

A GARDENERS GROWING TOGETHER GUIDE

# Indoor Growing Made Simple

4 Easy Ways to Grow Fresh Food Indoors — All Year Long



**GARDENERS GROWING TOGETHER**

Grow food 12 months a year — indoors & out

► [YouTube: Little Garden on the Prairies](#)

# Hello and Welcome!


from Tracey — Gardeners Growing Together

My name is Tracey, and I'm so glad you're here.

Whether you're a seasoned gardener looking for something new to try over winter, or you've never grown a thing in your life, you've made a wonderful choice. Growing food indoors means **fresh greens, herbs, and veggies 12 months a year** — no garden, no backyard, and no perfect climate required. (I garden in zone 3 on the Saskatchewan prairies, so trust me — if I can grow fresh food in February, so can you. ❄️)

This guide walks you through **four simple ways to grow indoors**, starting with the absolute easiest and working up to my personal favourite. You don't have to do all four — just pick the one that fits your space, your budget, and your comfort level, and start there.





Let's grow something. 🌱

 **New to all this?** Start with sprouting jars this week. You'll have something to eat in a few days — and that little win is what hooks you. 😊

▶ Catch all my how-to videos on YouTube: [Little Garden on the Prairies](#)

## The 4 Ways at a Glance

Think of these as rungs on a ladder. Start at the top, get a quick win, and climb whenever you're ready.

Method	Cost to Start	Effort	First Harvest	Best For
 <b>Sprouting Jars</b>	\$	Lowest	3–5 days	Total beginners — no soil, no lights
 <b>Microgreens</b>	\$\$	Low	1–2 weeks	Fast wins in a tiny space
 <b>Hydroponic Systems</b>	\$\$\$	Low (plug & play)	4–6 weeks	"Done-for-you" with lights built in
 <b>Kratky Method</b>	\$\$	Medium (DIY)	4–6 weeks	Tinkerers & budget growers

**Not sure where to start?** If you've never grown indoors before, begin with sprouting jars. In a few days you'll be eating something you grew — and you'll be hooked.

# Method 1 — Sprouting Jars

The easiest possible way to grow food indoors — just a jar on your counter.

## WHAT IT IS

Sprouts are seeds you "wake up" with water and eat whole — root, shoot, and all — usually within 3 to 5 days. Think crunchy alfalfa, broccoli, radish, lentil, or mung bean (those bean sprouts you get in stir-fry). It's the fastest food you'll ever grow.



## WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

- ✓ Ready in just a few days
- ✓ Cheapest method by far — a jar and some seeds
- ✓ No lights or grow space needed
- ✓ Packed with fresh, raw nutrition all winter

## WHAT YOU NEED

A wide-mouth quart jar + a sprouting lid (mesh screen), and sprouting seeds (alfalfa, broccoli, radish, mung bean).

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## QUICK START IN 5 STEPS

- 1 Add **1–2 tablespoons of seed** to your jar and pop on the mesh lid.
- 2 Cover with cool water and **soak overnight** (8–12 hours).
- 3 **Drain well**, then rest the jar tilted upside-down so it keeps draining.
- 4 **Rinse and drain twice a day** — morning and night. That's the whole job.
- 5 In **3–5 days**, when they've sprouted and greened up, give a final rinse and store in the fridge. 🥗

### A quick safety note

Always buy seed **labelled for sprouting or food use** (not garden seed, which may be treated), and keep your jar clean. A good rinse twice a day keeps everything fresh and safe.

 [Watch me do it](#)

## Method 2 — Microgreens

One step up from sprouts — and one of the most rewarding things you can grow indoors.

### WHAT IT IS

Microgreens are baby plants grown in a shallow tray of soil or a growing mat, then snipped with scissors when they're 1–2 inches tall (usually 7–14 days). Unlike sprouts, you grow these in a medium, give them light, and harvest just the stems and leaves — not the roots.



### WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT


- ✓ Ready in 1–2 weeks
- ✓ Grows in a tray on a windowsill or under a small light
- ✓ Loaded with flavour and nutrition
- ✓ Pennies a tray vs. \$4–5 at the grocery store

### WHAT YOU NEED

Shallow trays (with and without holes for bottom-watering), potting mix or a growing mat, microgreen seed (radish, broccoli, pea, sunflower are great starters), a grow light (or a very bright window), and a spray bottle.

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### QUICK START IN 6 STEPS

- 1 Fill your tray with about **1–2 inches of moist potting mix** and level it off.
- 2 **Scatter seed densely** across the surface and press it in gently.
- 3 Mist, then **cover for 3–4 days** (the "blackout" period) in a warm spot, around **18–22°C (64–72°F)**.
- 4 Once they've sprouted and lifted the lid, **uncover and move them under light**.
- 5 **Water from the bottom** to keep the leaves dry and mould-free.
- 6 **Harvest in 7–14 days** by snipping just above the soil line. Rinse and enjoy. 

#### A quick safety note

Use **food-grade, untreated seed**, start with clean trays, and give them good airflow. Bottom-watering (instead of soaking from the top) is your best defence against mould.

 [Watch me do it](#)



## Method 3 — Hydroponic Systems

The "done-for-you" option — everything built in, as simple as it gets.

### WHAT IT IS

These are tidy countertop units — brands like LetPot, AeroGarden, and the iDOO I use — with the **grow light, water reservoir, and timer all built right in**. You drop in seed pods, add water and nutrients, and the system handles the rest. It's the easiest way to grow "real" hydroponic herbs and lettuces without building anything.



### WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT


- ✓ Truly plug-and-play — lights and timer included
- ✓ Compact and great-looking on a counter
- ✓ Perfect for fresh herbs you snip as you cook
- ✓ Almost no guesswork — the ideal first "real" hydro setup

### WHAT YOU NEED

A countertop hydroponic unit (LetPot, AeroGarden, iDOO, etc.), plus seed pods or net cups and the system's nutrients.

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### QUICK START IN 6 STEPS

- 1 **Fill the reservoir** with water to the fill line.
- 2 **Pop in your seed pods** (herbs and leafy greens do best — basil, mint, arugula, chives, lettuce).
- 3 **Add the nutrients** that came with your system.
- 4 **Set the light timer** (most run automatically — often around 16 hours on).
- 5 **Top up water and nutrients** as the level drops.
- 6 **Harvest as it grows** — snip what you need and most herbs keep producing for weeks. 

 [Watch my LetPot setup](#)



## Method 4 — The Kratky Method

My favourite! Passive hydroponics — no pumps, no electricity, almost no fuss.

### WHAT IT IS


The **Kratky Method** is a simple, passive hydroponic system that doesn't require any pumps. Your plant sits in a net cup above a reservoir of nutrient water. As it drinks, the water level drops and leaves an **air gap** so the roots can breathe — which is the whole secret. It's a fantastic choice for beginners because it's easy to set up and needs hardly any maintenance.



### WHY YOU'LL LOVE IT

- ✓ No pumps, no electricity, no noise
- ✓ Set-it-and-forget-it — minimal maintenance
- ✓ Budget-friendly with upcycled containers
- ✓ Grows real meals: lettuce, herbs, even tomatoes and cucumbers

### WHAT YOU NEED

An **opaque container** (I love upcycling a Folgers coffee jug, a honey tub, or a mason jar ) , a net cup that fits the opening, clay pebbles + a rockwool or growing cube to start your seed, hydroponic nutrients (I use the General Hydroponics FloraSeries trio), and a grow light.

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### QUICK START IN 5 STEPS

- 1 Start your seed** in a rockwool cube until it sprouts roots.
- 2 Set it in a net cup** packed with clay pebbles, and fit the cup into your container's lid.
- 3 Mix your nutrient water** per the label and fill so the water just touches the bottom of the net cup.

- 4 **Place it under light.** As the plant drinks, the level drops — *leave that air gap, don't top it back up.* Those exposed roots are getting the oxygen they need.
- 5 For lettuce and herbs, you often won't need to refill before harvest. Bigger plants may want one top-up along the way. 🍅

💬 **Watch it come together.** The full start-to-finish is easier to show than tell — so watch me build one in the video below.

### WHAT TO GROW 🌱

There's almost no limit, but I've had the most success with **herbs, lettuces, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, and strawberries.**

▶ [Watch my Kratky setup](#)

🌱 [Shop West Coast Seeds](#)

## 🌱 Nutrients, pH & EC — Let's Keep It Simple

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This is the part that scares people off hydroponics — and it really shouldn't. Here's the honest version.

Plants growing in water need their food **added to the water** (that's what those nutrient bottles are). Two little measurements help you keep that water in the sweet spot:

- ✓ **pH** — how acidic the water is. Most greens are happiest around 5.5–6.5.
- ✓ **EC** — how strong the nutrient mix is.

### My real advice 🍷

Invest in a decent **pH/EC meter** — it's worth it. But please don't let it overwhelm you. For simple growing like lettuces and herbs, you can keep things very relaxed and still get beautiful results. And with sprouts, microgreens, and countertop systems, there's barely anything to measure at all. Start simple, and grow your confidence from there.

▶ Nutrient basics, made friendly

## 🚨 5 Beginner Mistakes to Avoid

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- 1 **Forgetting to rinse (sprouts) or overwatering (microgreens).** Both invite mould. Rinse sprouts twice a day; bottom-water your microgreens.
- 2 **Filling a Kratky container to the top.** No air gap = drowned roots. Let that water level drop.
- 3 **Using treated or non-food-grade seed.** Always choose seed labelled safe for sprouting/eating.
- 4 **Not enough light.** Leggy, pale seedlings are crying for more light. A simple grow light fixes it.
- 5 **Dirty jars and trays.** Start clean every time — it's the easiest way to prevent mould and bacteria.

## Ready to Grow More?

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If you caught the bug — and I really hope you did — here's where we keep growing together. 

### Go Deeper with Hydroponics

*Simple Indoor Hydroponics* is my membership community on Skool, dedicated to growing more food indoors with hydroponics — step by step, with me right there to help.

[Join Simple Indoor Hydroponics →](#)

### Grow With Us All Year

*Seed to Harvest* lives inside my free Gardeners Growing Together community, where we grow food every season — indoors **and** out, hydroponic **and** in soil — with support and a whole crew of fellow growers cheering you on.

[Join the GGT Community →](#)

Happy growing,  
Tracey 

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