



## House Plant Inspiration

The RHS and DK Books have just published the "Practical House Plant" book, RRP £14.99. It's full of ideas and tips on displaying house plants. There are wonderful photos of house plant filled interiors, plus all you could want on the practical side, including how to propagate house plants, house plant diseases and which house plant will grow well where. Great for any garden lover wanting to grow more indoors.



## Weeding Help

My list of jobs to do in the garden boils down to weeding, weeding and weeding at this time of year. My other half is adamant that he doesn't understand plants so he can't help with the weeding as he would pull out plants I wanted to keep.

It has only taken me 26 years together to come up with the answer, which is "Everything growing in the path is a weed. You weed the paths and I'll weed the beds." This approach could work with children and grandchildren, too.

15 cm up.

And each step needs to be at least 30 cm deep. Steps should also be equal – don't mix high or shallow steps with low or deep ones.

Even if everyone in your family is as nimble as a mountain goat, safe garden steps are really important.

A handrail can help, too, if anyone is a little wobbly. The charity has recently helped an MS sufferer to have her uneven steps replaced with safer ones and to have a handrail added.

She says that "being able to go out in the garden again made me feel that there was a future."

Gardening for the Disabled has also given grants for access ramps with handrails.

"Councils will often adapt a property for someone who gets ill but they don't extend that help to the garden."

Surfaces are another issue. Gravel is impossible for any kind of wheels – I find it

difficult to get a wheelbarrow across a gravel surface, let alone a buggy or a wheelchair. And wheelchairs don't cross lawns easily, either.

However, you don't necessarily have to get rid of all your lovely green grass. Gardening for the Disabled has also given grants for lawn mesh (from Sure-green.co.uk).

Lawn mesh gives a flat, stable surface that is wheel-friendly but which grass can grow through.

Finally, there are many good lightweight tool ranges today (try Fiskars and Kent & Stowe).

Gardening for the Disabled clients with more severe difficulties, such as stroke victims, have also often benefited from using Active Hands gripping aids (Activehands.com).

Gardening for the Disabled is 50 years old this year, and needs more funds to help more people. See <https://goo.gl/iouGXC.uk>.



## Growing Some New Varieties

I'm sowing lots of seeds at the moment, especially for the veg patch. We don't have a greenhouse, so I start a bit later than many gardeners as some seeds don't get enough light on window-sills to grow well. This year I asked fellow gardeners on Twitter for the one vegetable they wouldn't be without. It needed to be tasty and easy to grow.

I expected lots of tried-and-trusted favourites, but in fact, I heard about unusual varieties of veg that have done really well for my fellow gardeners. Perhaps the most interesting was Salsola soda, otherwise known as Friar's Beard or saltwort. It's like a mixture between spinach and seaweed, and I can't wait to see how it turns out.

The beetroot lovers universally said that golden beetroots have a better flavour than the traditional red kinds. Try "Burpees Golden" or "Boldor". I had thought golden beetroot might be a bit of a fad, but I'm going to try growing them this year.

Among the "must-have" favourites were kale, Swiss chard and climbing beans – no surprises there. But I must add kalettes or flower sprouts. These were created by combining Brussels sprouts and kale, and even Brussels sprout haters love them. They do take quite a long time from seed to harvest – I've just planted the first seeds now and don't expect to eat them till November. But they are very useful in the dead of winter when there's not much else around.

Most of these seeds are available from Thompson & Morgan, Mr Fothergill's and Franchi Seeds of Italy.

Try something a little different this year.



Visit Alexandra's blog online at [www.themiddlesizedgarden.co.uk](http://www.themiddlesizedgarden.co.uk)