



The Achiltibuie Garden
...let's grow

Salad & herb planter

Kit contents:

1 planter with closed grommets & bracing strip funnel	4 pyramid pot bases + wick
4 herb planter spacers (black correx)	1 planter fleece
1 litre general purpose feed 1	30ml measure
5 litres <i>Gold</i> growing medium	1 litre general purpose feed 2
	4 packets of salad/herb seeds

Assembly.

1. Slide the bracing strip onto the end of the planter, then position it at the middle of the planter.
2. Make sure that the capillary matting wicks are threaded through the slots in the pots so that the two ends protrude equally below the pots.
3. Fill up the pot bases with dry *Gold* growing medium. Don't press it down with your fingers as the air gaps in the *Gold* are vital to good aeration.
4. Sow your seeds thinly onto the surface of the *Gold*, one type of seeds to each pot, then cover the seeds with a thin sprinkling of *Gold*. It is better not to sow the whole packet; if the pack is folded down and stored in a cool dry place the seeds will keep for a considerable time so that successional sowings can be made.
5. Place the pots into the planter.
6. Fit the funnel into the hole in the bracing strip then pour in plain water to the planter until the water reaches a level just below the bottom of the pots. Leave the *Gold* to absorb this water (up to 30 minutes), then add the same amount of water again.
7. Place the planter in a warm place (ideally a constant 20°C). Lay the black correx spacers over the top of the pots to exclude light.
8. Check the pots daily for signs of emerging seedlings. Make sure the *Gold* does not dry out – add plain water to the planter as required.
9. As soon as there are seedlings visible remove the black correx, place the planter in good light and lay the fleece material over the pots. (Note: germination rates may vary between different types of seeds. Keep the black cover on pots with no seedlings showing and use the fleece over the young seedlings). The fleece provides a perfect micro-climate for young plants: it reduces evaporation, diffuses light, keeps the humidity up and retains warmth. The fleece can remain on the plants until they have grown 3" to 6" high.
10. Thin out the seedlings if necessary (see 'Growing Tips' below for more info).
11. Top up the level of water in the bottom of the planter as necessary, but do not fill deeper than the bottoms of the pots as this will waterlog the *Gold* and drive air out.
12. There is an initial dose of nutrient in the *Gold* which will be enough for the first few weeks of the plants' lives. You should start feeding them 3-4 weeks after the first seedlings have emerged. Add 5ml of concentrate 1 and 5ml of concentrate 2 to 1 litre of water and use this solution to top up the planter. You can make up larger quantities of the feed solution for convenience (eg 25ml of concentrate 1 and concentrate 2 in 5 litres of water).

Growing tips

Light

The amount of light your plants get is the most important factor affecting their growth. On short winter days plants grow a lot slower than long summer days even if they are in a heated environment. Best conditions are provided by even all round light such as in a greenhouse, conservatory or a sheltered place outside. A bright windowsill will provide reasonable conditions but remember that relatively little light gets to the plants from inside the room, so place the kit as close to the window as possible and rotate the pots regularly. Protect very young seedlings from lots of direct sunlight – keep the fleece on and use a west or east facing window.

Thinning

Depending on the ultimate size of the varieties you are growing you will want to grow varying quantities of plants in each pot. Dill and rocket can be grown densely (30-40 plants per pot), basil will need more space (6-8 plants per pot), lettuces maybe 3 per pot. Spare seedlings may be planted out in the garden or in other pots.

Harvesting

The salad leaves can be harvested when they are 2”- 3” in length. Take off the largest leaves as they reach a suitable size as you require them. Most of the varieties we offer are suitable for “cut-and-come-again” cropping.

Successions

After several weeks of harvesting leaves as above, lettuces and other salad leaves will go to seed (ie they will stop producing leaves in favour of flowers). This process is irreversible. Use the last of the leaves and remove the crop from the pot. Sow more of your saved seeds in fresh *Gold* or use a recycled supply if you prefer.

Recycling *Gold*

If you wish to dispose of used *Gold* you will find that it makes an excellent soil conditioner. Dig it into your garden or add to the compost heap.

Alternatively it can be recycled in your growing kit. Remove the old plants and riddle out as much of the dead roots, leaves and other debris as possible. Spread thinly on a metal tray and place in a hot oven for 10-15 minutes. This will sterilise the *Gold* and it can be used directly when cool. It is also possible to microwave *Gold* to sterilise it – use a microwave-suitable dish.

Watering & feeding

Frequency of feeding is determined by the rate of plant growth and the rate of transpiration of water from the leaf area: this is related to the air temperature, humidity and light intensity. In hot weather conditions the pots take up lots of liquid feed just to supply the plants with sufficient water to transpire and not because the plants are requiring more feed. In these conditions it is possible to provide a weaker feed strength with no detrimental effect on the crop. Cutting the strength of the feed by 25-50% in hot conditions is acceptable.

The liquid feed is supplied in as two concentrates which may react together if mixed. Measure the two concentrates separately then add them to water. When correctly diluted the two 1 litre bottles supplied will give you 200 litres of diluted feed.

Additional feed sets and refill packs are available by mail order from www.thehydroponicum.com or by telephoning The Achiltibuie Garden on 01854 622202