

Slug: Ask the Master Gardener  
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Sprouts, the edible shoots of seeds, are easy to grow in your kitchen. Most of the seeds undergo the transformation from seeds to edible shoots in approximately four to six days. They are great in all kinds of salads and sandwiches. They can take the place of lettuce and other greens when these are scarce and expensive.

The most common sense sprouted for edible shoots are alfalfa, mung and azuki beans. Other seeds such as soy beans, lentils, dried peas, raw-hulled sunflower, curled cress, dill, radish, and mustard also can be sprouted for eating purposes.

The most readily usable container to use for sprouting any of these seeds is a wide-mouth one-quart jar. Other materials needed are cheesecloth and stout rubber bands. Seeds can be purchased from health food stores, garden stores, and some grocery stores.

The following procedures are recommended:

If you are sprouting mung, azuki, soybeans, lentils, dried peas, or raw-hulled sunflower seeds, put one quarter cup of seeds in your jar. For alfalfa, mustard, dill, or early cress seeds, use one-and-a-half teaspoons, and for radish seeds use two tablespoons. Do not use more than the recommended amount because the volume of the sprouts will increase many times as they grow.

Add enough warm water to cover the seeds and let them soak overnight. The next morning, cut a piece of cheesecloth and place it over the mouth of the jar. Firmly attach it to the jar with a rubber band. Now drain the water off. Rinse the seeds two or three times with warm water and drain well. Turn the jar on it's side and place it on the kitchen counter. Light is not necessary, in fact, the jar should be kept in a rather dark place for the first two or three days.

Rinse the seeds at least twice a day during the sprouting process. When rinsing, fill the jar with enough lukewarm water to submerge the sprouts so that they can swirl about. Then drain, shaking gently to remove most of the water. If the sprouting seeds don't smell fresh, step up the rinsing and grow under cooler conditions. If you like green leaves on your sprouts, place the jar in a sunny window or under a light for the last two days of the sprouting process.

When the sprouts are ready, rinse them, drain well and pat dry. Refrigerate them in a jar or plastic bag until you are ready to use them. They will stay fresh in the refrigerator for up to a week.

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This column is written by Washington State University/Skagit County certified Master Gardeners. Questions may be submitted to WSU/Skagit County Extension, 306 S. First Street, Mount Vernon, WA 98273-3805.