



GET TO KNOW YOUR SOIL

Soils vary around the world, but they all contain sand, silt, clay, moisture and air. As a gardener, it's important to get to know your soil. If a plant is from a sandy part of the world and you try growing it in a wet clay soil, it won't be happy! Similarly, a plant from a damp area won't like to grow in a sandy soil.

- Using a trowel (see pages 24-25), collect a soil sample from your garden. Lay it out on a piece of paper, remove any twiggy bits, then using your trowel, crush the soil so it's as fine as possible.
- Next, part fill a large jar with the soil sample, cover with water, put the lid on tightly and then give it a good shake before leaving it for at least 24 hours to settle.



3. You should now be able to see the different layers of your soil. The parts of soil are different weights and the heavier ones – like sand – fall to the bottom first. Clay will settle last and even make the top layer quite cloudy for a while, as its tiny particles float in the water.

GARDEN FOES

Sometimes your garden might be visited by some not so welcome wildlife visitors — munching their way through your plants and obliterating weeks of hard work. Rather than using harmful chemical pesticides, there are some natural ways you can discourage any unexpected visitors to your garden.

ENCOURAGE BENEFICIAL ANIMALS

You can control pest populations naturally by encouraging beneficial creatures such as ladybirds, wasps, hoverflies, birds and frogs in your garden.

Try planting flowers that attract these insects, making a bug hotel or adding a bird feeder.

PEST REPELLENTS

To repel insects, you can make an organic pest spray using a mixture of water, garlic, onion and chilli.

PROTECT PLANTS

You can cover your plants with netting to stop birds swooping down for a tasty snack.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR PESTS

Slugs and snails can eat a whole batch of seedlings overnight. You can try adding a barrier such as gravel because they find it more difficult to slither across. Remember to check your pots every day for hiding snails — gently picking them up and putting them in another part of your garden.

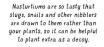
PLANTS THAT HELP OTHER PLANTS

Did you know that certain plants can deter or encourage insects to your garden? Growing particular plants together can also aid pollination, prevent disease and even keep pest numbers down.

The strong smell of French marigolds deters the pest whitefly when grown with tomatoes.

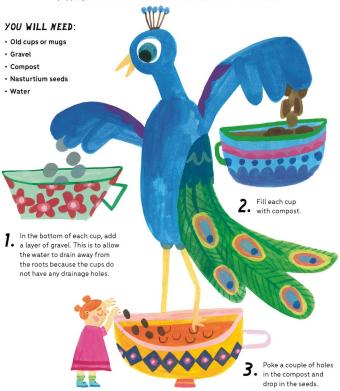


Onions, garlic and leeks deter pests from carrot and parsnip plants.



GROW CUPS OF NASTURTIUMS

Did you know that you can eat the petals from certain flowers? Nasturtiums are bright and colourful, and they taste a bit peppery! You can add them to a salad for a burst of extra flavour.





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