

Grow your own sprouts

Article written by: Kate Marsland, Master Gardener

Last month, we talked about worms turning our garbage into soil, this month we'll be growing alfalfa sprouts without soil. Since it's too cold right now to grow anything outdoors, this is a neat thing to know! If you've ever eaten sprouts on a sandwich or in a salad, you already know how sweet and crunchy they can be. What you probably don't know is how easy it is to grown your own!

Here are the supplies you'll need:

- **A clean glass jar with a wide mouth**
- **Cheesecloth**
- **Rubber band**
- **Two tablespoons of alfalfa seeds**

The first step to growing sprouts is to soak your seeds. Put the alfalfa seeds in your clean jar and cover them with clean water. Cover the mouth of the jar with a couple layers of cheesecloth and use the rubber band to hold it in place. Set the jar aside and leave it overnight.

In the morning, you need to strain your seeds. Hold the jar over the sink and pour the water out through the cheesecloth. Shake it a few times to be sure you get all the water out. Set the jar aside until evening.

Is it evening? Then it's time to rinse the seeds. Pour some water into the jar, swirl the seeds around and pour the water out again. Repeat this step every morning and evening, and watch for the seeds to sprout!

After four to five days, your sprouts will have reached their peak for flavor and nutrition. That means it's time to harvest them. Just open the jar and chow down! You can eat them plain or add them to a sandwich or salad. Put the jar in the refrigerator if you're not going to eat them soon.

Of course, many kinds of seeds, beans and nuts can be used to grow sprouts. What's important is that you use the ones that are intended to be eaten as sprouts. Most seeds are treated with fungicides and other chemicals that you shouldn't eat. Get your seeds for sprouting from a health food store, or a garden center that carries untreated seeds. Experiment with radish, clover or sunflower seeds, and garbanzo or lentil beans; each one has a different flavor.

Look at the web site www.learn2.com for more information on growing and cooking sprouts. Younger children can read the book *The Tiny Seed* by Eric Carle to learn about how seeds grown.