

Some recommended varieties and tops tips for growing in pots and confined spaces

As a general point, always buy the best quality compost that you can afford for putting into pots or other containers. I have found that the cheap brands are cheap for a reason, i.e. they are poor quality, probably missing the trace elements necessary for good plant growth such as magnesium needed to make the chlorophyll which absorbs sunlight. Vegetables grown in containers are always going to need a more regular watering regime than those grown in soil in the ground. In dry spells its sometimes feels as if you are doing nothing else other than watering. Here's a few more suggestions:

Crop	John 's Favourite Variety	Pot Size (guide)	Notes & tips
French Beans	Hawkesbury Wonder	10 litres or above, 2 plants in a 20-litre pot	Delicious long pods up to 10 inches. Needs support of a cane
Runner beans	Hestia	20 litres or larger	Dwarf variety growing around 18 inches tall. Don't expect huge yields
Lettuce	Little Gem or mixed salad leaves	6 litre for two lettuce	Salad leaves are also an excellent option for containers
Early Potatoes	Various, my favourite is Pentland Javelin	15 litre plus	Take off most of the chits before planting or you end up with too many tiny spuds
Carrot	Early Nantes, or round varieties such as Paris Market	20 litre	May need covering with fleece or mesh to avoid carrot root fly. Contrary to myth, height barriers alone do not work. Trust me!
Turnips	Sweet Belle	6 litre and upwards	An easy crop maturing in around 8 to 9 weeks
Shallots	Any.	6 litres for 4 shallots	Perfect for pickles. Plant in early new year and ready by the end of June
Chilli's	Very much a matter of personal preference, check the Scottville scale reading though.	6 litre and upwards depending on variety.	Chilli's and peppers require bottom heat in the spring to really get then growing
Beetroot	Pablo, Action	20 litre	Beetroot like high nitrogen feed to get them moving. Not the easiest crop to grow in pots.
Tomatoes	Any variety bred for hanging baskets	20 litre or above. I have found tomatoes struggle if the pot is too small	These dwarf varieties crop early but run out of steam unless fed regularly
Peas	Twinkle	20 litres	This dwarf variety will produce a crop of early peas. And you can then plant another crop in the to follow on.
Courgettes	Midnight	20 litre plus	Compared to plants grown in the ground, I have thus far found yields to be disappointing. I must be doing something wrong!
Broad Beans	The Sutton	3 plants in a 20-litre pot	This old dwarf variety (it's about 18 inches tall when mature) crops quite well in pots.
Aubergine	Scorpio (on grafted rootstock)	25 litres plus	Grafted aubergines are extremely productive, up to 10 fruits per plants but need a lot of feed and a big pot

Spinach	Any	Various, the bigger the pot, the more plants it will hold	Generally, does best in spring and autumn. Runs to seed quickly in hot spells
Radish	Any	8-inch-deep boxes work well	Radish don't like fertile soil and John Ines No 1 might be the best compost.
Spring Onion	White Lisbon	6 litres and upwards.	An old favourite but ultra-reliable. Sow quite thickly and then thin out.
Kohl Rabi	Kolibri (a bright purple skinned variety)	6 litres and upwards	This unusual but tasty veg, a member of the cabbage family talks around 12 weeks to mature.