



# It's so simple... Container courgettes

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There are an increasing number of great varieties of courgettes these days that are bred specifically to be grown in containers. Great if you always find yourself short of space in the garden!

Some examples are Parador (which is also a lovely yellow variety of courgette), Patio Star and Midnight. We've been growing courgettes in containers as well as in the soil for the past couple of years, and they've been surprisingly successful! These varieties are also fantastic croppers and very tasty to eat – which is key!

We sow the seeds like we do most seeds, in a 1/4 seed tray filled with moistened Seed and Modular compost. The seeds are sown on their sides. This is because the root and first leaf come from either end, so sowing them on their side gives them the easiest route down into the soil (in the case of the root) or up into the air (for the first leaf).

A week or so later, they have usually germinated and are ready to prick out. It's important to get the right balance when pricking out seedlings – not too soon so you end up inadvertently damaging the tiny seedlings during transplanting but not leaving them too long so they become leggy or grow such an extensive root structure in the seed tray that again they end up getting damaged in the process.

We prick our courgettes out into 3 inch square pots, filled with multipurpose compost – slightly firmed down half way through filling, and then filled to the top. Before pricking out a seedling into each pot, the pots are given a light watering to moisten the compost.

A hole large enough for the seedling is made in the pot with the dibber tool. Make sure when making the hole that it is large enough to easily fit the seedling plus any roots it may have made. It can be a good idea if it is the first time that you've grown something to leverage one of the seedlings out of the seed tray before making the hole so you can get an idea of how big it needs



to be. You don't want to be fiddling around too much adjusting the size of your hole with a seedling waving around in your other hand!

Once transplanted, the seedlings are gently firmed into the compost to stabilise the seedling, before giving them a final light water and leaving them to grow on. They stay in these pots until they were planted out into their final pots.

A couple of weeks later they are planted out into large tubs (usually around 30 litres). With anything we plant in containers, we always put some soil in the bottom to give the pots a bit of weight and keep them anchored if the wind creeps up. We then fill each container with multipurpose compost before planting one courgette per pot.

We then put a stake in each pot for the courgette to grow up, securing this to the fence so that the plants can't blow over once they get courgettes growing on them. As you can imagine, the plants get quite heavy once fruiting, so it's important to make sure they're tied up the stake at regular intervals to prevent the plant falling over.

The only thing with the container courgettes is that they need A LOT of water otherwise the compost dries out. Therefore, we always make sure to give them water every morning (and sometimes at night if it's been a really warm day!) to make sure the compost doesn't dry out.



We also grow our courgettes in the garden up stakes, regularly tying the stalk to it.

This results in the courgette plant taking up less space and also being much easier to harvest! As you can see (albeit I appreciate I'm only 5ft 2) the courgette plants can grow really tall by staking them, and it means you get lots of yummy courgettes to eat! The only thing is that you really have to keep on top of the tying up, because otherwise we find that sometimes the growing points of the plant can be snapped off in the wind!

