




Growing To Love Tomatoes



Teachers' Guide





80%

OF OUR CHILDREN ARE NOT EATING ENOUGH VEGETABLES

with a third eating less than one portion of vegetables a day. Perhaps most alarming is that 50% of parents say they have given up even trying. Our mission is to inspire kids to love vegetables and to share that joy with their parents and carers today and their own children tomorrow.

We all know the background issues of childhood obesity, coupled with poor fruit and vegetable consumption. However, we believe that if we work together with schools and teach children to have a positive relationship with healthy food, it will grow and empower them with all of their food choices, their own dietary health and provide an understanding of how their food is produced.

Find out more about
Veg Power at:
vegpower.org.uk

VEGPOWER





Growing To Love Tomatoes

Welcome to your 'Growing to Love' teachers' guide which includes everything you need to help you and the kids along your tomato growing journey.

Throughout the guide we've highlighted elements of the project that we feel would be useful to plan for in advance. Head straight to your planner on **page 6** for a quick overview and to find out what's included in the box.

Each stage of the growing project has a checklist and we have provided plenty of suggestions for learning opportunities and additional activities.

The supporting wall charts and (plastic-free) sticker packs act as the child's mission control and should travel home with the plants and children at the end of term to continue their growing journey over the summer.

This growing project puts children centre stage as they perform the pivotal role of nurturing their tomato plants. It's all about the kids having fun whilst learning where their food comes from and ultimately trying their home grown tomatoes.



THANK YOU TO
OUR PARTNERS



PASSION in Seed



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Scan the QR code to keep up to date on all things Growing To Love...tomatoes





Why Growing?

At Veg Power our mission is to get children eating more vegetables. We use play and creativity to inspire and empower children to make positive food choices. We want kids to love vegetables and one of the best ways to develop that love is through growing their own. Which is why we designed our fun growing project with help from behaviour change experts, educators, botanists, entertainers and gardeners, where the tomato plant will be at the centre of different learning opportunities and help deliver some curriculum goals.

Green thumbs up: How engaging kids in growing veg can lead to healthy habits



**DR CLARE HOLLEY,
SENIOR LECTURER IN PSYCHOLOGY
LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY**

We all know how challenging it can be to encourage children to eat vegetables, and I am sure it is of no surprise to you that most children are not eating as many vegetables as health research suggests they should. Getting children involved in growing vegetables can not only reconnect them with both food and nature, but it can also be enjoyable and an excellent way to help them get excited about vegetables.

In fact, research shows that being involved in growing vegetables is a reliable way to decrease their reluctance to try vegetables as well as leading children to eat more vegetables. So why is eating vegetables so important? A diet rich in vegetables improves health and reduces risk of disease later in life. In addition, research shows that food preferences forged in childhood track through to adulthood, making children the perfect ones to get involved in food growing.

Evidence tells us that time spent in green space leads to greater wellbeing, aids relaxation, and decreases stress, low-mood, and anxiety. These benefits may be particularly powerful for neurodiverse children, such as children with Attention Deficit

Hyperactivity Disorder as well as those with mental health conditions. When children are involved in growing vegetables, it can foster independence and autonomy, and lead to feelings of achievement, satisfaction, and pride. They can gain confidence and self-esteem through the process of gardening, where they take ownership of their plants and the vegetables they produce, but it can also help them to forge and strengthen relationships with others whom they garden with through cooperation towards a common goal.

What's more, freshly grown tomatoes have been proven to taste sweeter and far more delicious than those you can get in the shops (meaning your children are more likely to eat them). Finally, freshly grown tomatoes contain much greater quantities of antioxidants and other important micronutrients meaning not only do they taste better, but they are also better for your child's health.

Nature's miracle: Why you'll want to keep growing your own veg

It starts with a tiny seed, a lifeform that has gone into deep hibernation and with a few little tricks it produces one of nature's most incredible miracles. It's this journey from seed to plant that becomes a lifelong fascination for a gardener and it's where we well and truly get the gardening bug.

It's also how I get the gardeners and food growers of the future to become lifelong custodians of plants and all they do for us. The great thing about working with children is they instantly get it! It's in our DNA and it ignites quickly in a child and the more we encourage it the more they, and society will benefit. This is why projects like 'Growing to Love' are so important.

Once you've grown one plant you'll want to grow more, I guarantee it, and if I have not convinced you so far, just wait until this tomato plant starts to return all that love you've shown it. By July the fruit will start to form, delicious, juicy tomatoes will begin to grow and there is nothing, I repeat nothing that tastes as good as homegrown food, it's impossible.



CHRIS COLLINES, GARDENER
@CMCOLLINS_HORT

Just a quick note to say please don't worry if your first go is not a complete success. Maybe your tommies don't go red or the plant becomes a bit leggy. You can sow fresh seeds anytime and green tomatoes still make a cracking bolognese sauce. However, if you head on over to the website, we have all the info and support you need, and we will be growing along with you. There are going to be a lot of loved tomatoes out there. Happy Gardening.

Caroline & Co. Photography



SAM NIXON
TV AND RADIO PRESENTER
@SAMNIXON18

Homegrown magic: Transforming taste buds with tomatoes

My love of growing my own vegetables comes from my love of cooking. Being able to pick a tomato straight off the vine, or pull carrots from the ground and have them cooking in a pot within minutes really excites me. I started growing my own vegetables properly about 8 years ago. I say properly, because I'd grown a few bits in my garden years ago and loved it. But, it wasn't until I got an allotment that I really started taking it seriously.

I know everyone who grows their own says it, but it really does taste so much better. Eating a tomato warm from the sunlight, straight from the vine is a totally different experience to eating the shop bought ones. I actually didn't used to like the taste of fresh tomatoes until I grew my own, and now I can't wait for them to fill my greenhouse each year.

The other thing I love about growing your own is that you can grow things that you perhaps can't pick up in your local supermarket. Multi coloured carrots, yellow courgettes, yellow beetroots, black French beans...the list goes on. I also love that growing my own fruit and vegetables has given my children a knowledge of where their food comes from.

I'll be totally honest, growing your own can be quite frustrating at times, so my tip is to be patient and enjoy the journey. You may find the first part of growing your own tomatoes a little underwhelming but trust me, once the height of summer comes, it will be worth the wait when you harvest your beautiful produce and taste those delicious fresh tomatoes.

Your Planner

A step-by-step practical guide to growing tomatoes

GrowingToLove.com

Scan for activities, lesson plans, fun video tutorials and downloads



WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

- 28 page Teachers' guide
- 32 x Wall chart and (plastic-free) sticker packs
- 5 x Propagation window sill kits with 5 sets of 4 seed cells
- 12 x Tomato seed packs
- 100 x Plant labels
- 1 x Box of stage one seed sowing compost
- 1 x Box of multi purpose repotting compost
- 1 x Bottle of organic vegetable feed

If your delivery has not arrived by 19th April, please contact us via the platform of vegpower.org.uk/contact

PLANNING - APRIL

For each stage of the growing project there are certain points you may want to think about planning now. Every stage from sowing the seeds to sending the plants home with the children has pages full of information, a checklist to help you map out your journey and a planner for all your notes.

- Review this guide
- Add your notes
- Visit our website for additional resources



2 From April to June, take care of your baby tomato plants and keep an eye out for seedlings. Turn to page **12** for tips on looking after your plants.

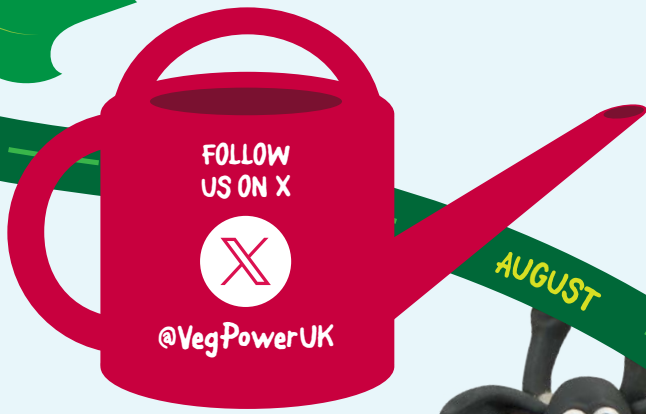
Caring



APRIL

Sowing

1 Ready, set... tomato! It's time to sow your tomato seeds in school w/c 15th April. Turn to pages **8** and **9** for instructions and a list of items you'll need on the day.



“ Absolutely great, the kits included everything the children needed to grow their own tomato plants. Perfect link to science curriculum in KS2.”

EMILY, KS2 TEACHER



AUGUST



4 Here today, gone tomato! Now it's July, the tomato plants are ready for their summer holidays. Let parents and carers know the kids will be bringing their plants home to continue their growing journey over summer. Turn to page 20 for safe travels. And don't forget to pack their wall charts and stickers!

Home



JULY

JUNE

Repotting

3 It's time to get those green fingers messy! Encourage the children to bring in recycled pots (2 litre milk cartons, large yoghurt pots etc) and ask volunteers for a helping hand to repot your plants. Turn to page 16 for instructions and preparation.



Thanks for your support

Sowing

WEEK COMMENCING
15th April

Learning all about how we grow food is not just good for children in terms of encouraging healthy eating, it's important to develop their understanding of the food chain, climate, sustainability and our environment. Children learn by getting stuck in and getting their hands dirty! So, involving them in a growing project is ideal for their development. Check out our website for more information on how to sow seeds, watch videos and download our lesson plan.

YOU'LL NEED

Propagator trays
Stage 1 compost
Seeds · Plant food
Water · Wall charts
Stickers

TIPS ON SOWING

Planning and preparation

The first step is to plant your seeds into the propagator trays, ideally in the week commencing 15th April, the sooner the better. But don't worry if you can't plant them until the following week. Here's what you'll need to prepare:

1

Choose your space

Where are you planning to pot your plants? Outside is perfect if possible. Once the seeds are planted, start the growing journey on window sills.

4

Helping hands

Extra hands might be helpful. You could ask parent/carer volunteers or reach out to your local community garden to help sow the seeds.

2

Check your kit

Make sure you have everything you need from the kit we provide. Any problems give us a shout (see page 26).

5

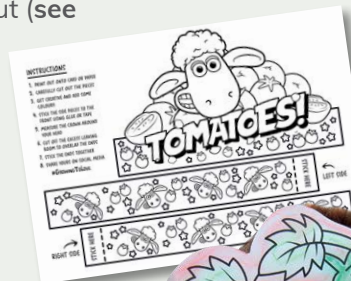
Plan any extra activities

Check out our website for more information on sowing seeds, germination and where our food comes from. Look out for additional teaching resources, lesson plans, and arts & craft projects such as these Shaun the Sheep tomato crowns.

3

Check Instructions

Planting is simple and our experts Chris Collins and Sam Nixon are here to help. Check out their 'how-to' video in the sowing section of our website.



GrowingToLove.com



ON THE DAY

Growing your own tomatoes is simple and just a couple of plants will provide plenty of delicious tomatoes throughout the summer. They're ideal for growing in containers, either outdoors, on a window sill in a sunny spot or in a greenhouse.

We suggest you assign children to water the plants when necessary (the soil should always be damp). Perhaps by setting up a rota for the children to check the plants daily.

To plant your seeds - fill the propagator pots to the top with seed compost, water well to fully dampen the soil, then sow one seed on the surface of each module, cover lightly with compost and place on a warm window sill. You have enough kits so that each child can sow at least two in case of any casualties.



- 1 Plant seedlings in compost using propagator kits
- 2 Water and feed plants
- 3 Place on a window sill in a sunny spot
- 4 Hand out wall charts and sticker packs to children and add their first sticker
- 5 Use our online resources and suggested lesson plans

"So let's start with the classic edible plant, the humble tomato as this is the perfect month to get that tiny seed up and running. A small propagator (tiny greenhouse) will get the compost nice and warm and tell the tomato seed it's safe enough to germinate. This part I absolutely love, a tiny set of leaves called cotyledons emerge from the soil and begin to harness energy from the light. Beneath that, out of sight are the roots busily making sure this new arrival has enough to drink.



Now it's over to me to bond with my new friend. For this I have a few 'golden rules' - the first thing to do is give it a nice sunny spot, then every day I'll check it needs water, keeping the compost slightly damp. If my tomato is in the window, I'll rotate it, so it doesn't lean too far to one side. Soon the apical bud (the bud at the top) will produce new leaves, drawing more and more energy from the sun and slowly getting stronger."

CHRIS COLLINS



Your Planner

Add your planning notes and feedback here

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“ Absolutely brilliant! Kids completely love the growing process and are very interested in how the plants grow. Many of the kids are used to veg coming in packets and plastic, so the children were invested in learning and understanding how we get veg, and also that we have to grow the veg.”

SARAH, YEAR 2 TEACHER

Visit GrowingToLove.com to watch Sam and Chris' sowing video and download your lesson plans





The secret to caring for tomato plants is placing them in a sunny spot and regularly watering and feeding them. You'll see the tomato seedlings start to emerge in around 5-10 days. Encourage the children to check their seedlings regularly and water when necessary using the rota you have assigned the children to.

Caring

April to June

YOU'LL NEED

- Water • Jug or watering can
- Plant Food
- Wall Charts

Seeds can be shy! There are many studies to show that plant growth may be influenced by sound. We think encouraging the children to talk softly to their seedlings with lots of love and engagement will create a bond, and give the children agency and ownership of their plants.

Sharing is caring, post your growing journeys on social media for others to enjoy using the hashtag **#GrowingToLove**

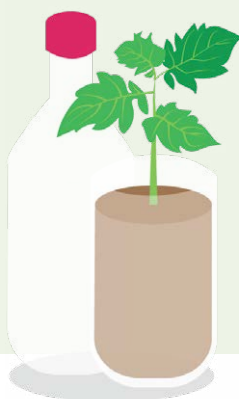
Planning and preparation

There are some things you need do over the next couple of months during the 'caring' stage that will help provide the plants with the best chance at growing fruit:

1 Water
Aim for a consistent moisture level in the soil – if the plants dry out and then get soaked to compensate, the fruits will take up too much water and split. Check daily and keep the soil damp.

2 Sunshine
Turn your plants daily to make sure the whole plant is getting a good amount of sunshine.

3 Feed your plant
Feed every 10–15 days with the plant feed provided. Check the instructions on the box for the suggested amount.



4 Pinching
When plants are about 2.5cm long, remove the side shoots regularly, this is called 'pinching out'. Side shoots grow where the base of the leaf joins the main stem (leaf node). You can find out more by scanning the QR code above.

5 Talking helps
Get the kids to talk softly to their plants with lots of love and encouraging words to create agency and ownership.

6 Additional activities
Head to our website for downloads, lesson plans and learn all about the magic of nature.



SAM AND CHRIS' TIPS FOR CARING

Never water the plants if the soil feels wet and squelchy. It is important that you check if your plant needs water every day, whether it needs it or not, think of it as a pet that needs to be cared for daily.

If any leaves become yellow or have brown blotches, do not panic, gently snap them off at the base. It is common for plants to shed leaves occasionally.

Bonus tip

To make the tomatoes nice and bushy and to help them produce more fruit, pinch out the very tips of the plant after one month, this means removing a tiny piece of leaf right at the very end of the shoots, use your fingernails to do this.

Visit our website for Chris and Sam's video and tips on caring for your plants.

For the next couple of months, follow these tips:



1
Keep an eye out for seedlings

2
Use plant labels to assign plants

3
Turn plants daily to face the sun

4
Water regularly

5
Feed every 10-15 days

6
Remove side shoots

7
Place second sticker on wall charts



It's really important to make sure plants are turned daily to face the sun, to make sure the whole plant is getting light and it doesn't lean to one side.



Your Planner

Add your planning notes and feedback here.

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Visit GrowingToLove.com to watch Sam and Chris' video about caring for your plants and download your lesson plans.

“ An amazing opportunity for the children in the city as the only thing many of them typically get to grow is cress on the window sill. Linking the campaign to the lower key stage 2 curriculum was helpful.”

ALEKS, ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHER

Repotting

June

Repotting tomato seedlings only makes them stronger. That's because the space encourages them to grow even more roots... and more roots mean bigger, healthier plants that are better able to withstand pests and diseases.

Planning and preparation

It's now time to re-pot your plants to give them more space to grow. Here's what you'll need to prepare:

YOU'LL NEED
Repotting compost
Recycled pots • Your tomato plants • Water • Watering can or jug • Plant labels
Wall charts and stickers

1

Choose your space

Where are you planning to re-pot your plants? Outside is perfect if possible. Once repotted place back on window sills.

2

Recycled pots

Ask the kids and their parents/carers to bring in a recycled pot for this stage of the project. Recycled flower pots, family sized yoghurt tubs or the base of large juice or milk bottles can be used. They will all need drain holes cut into the bottom.

3

Check instructions

Check out Chris and Sam's video and tips on the repotting section of our website for easy to follow steps and more ideas for recycled pots, plus how to prep them with drain holes.

4

Helping hands

Extra hands might be helpful. You could ask parent/carer volunteers or reach out to your local community garden to help with the repotting stage.

5

Assign the plants

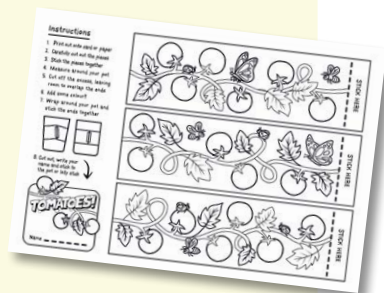
Pick the best plants and assign each child with a tomato plant so it encourages them to create a stronger bond and gives them ownership. Perhaps suggest they name their plant.



6

Extra activities

Download our plant pot sleeve templates for the children to decorate and place around their recycled cartons. We have different sizes and shapes that will work with a variety of pots.





ON THE DAY

Water the seedlings a couple of hours before repotting, to help keep the compost from falling away and to help keep the roots from drying out.

Place an inch or so of soil in the bottom of the container and lightly tamp down to remove any air pockets.

Remove the seedling from its seed cell by pushing the root ball and soil from the bottom of the cell. Resist the urge to pull the seedling out by its stem, as this can crush and bruise the fine hairs which are actually air roots.

Place the seedling in the new container and add soil in layers, lightly tamping down each layer to remove air pockets which will let the roots dry out. Add enough soil to bury about two-thirds of the plant stem. Leave the top three sets of leaves above the mix. Remove any other leaves that would be otherwise buried.

- 1 Scan the QR code to watch Sam and Chris' repotting video
- 2 Check the recycled pot is clean before repotting to avoid any spoiling or contamination
- 3 Water plants a couple of hours before so they don't dry out
- 4 Repot one plant in a recycled container using the stage 2 repotting compost
- 5 Use the plant labels to assign the plants to the children and place back on window sills or in a sunny spot
- 6 Place stickers 3 and 4 on the wall chart
- 7 Decorate plant sleeves
- 8 Use our online resources and suggested lesson plans



"When my tommy is at around 6 to 8 pairs of leaves it's probably a good time to give it a bigger home so I'll transfer it to a new pot (such as a recycled 2 litre milk carton or family yoghurt pot) and now I can really start spoiling it. Regular feeding with plant feed, along with a cane for support and pinching out the apical bud to get a nice bushy plant, I am well and truly bonded to my new plant."

CHRIS COLLINS



Your Planner

Add your planning notes and feedback here

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“ We loved taking part and the children enjoyed watching their tomato plant grow. Their favourite bit was when they started to produce fruit and I had lots of tomatoes that had grown over the summer holidays come in on the first day back to show and share with me! We are keen to join again next year. The kits were beautiful, and the children loved planting the seeds, watering them and then taking them home to continue to look after and grow. Thanks again!”

VAL, KS2 TEACHER





At the end of term, the plants should go home with the children to continue their growing journey over the summer holidays. The wall charts and sticker packs should be sent home with the children too.

Top tips for a safe journey home

Make sure the children carry their tomato plants home very carefully. If possible, wrap newspaper around the pot and plant in a funnel and sellotape in place, then gently lower it into a carrier bag. Tell kids to take the plant out of the bag and remove the paper as soon as they get home.

Planning and preparation

We want the plants to travel home safely with the children so that they can continue the fun at home without any disappointments. Here's some tips to help prepare for this stage:

- 1 Let families know**
Remind parents and carers that plants will be going home at the end of term so they can help make suitable plans to transport them safely back.
- 2 Instructions for care**
Keep an eye out for our email with a digital flyer to be sent on to parents and carers to help them care for the plants over the summer.
- 3 Wall charts and stickers**
Along with their plants, give the children their wall charts and sticker packs to take home.



ON THE DAY

We will email you a digital flyer to send on to parents and carers, which can also be downloaded from the website. The flyer will have advice about how to look after the tomato plants at home, how to find help and support and lots of fun growing activities they can do over the summer.

The kids can name and decorate their plant pots with their Shaun the Sheep sticker.



Send parents and carers the digital flyer



Add sticker 5 to wall charts



Send plant, wall charts and sticker packs home



Remind parents & carers to share their growing journeys on social media throughout the summer and to visit our website for the chance to win prizes



We gave established plants to each of our year 5s as something to look after and take care of as they were about to move up into year 6. This gave them a sense of responsibility.” EMILY, TEACHER



Your Planner

Add your planning notes and feedback here.

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“ We gave established plants to each of our year fives as something to look after and take care of as they were about to move up into year 6. This gave them a sense of responsibility.”

EMILY, TEACHER

Turning first tastes into lasting habits

Engaging families

How can we turn the excitement of the growing journey into long lasting healthy eating habits to improve childrens' diets?

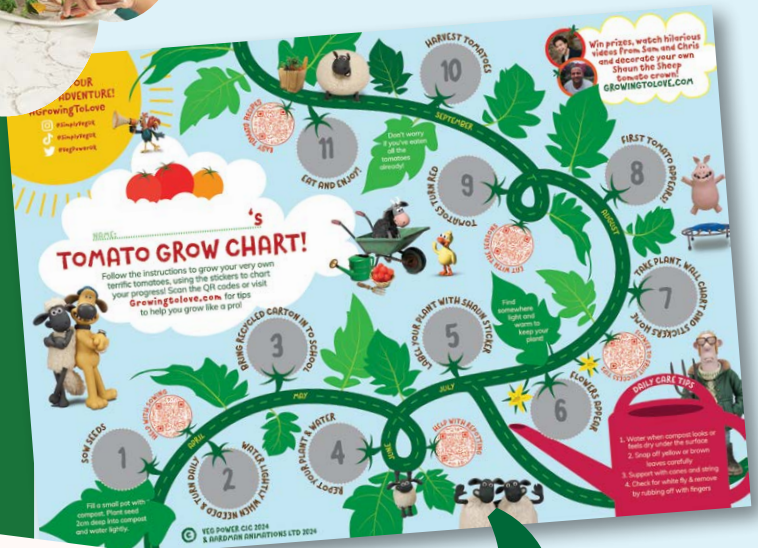
The growing project works extremely well when both schools and families are involved, by encouraging the kids to nurture their plants and really engage in the growing process. The wall chart and sticker packs act as the child's mission control and should be used throughout the growing adventure to keep the kids excited and looking forward to the next stage, right up until eating the tomatoes. The digital element of the project provides plenty of additional resources to be used both in school and at home.



A growing love that lasts

It is essential to the success of the campaign to engage your parents and carers. Here's how you can help:

1. As soon as possible... let them know the growing project is happening in schools
2. Tell them about our webpage GrowingToLove.com
3. Send on the digital flyer from us
4. Let them know plants will be travelling home at the end of term and to make suitable arrangements
5. Encourage them to continue using the wall charts and stickers
6. Tell them to post on social media over the summer holidays to share with other families



RECIPES

We have a library of simple, fun and affordable recipes - SimplyVeg.org.uk

SIMPLY VEG



Our growing project helps kids to feel positive and excited by vegetables, but if we are going to make a lasting change we also have to support our parents and carers.


The cost-of-living crisis is putting immense pressure on household budgets. Our data shows that many people are spending the same in stores but are now having to leave a few items behind. All too often, vegetables are being sacrificed.

So, Veg Power, supported by many of the UK's top experts in food and nutrition, have launched Simply Veg - our mission is to help families to use vegetables and pulses to navigate these challenging times.

We have recruited a stunning expert panel and formed partnerships with leading children's brands. We have money-saving tips, lunchbox hacks, free-stuff and fun ways to engage the kids - and much more planned for 2024.


simplyveg.org.uk

49% **LOWER INCOME FAMILIES** have bought **fewer fresh vegetables** lately



SOURCE: You Gov survey commission by Veg Power 2022

48% **PARENTS** struggle to get their children to **EAT VEGETABLES**



SOURCE: National Survey of 3,000 parents of primary school aged children commission by Veg Power 2022

How you can help

All these experts are giving their time and insight for free to support families. We need your help getting the message out. Could you put up a poster? Hand out flyers? Send out an email?

To find out more: vegpower.org.uk



Veg Power is a not-for-profit alliance of companies, organisations, celebrities, schools, parents and carers united by a common goal: to get our kids eating more delicious, healthy veg.

Our mission is no easy task but if we all rally together, we believe it is possible. We need your help. Please guide us with your experience and insight, and please lend your voice on social media to inspire and support each other.



Until the end of September 2024 we'll have an online survey. Everybody is welcome to tell us what they think. You, your colleagues, as well as parents and carers. Whether you love it or hate it we want to hear from you, as it's that feedback that will help us improve.

Visit the website to find our online survey.

By completing the survey, your school will automatically be entered into a draw to win £250.

Feedback

SHARE YOUR GROWING JOURNEY

Social media has such an important role. We don't expect and would not encourage your kids to be active on the adult social media platforms, but parents, carers, teachers, caterers and others are. On social media we can inspire each other with ideas, amaze people with your wonderful school and support each other with our likes and shares. This is where our alliance comes together.

We have a social media campaign with a unique hashtag so that children can share their progress and inspire others.

Our hashtag is
#GrowingToLove

FOLLOW
US ON X



@VegPowerUK

Need help?

If you do need help, please first check this guide and then head to our website. There you'll find resources you can download, guides and blogs that might answer your questions and if that fails please contact us: vegpower.org.uk/contact





SHARE YOUR
TOMATO ADVENTURE!
#GrowingToLove

For more great resources
GrowingToLove.com