



# GROW your own **SUPERFOODS**

Can't afford goji berries and wheatgrass? Cultivate a little spot of nature at home for great nutritional gains, says **Louise Pyne**

**L**ooking for an easy way to upsize your wallet and crank up your health credentials? If you want to optimise your diet but your weekly budget won't stretch to the latest superfoods, the answer is simple – grow your own.

A growing number of health-conscious foodies are transforming their back gardens, balconies and even windowsills into miniature superfood gardens in a bid to cut down on waste and boost the contents of their plate. Even if you live in a teeny urban studio or on the 7th floor of a high rise block of flats, there are plenty of options to make the most of your living space. Best of all, you don't have to be naturally green fingered to reap the rewards!

'These days it's easy to grow fresh food indoors or outdoors at home or work – and unusual crops such as cacti,

aloe vera and even edible flowers are becoming increasingly popular, thanks to their delicious flavour and high nutrition,' says Neil Whitehead, founder of Seed Pantry ([seedpantry.co.uk](http://seedpantry.co.uk)), which supplies kits for growing your own fresh food. There's no threat of chemical nasties either; just tasty ingredients that your body loves.

## SAVE MONEY

Last year the UK's biggest garden centre retailer Wyevale Garden Centres ([wyevalegardencentres.co.uk](http://wyevalegardencentres.co.uk)) reported a massive 500 per cent growth in sales of superfood trees and bushes – including blueberry and goji berry – along with a steady increase in sales of vegetables and herbs. 'Superfoods have really hit the headlines in recent years, and with this has come an

**69**  
GROWING  
YOUR OWN  
CAN SAVE  
YOU £250  
A YEAR



## SOW YOUR OWN

Green-fingered expert Neil Whitehead reveals his fuss-free starter tips

### 1 SPACE OUT SEEDS

When sowing seeds, each tiny seed (or larger seed) is one plant that can grow really big if you allow, so don't always sow all the seeds; instead space them out for more growing room.

### 2 ADD SUNLIGHT

Plants need two main things to help them grow - sunlight for photosynthesis and plenty of water (little and often is the best approach). The soil needs to be damp but not soaking, so water them little and often.

### 3 KEEP THE GROWING CYCLE GOING

Harvest what you need, and let the plant grow more for you. Most plants will grow a second or even third crop each year, so make sure that you maximise each yield.

increase in price, so growing your own is a great way to eat well for less,' explains nutritional therapist Chloe Bowler (chloebowler.com). Research by garden and conservatory furniture retailer Alfresia.co.uk reveals that tending to your own private patch of nature can save you a whopping £250 per year. The modest price tag, (which 68 per cent of people admit is the main reason for taking the plunge) also comes with another compelling perk - the massive satisfaction factor. After all, there's no prouder moment than tossing together a salad from leaves you've literally nurtured to life or watching fruit spring from a tree.

## UNLEASH YOUR INNER GARDENER

The great news is, it's super-easy for gardener newbies to tap into the trend. You just need a simple starter kit (try Seed Pantry's Grow Pods, £35, which are designed to grow crops indoors at a quicker rate than a regular soil plant) and lots of enthusiasm. If you want fast results, sprouting seeds, growing wheatgrass and micro greens (such as rocket and pea shoots) in a planter box placed on a sunny windowsill will produce a good yield in a matter of days. Once picked, these antioxidant-rich goodies can elevate everything from smoothies to salads, regardless of the season. 'Blueberries and oriental greens are also good options as they don't need much room or any particular soils, just a window box, planter box or a flat roof with exposure to sunlight,' says Bowler. And, if you're working with a larger space, why not try experimenting with some exotic superfoods for a big antioxidant hit? 'You can either grow goji berries from seed (£2.49 for a 30-seed pack; suttons.co.uk), or buy a plant as it

will fruit in the first year, and you don't have to worry about the nutritional benefits becoming depleted from travelling half way across the world. Flaxseed (also known as linseed) is also a good option [WHERE TO BUY?]. It needs space and time to grow but the rewards are immense,' says Whitehead. ■

## 3 SUPERFOOD BENEFITS

Nutritional therapist Chloe Bowler shares the benefits found in these easy-to-grow ingredients.



### FLAXSEED

As well as being a good source of fibre, flaxseed is high in omega 3 for healthy skin and hair. It also helps with gut health, and is gluten free.



### ALOE VERA

Aloe Vera contains a huge range of minerals, including calcium for healthy bones, potassium for healthy muscles and magnesium to help keep blood sugar levels stable.



### WHEATGRASS

A good source of Vitamins A, C and E, wheatgrass is mostly made of chlorophyll, which is important for blood health. Wheatgrass is hard to digest raw, so liquidise it and enjoy as a juice.