



February/March

University of California Cooperative Extension

**Welcome to Nutrition BEST Gardening!** At Nutrition BEST, we're working to make healthy food and healthy lifestyles available to everyone. In this newsletter, you will find projects, ideas, and resources for gardening with kids of all ages, even the very youngest. **Let's grow together!**

## Project of the Month: Seed Balls

Seed balls are a fun way to plant springtime flowers, herbs, or even veggies for your garden. Try using a wildflower seed blend for beautiful color, or herbs like basil and cilantro to add flavor and scent to your garden. You can find clay at craft stores, or just dig up some red dirt from outside!

### You will need:

- 1 cup clay
- 1/2 cup compost or potting soil
- Water to moisten
- Flower or herb seeds — a couple of packets

Stir or knead together the clay and compost. Add water slowly, a bit at a time, until the mixture has a smooth, soft "dough" texture.

If using small seeds, such as herbs or wildflowers: Mix a handful of seed into the clay mixture, until well blended. Roll clay into 1-inch balls.

For large seeds, such as squash or melons: Roll the plain clay mixture into balls, then stick one or two seeds inside each ball.

Place the clay balls on a paper plate and set them in a warm, sunny spot to dry for several days.

Now it's time to plant your seed balls! Toss them in bare spots around your yard or neighborhood, or share with friends. If it is raining, that's all you need to do! If the weather is dry, you can water



your seed balls once a day or two until the seeds sprout and get established. Happy

## In The Garden: February and March

Now is a good time to plant seeds for peas, carrots, radishes, and other fast-growing, cool-weather crops; as the soil warms, the seeds will sprout.

If you want to grow your own tomatoes and peppers from seed, now is the time to start them indoors!

Plant strawberry plants as soon as they are available at the nursery.

Plan your summer garden: decide what you would

like to grow and where, add compost to the soil, and check your last frost date to determine when it will be time to plant. (For our area, it's usually safe to plant summer vegetables in mid- to late-April.)

If you are planting a garden in the ground, wait until the soil is no longer muddy to dig or till your garden beds. If the soil is too wet, it will be difficult to dig and may get too compacted for your plants to grow well.

If you have a container garden, now is the time to add some fresh soil and slow-release fertilizer, so your containers will be ready for planting!

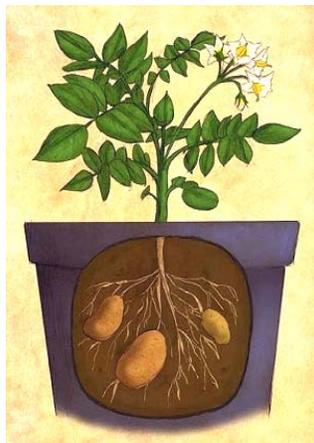
## Gardening Fun: Plant Some Potatoes!

Potatoes are fun and easy to grow, especially in a container garden! This is a great activity for kids — you can grow a lot of food in a small space, and it's especially exciting to dig up the harvest!

You will need a large **planting container**, such as a large flowerpot, barrel, bucket, or even a clean garbage can. Make sure the container has some holes in the bottom for water drainage.

You will also need some “**seed potatoes**,” or sprouted potatoes meant for planting. You can use sprouted potatoes from your pantry, but it's best to buy certified disease-free seed potatoes from a nursery. Make sure each potato has a couple of “**eyes**” —the more eyes, the more plants you will get!

Cut each potato into several pieces, so that each piece has at least one “eye.” Store the cut pieces at room temperature for 1 to 3 days, until the cut parts dry out a bit; this helps keep them from rotting once planted.



To plant the container: we will do this in several stages, adding soil as the potato plants grow. As you bury the stem of the plant under layers of soil, more roots and more potatoes will grow!

Start with about 6 inches of good **potting soil** in the bottom of your container. (You can also mix the soil with compost if you have some.) Place the potato pieces on the surface, 6 to 8 inches apart, and cover with another 4 inches of soil. Water well. Potatoes like plenty of moisture and good drainage; the soil should be moist but not soggy.

As the potatoes sprout and start to grow, continue adding layers of soil to the container, so that only the top inch or two of the plant is showing above the surface. When you get close to the top, stop adding soil and allow the plant to grow. When the potato plant flowers and turns from green to yellow, it's time to dig up the potatoes! You can do this easily by dumping out the soil on a tarp or in a garden bed. Let kids help sift through the soil and find the potatoes. Store your harvest in a cool, dark place.



## Recipe: Roasted Radishes with Carrots

**Yield: 4 servings**

**Time: 25 minutes**

### Ingredients:

- 1 bunch small to medium radishes (about 12)
- 10 carrots, peeled and cut into thirds
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (preferred) or vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme, or 1/4 to 1/2 tsp dried thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 fresh lemon, optional

### Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 425°.
2. Place the radishes and carrots in a bowl. Toss with oil, thyme, salt and pepper. Place radish-carrot mixture on a baking sheet.
3. Roast until tender yet firm in the center, about 20 minutes. Squeeze with lemon juice to taste and serve.



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