Planting

Planting involves the active process of gently placing a little seedling into the ground. Placing seedlings in their final position to achieve optimum growth involves consideration of the plant's needs both above and below ground.

1. Key Ideas

All plants need to share physical space in order to get the benefit of light. They also need sufficient root contact with soil to grow stable and gain access to water and nutrients.

We want to ensure that each plant can have enough nourishment in order to grow well.

2. How to Plant

When transplanting seedlings it's important to make a hole that's big enough to contain the entire root-ball.

Once in the hole, cover around the base of the plant with soil, firming it down to ensure the roots are in contact with the surrounding soil and the plant is held firmly in the ground.

If you're sowing seeds directly into their final growing position, make sure to check the correct planting depth for that type of vegetable - different seeds have different requirements for germination.

3. Space Below and Above Ground

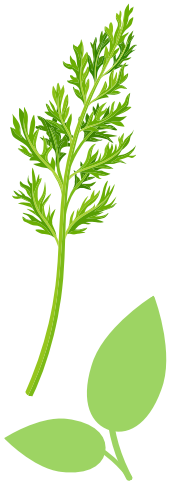
The roots of a plant can sometimes occupy the same amount of space or more, than the part of the plant above ground. This gives the plant stability, and the ability to take increasingly bigger amounts of water and nutrients from the ground.

Above ground, plants grow to different heights depending on their growth habit and access to light. Spacing plants correctly so that they can access plenty of sunlight is essential. If they're too close together they may become stunted or grow 'leggy' in order to access more light - both of these will decrease plant health and productivity in terms of what we can harvest.

4. Water

Water is the most immediate source of nourishment for the plant. When we first plant something into the soil, its roots may be damaged or dried out by contact with the air.

It's very important for the establishment of the new plant to make sure it has immediate access to water when it is transplanted. This can be done by filling the hole with water before putting the seedling into the ground, or it can be done by watering the plant once it's in the ground. Preventing the soil from drying out is very important in the first few days after transplanting.



5. Observing Plants

By touching and observing a live plant we can find out where water is stored (for example, this might be inside the leaves, in the petals, or on the surface).

We can compare what a veggie looks like when it's dry, to what it looks like when sprayed with water.

Observations can also be made about the skin of a veggie - some are smooth and waterproof, others are hairy or with pores. How does water behave on the different surfaces?

6. Companion Planting

Some plants can benefit from growing together in the same space or planter. Called 'companion planting', it's when specific plants, flowers or herbs are planted alongside the vegetable plants to protect them or enhance their growth.

The companion plants attract insects (including bees) for pollination, repel pests, or act as food for pests (and so protect the main crop from being eaten).