tasks too, so this could be something you plan to do with your school aged groups after Easter when they all return.*

Being outdoors is great fun for children who have been stuck in a classroom all day and allowing them to take part in tasks like this can give them a new focus and a break from the day-to-day stresses of being back in school.

Horticulture has been proven to be therapeutic and help to reduce anxiety in all age groups, so this is something which children could definitely benefit from in these Covid times.

The Outdoors are also safer in terms of Covid risk.

Full-daycare services can carry on with growing, so here are some ideas of what to be doing in the coming weeks:

Over the next few weeks there is lots to be done –

You can **plant potatoes**

Sow seed – **sunflowers and runner beans** can be sown now or over the next few weeks. If you have sprouted Runner Beans in a jar you can transfer these to pots with compost. Keep these seedlings indoors until danger of frost has passed!



Here is a runner bean seedling ready to transfer to a pot with compost

Your radish and salad leaves can also be sown now or over the coming weeks. These are great for filling gaps.

Radishes produce a quick crop – once you sow them you will have your first crop in a matter of weeks. A quick result for busy little people, children love to see the fruits of their labours, and even better to taste them! Radishes have a peppery taste so children will certainly find them interesting to taste..



Salad is also easy to grow & good for tasting.



You can choose to sow all of your seeds at one time, giving all of the children a chance to sow some – or you can do them over a number of weeks.

The discount supermarkets usually have grow-bags and potting compost.

POTATOES

A staple in Ireland, most of us eat potatoes quite regularly. It is great for children to understand where food comes from.

HOW TO GROW

You can plant your potatoes directly in the ground if you have a little patch free – here we just dug up some grass to make a new growing spot.



Photos - On left: a new bed dug in a lawn!

On right: Potatoes planted in a traditional potato drill

The potatoes can be planted about 15cm deep (the size of a small ruler!) and 40 cm apart, cover with soil and wait.

In a few weeks we should see the shoots emerge and eventually we will need to 'earth them up', so if you have a pile of soil left, keep it!

Earlies like Charlotte and Queens can be planted now, or any time over the next few weeks. Chitting helps them to get growing quickly so this is a good idea (leaving them on the windowsill in an egg box to sprout!)

If you don't have a patch of land or flower bed / raised bed etc available you can use a large pot or container or special potato growing bag.

Instructions for planting potatoes in a bag:

-Take an old canvas type shopping bag and fill 2/3 with soil or compost. Cut some small holes near the base for drainage.

-Put one or two seed potatoes into the soil and cover with about 10-15 cms of soil. Keep damp and in a few weeks you will see shoots emerge. You can then add more soil to fill the bag. Keep this watered for the summer or stand in shade / a shallow tray of water if you are away for a few days.

-This can work with basically any container. Some people just buy a bag of compost or a grow-bag, turn longways and cut off the top of the bag, put the seed potatoes (maybe 2 per bag) a few cms into the compost, cut small holes near the base for drainage.

-Your potatoes will be ready to harvest in autumn (after the plants have flowered & leaves start to die back)



This is a potato growing bag, but any deep canvas type bag will work