

Vegetables in the Living Field Garden

Good country for vegetables

The climate and soils around Tayside are ideal for growing temperate vegetables and herbs. Those from mediterranean and subtropical regions have a hard time with the cold, but most of the rest thrive where soils are deep enough and winds not too strong.

Vegetables (and fruits) provide a wide range of ingredients for a healthy and balanced diet.



Chard, cabbages, curly kale and spinach

Carbohydrate from 'roots' and fleshy fruits, protein from peas and beans, oils from seeds, vitamins and minerals from leaf - diverse offerings from the plant kingdom.

Vegetables are here grouped by the plant parts eaten - leaves and stems, 'roots', flowers, fruits and seeds.

Fresh leaf

Soft foliage - high in vitamins and minerals - does not keep and has to be eaten fresh unless frozen.

Lettuce, chard, spinach, kale and the other leafy vegetables are best eaten within a few days of picking them or else pickled.



Cauliflower, sprouting broccoli, courgette and pumpkin

Flowers and fleshy fruits

The bunched flower heads of cauliflower, broccoli and purple sprouting are among the country's favourites. Marrows, courgettes and pumpkin grow well outside in this climate, if harvested before frost.

Flower heads and fleshy fruits keep for longer than open leaf and most last the winter when pickled.

The beauty of roots

Settled society has to rely on stores of produce to take it through cold and drought. Dry grain - cereals and pulses - provides the basic needs for carbohydrate and protein. The root and stem tubers, often classed as 'roots', produce fresh vegetable tissue that can last over the winter, either harvested or in the ground.

Many plant families have species and varieties that store their energy in tubers - here we have turnip and swede (cabbages), red and forage beet, carrot and parsnip.



Potato tubers (and flowers), carrots, red beet and swede

Roots such as potato and swede transformed farming and gardening when they became widely grown here a few centuries ago. They can be boiled, braised, roasted or pickled.

Seeds for protein and oil

Seeds of the legume family are high in protein. In north temperate lands, the main grain legumes are faba beans (broad and field varieties), phaseolus beans (runners and French) and peas (whole pod, fresh and dried).

All of them 'fix' nitrogen gas from the air through a symbiosis with bacteria that form nodules on the plants' upper roots.



Sunflower, peas and faba beans

Few oil-bearing plants are grown here. Linseed is one. Sunflower yields in good years. Oilseed rape is mostly a commercial crop.

The Living Field project

All vegetables shown here were grown in the Living Field garden at the James Hutton Institute, Dundee, UK.

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