

PLANT

✿ a ✿

GROCERY

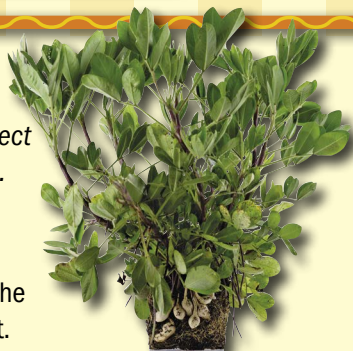
Garden!

Learn how to grow interesting and unusual houseplants from seeds and pits. Here are a few fun and easy projects to try.

✿ PEANUTS

Use fresh, unroasted peanuts. Avoid this project if you have an allergy to nuts (see page 128).

- Fill a wide, 4-inch-deep plastic container two-thirds full of moist potting soil.
- Shell four peanuts and place them on top of the soil, then cover with 1 inch of soil. Keep moist.
- Plants will sprout quickly.
- In a couple of months, small, yellow, pea-like flowers will develop along the lower part of the stem. After the flowers fade, short stems form, start to grow toward the ground, and then push themselves into the soil.
- Peanuts will be ready to harvest in about 6 months.



✿ CITRUS

Most oranges, grapefruit, lemons, and tangerines contain seeds that can be used to sprout citrus plants.



- Soak the seeds in water overnight. If you are soaking seeds of different fruit, keep them separate.
- Nearly fill an 8- to 10-inch-diameter plant container (make sure that it has holes in the bottom) with moist potting soil. Plant each seed ½ inch deep in the soil: Push your index finger into the soil to the first knuckle. Put the seed into the hole and cover it up.
- Cover the pot with a plastic bag or piece of plastic wrap and put it in a warm spot. When the seeds start to grow in a few weeks, remove the plastic. Keep the pot in a warm, sunny window.



✿ BEANS, PEAS, AND LENTILS

Before they're used in a homemade soup, save a few dried beans, peas, or lentils and bring them back to life.

- Soak the dried beans, peas, or lentils overnight in warm water. They look different, so you don't have to separate them.
- Fill an 8- to 10-inch-diameter pot (make sure that it has holes on the bottom) two-thirds full of moist potting soil.
- Place three seeds on the top of the soil and cover with ½ inch of soil. (Or use your finger as described for the citrus seeds.)
- Cover the pot with a plastic bag or plastic wrap and put in a warm spot. After the seeds sprout, remove the plastic.
- Put the pot in a warm, sunny window, and keep the soil evenly moist. Be prepared to tie the plants to a small stake as they grow.



✿ PINEAPPLES

When it drizzles on a sunny day in Hawaii, locals call it “pineapple juice.”

- Hold the pineapple’s crown of leaves with one hand and its body with the other. Twist until the crown comes off the fruit.
- Peel off the crown’s bottom leaves and discard them. The resulting stump will hold the roots. Let the crown dry out for 2 to 3 days.
- Put the stump into a glass of water on top of the refrigerator. Change the water regularly and keep it out of direct sun. Roots appear in a few weeks.
- Transplant the stump to a pot (make sure that it has holes in the bottom) with fast-draining potting soil and put in a sunny window. Keep moist.
- Repot the plant after 1 year has passed.



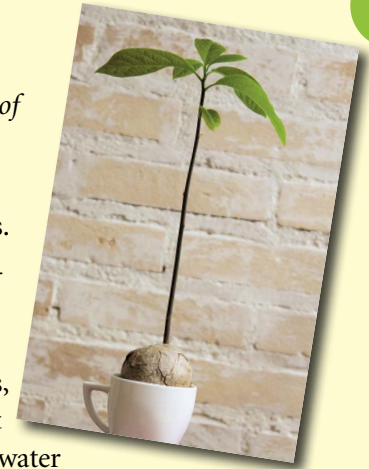
- After 2 more years, put the whole pot into a black plastic bag with a rotted apple cut in half. Put one half of the apple in the crown and one half in the soil. Seal the bag and set it aside for 2 weeks.
- Open the bag. If you see growth in the crown, remove the apple halves and put the plant where it will get lots of sun. If there is no growth, seal the bag for 2 more weeks.
- Flowers should appear 6 months after the first sign of growth.



✿ AVOCADOS

The “alligator pear” is actually the berry of the avocado tree.

- Remove the pit from an avocado. Wash the pit and allow it to dry for 2 to 3 days.
- Stick three toothpicks into the pit’s equator (or middle), equidistant apart and about ½ inch deep. Place the pit, with its fat base down, on the rim of a water glass, using the toothpicks to suspend it so that it doesn’t fall into the glass. Add enough water to the glass to cover about an inch of the pit.
- Put the glass in a warm place out of direct sunlight. Add more water as needed. Roots and a stem should sprout in 2 to 6 weeks.
- When the stem is 6 to 7 inches long, cut it back to about 3 inches.
- When the roots are thick and the stem has grown out again, plant it in potting soil in an 8- to 10-inch-diameter pot, leaving the pit half-exposed.
- Set the pot in a sunny spot. Water the tree often, lightly, keeping the soil moist but not soaking wet. (Yellow leaves are a sign of too much water.) When the tree is about a foot high, cut it back to 6 inches so that new shoots will sprout.



✿ MANGOES

India produces more than 50 percent of the world’s mangoes. Fat from the seed is used to make soap. Some people are sensitive to the urushiol in the skin of mangoes. Avoid this project if you are susceptible to poison ivy.

- In the mango, there is a large, hairy pit. The seed is inside. Carefully, using a knife, scrape the excess flesh from the pit.
- With a dull knife (not a sharp knife; try a butter knife), gently pry open the pit and remove the seed.



- Soak it in water for at least 24 hours.
- Fill a small plastic bag with dampened peat moss or sphagnum (available at garden stores) or damp paper towels. Place the pit in the bag and surround it completely with peat moss. Close the bag halfway; leave it partly open to allow for air circulation. Put the bag in a sunny window.
- Check every day to make sure that the pit is not too dry or too wet. Moisten it, if necessary.
- When the roots are 4 inches long, transplant the seed to a pot that is at least 1 inch larger than the seed and nearly filled with potting soil. (Also make sure that the pot has holes on the bottom.) Water to keep it moist. Put it in a sunny spot and fertilize at least once in the summer.