

Balcony & Small-Space Growing Planner

Month-by-month calendar, container guides, soil mixes & harvest tracking

By DedoVerdePT | SelfSufficient.cloud

Europe-first . Metric units . No fear, no hype

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1. Why Grow in Containers?

No land needed. A windowsill, balcony, patio, or shared garden can teach you watering, germination, light, soil, pests, and seasonal timing.

Container growing advantages:

- Total control over soil quality
- Portable - move with sun/seasons
- Fewer weeds, easier pest management
- Scalable - start with 3 pots, expand yearly
- Works in rentals (no ground disturbance)

Start with easy crops: herbs, salad leaves, radishes, beans, tomatoes (if 6+ hrs sun), or local varieties suited to your climate.

2. Your Growing Space Assessment

Fill this in before buying anything:

Factor	Your Value	Notes / Action
Sun hours (direct)		Morning / Afternoon / All day / Shade
Balcony dimensions (m)		Length x Width x Railing height
Weight limit (kg/m2)		Check lease / building docs
Water access		Tap on balcony / carry from kitchen / hose
Wind exposure		Protected / Moderate / Exposed (need windbreak)
Railing type		Solid / Slatted / Glass (affects mounting)
USDA/EU hardiness zone		Look up your zone for perennial planning
Frost dates (last/first)		Critical for tender crops

EU Hardiness Zone Quick Reference

Zone 8-9 (Mediterranean coast, Portugal, S. Spain): Year-round growing, citrus, olives

Zone 7 (W. France, N. Spain, Italy coast): Mild winters, figs, pomegranates

Zone 6 (Paris, London, Netherlands, Germany): Cool winters, need protection for tender

Zone 5 (E. Europe, Scandinavia coast): Short season, cold-hardy varieties only

Zone 4 (Inland Scandinavia, Alps): Very short season, focus on fast crops

Look up your exact zone at: plantmaps.com/interactive-europe-plant-hardiness-zone-map.php

3. Month-by-Month Planting Calendar (Zone 6-7 Baseline)

Adjust 2-4 weeks earlier for Zone 8-9, 2-4 weeks later for Zone 4-5.

Month	Key Actions
January	Plan & order seeds. Start chitting seed potatoes indoors. Microgreens on windowsill.
February	Sow tomatoes, peppers, aubergines indoors (heat mat). Broad beans direct if soil >5C.
March	Sow salad, radish, carrots, beets outdoors (fleece). Pot up tomatoes. Herbs indoors.
April	Transplant hardy seedlings. Sow beans, courgette, cucumber indoors. Potatoes in bags.
May	After last frost: tomatoes, peppers, beans, courgettes out. Succession sow salad q2 weeks.
June	Plant out all tender. Pinch tomato sideshoots. Feed weekly. Harvest early salad/radish.
July	Sow autumn carrots, kale, chard. Harvest beans, courgettes daily. Water deeply.
August	Sow winter salad, spinach, turnips. Last beans. Cut-and-come-again herbs.
September	Plant garlic, overwintering onions. Cover tender. Harvest tomatoes before blight.
October	Clear spent crops. Green manure (mustard, phacelia). Mulch beds. Move pots to shelter.
November	Plan next year. Order garlic/onion sets. Clean pots. Store tools.
December	Microgreens indoors. Review harvest notes. Dream with seed catalogs.

4. Container Sizing Guide

Right pot = healthy roots = better harvest. Minimum volumes:

Crop	Min Volume	Pot Dimensions / Notes
Herbs (basil, parsley, cilantro, mint)	3-5 L	20 cm diameter x 20 cm deep
Salad leaves (cut-and-come-again)	5-8 L	30 cm diameter x 15 cm deep (wide shallow)
Radishes, spring onions	3-5 L	15 cm deep minimum
Tomatoes (determinate/bush)	15-20 L	30 cm diameter x 30 cm deep
Tomatoes (indeterminate/vining)	25-30 L	35 cm diameter x 35 cm deep + support
Peppers / Aubergines	10-15 L	25 cm diameter x 25 cm deep
Beans (bush)	8-10 L	25 cm diameter x 25 cm deep
Beans (climbing)	15-20 L	30 cm diameter x 30 cm deep + 2m support
Courgettes / Squash	25-30 L	40 cm diameter x 30 cm deep
Potatoes	30-40 L	Grow bags 30-40L, 3-4 seed tubers
Carrots / Beets	8-10 L	25 cm deep minimum, loose soil
Strawberries	5-8 L	Hanging baskets / towers / wide pots
Blueberries (acid soil)	20-30 L	Ericaceous compost, rainwater only

5. Soil Mix Recipes (by Volume)

Never use garden soil in pots. It compacts, drains poorly, brings pests.

Mix Name	Recipe (by volume)	Best For
Universal Container Mix	40% compost + 30% coconut coir + 20% perlite + 10% worm castings	Most vegetables, herbs, flowers
Tomato / Heavy Feeder Mix	30% compost + 30% coconut coir + 20% perlite + 10% worm castings + 10% bone meal	Tomatoes, peppers, squash, courgettes
Mediterranean / Herb Mix	30% compost + 30% sharp sand/grit + 20% coconut coir + 20% perlite	Parsley, thyme, lavender, sage, oregano
Acid-Loving (Blueberries)	50% ericaceous compost + 30% coconut coir + 20% perlite + pine bark	Blueberries, cranberries, lingonberries
Seed Starting Mix	50% fine compost + 50% vermiculite (or 60% coir + 40% perlite)	All seeds, no nutrients needed initially

6. Companion Planting for Containers

Maximize small space by pairing compatible crops:

Crop	Good Companions	Avoid
Tomatoes	Basil, marigold, nasturtium, parsley	Fennel, potatoes, cabbage family
Peppers	Basil, onions, carrots, marigold	Fennel, kohlrabi
Beans (bush)	Carrots, cucumber, radish, corn	Onions, garlic, fennel
Beans (climbing)	Corn, squash, radish, cucumber	Onions, garlic, fennel
Cucumber	Beans, peas, radish, dill, nasturtium	Potatoes, sage, melons
Lettuce/Salad	Carrots, radish, strawberries, cucumber	Parsley, celery
Carrots	Onions, leeks, rosemary, sage	Dill, parsnip
Herbs (most)	Nearby vegetables (pest confusion)	Rue near basil, fennel near most
Strawberries	Borage, lettuce, spinach, thyme	Cabbage family, tomatoes

7. Feeding & Watering Schedule Template

Print monthly and track:

Week	Water (L)	Feed Type	Dose	pH Check	Notes (pests, growth, harvest)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

Best for: Comprehensive: hardness, pH, chlorine, lead, bacteria

Not for: Certified lab results for legal compliance

EUR 20 | \$22 | Buy: selfsufficient.cloud/go/water-testing-kit/

Next Steps

1. Complete your space assessment (p.2). Order seeds this week.
2. Read the full "Seed-Starting Kit for Balcony Gardeners" article when published.
3. Visit Recommended Gear for updated container/soil recommendations:
selfsufficient.cloud/recommended-gear/
4. Join the newsletter for monthly planting reminders:
selfsufficient.cloud/newsletter/
5. Other guides in this series:
 - The Practical Tool Buying Guide (EUR 12)
 - Water Security for Beginners (EUR 15)
 - Energy Audit Workbook (coming soon)
 - The "What Not to Buy" Guide (coming soon)

Start small. One pot. One herb. One harvest.

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