

## Pondering about plants for planters.....

By Jenny Coleman, Community Lead in Todmorden



1. As in all planting consider first where your planters are, are they in sun or shade, a windy spot or a sheltered one, do you have easy access to water. The sort of soil you put in them can be controlled in a way that planting in open ground usually cannot but all plants grow best in the conditions that suit them so get that right first of all and you, and they, will be much happier.

This is particularly important if you need your plants to be low maintenance. Nature is very adaptable and there are things that you can grow in most conditions, you just need to choose them with care.

2. For edible planting which you wish to share with your community also consider what people are likely to eat. Herbs are a great choice as they are well recognised and used and can be 'cropped' easily as people pass. They are also often decorative and attractive to bees and other pollinators – although do remember that the best flavour is usually found in the basic vulgaris sorts rather than the decorative varieties created by the horticultural industry.

3. Beans or peas which can be grown up wigwams are also a good choice; children (and adults) can pick and eat peas raw as they pass. The flowers on some varieties are also attractive. Consider your communities knowledge before you plant more unusual varieties – we planted some French beans which have purple pods last year, they were left on the plants, few people recognised them as edible.



4. Perennial plants which come up year after year are also a good bet; rhubarb is one of our favourites. It does need feeding each year with a good dose of well-rotted manure or compost but otherwise will take care of itself. The only down side is that it is usually cropped very heavily.

5. Onions and shallots from sets can also be grown and garlic does well if you can devote some space for its long growing season.



6. My first choice for brassicas (members of the cabbage family) would be purple sprouting broccoli, called tender-stem broccoli by the supermarkets. It is hardy, produces shoots when little else is available and can be cropped successively by lots of people. Kale can also be good for the same reasons.

These vegetables are less attractive to look at for many people so if you are likely to have people around who complain that they would rather have nice rose bushes in the tub proceed with caution!

7. Root vegetables are much more difficult, potatoes need a lot of space for the crop although they are magic for children, like digging up buried treasure. Carrots and parsnips tend to be pulled up before they are ready and then of course they cannot be put back.

8. Which leads me to my final point when planning this sort of gardening, information signs are vital. Tell people what is growing, when it can be harvested and if possible how to cook it.

Good luck and don't let any of the above stop you from trying things in your own situation, we have had some great successes and some monumental failures you can learn from both of them. There is always another season.