

# Plant it, Grow it, Taste it!

## Teacher's Notes

*An interdisciplinary learning project for  
Curriculum for Excellence First Level*

Sponsored by:



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## **About the RNCI**

The Royal Northern Countryside Initiative (RNCI) is an educational charity, established in 1997, to help children and their teachers in the North-East of Scotland develop a greater understanding of farming and the working countryside. We achieve this by providing free educational resources and experiences to schools throughout Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City.

This project is funded by the Aberdeen City Council Community Food Growing Fund 2018-19. We are distributing 150 grow packs with the aim of embedding food education into the curriculum.

## **Teacher's Notes**

This project is designed for pupils working within Curriculum for Excellence First Level, though activities can be adapted for children working in early and second level. The whole project is very straight forward and this document is here to walk you through each step. There is no reason to worry and no hidden costs.

Pupils are set the challenge of growing their own salads/vegetables within the classroom or school garden by the end of the summer term. While growing their produce, they will undertake a selection of activities and investigations linked to science and other learning outcomes, the project culminates in a cooking activity. This will hopefully incorporate some of the produce that your pupils have grown.

Within each grow pack you will receive:

- A risk assessment for activities
- 3 x Salad/herb seed packs (more can be made available if required)
- 3 x Growing propagators
- 36 x Jiffy germination disks
- Watering bottle
- Compost (on request)

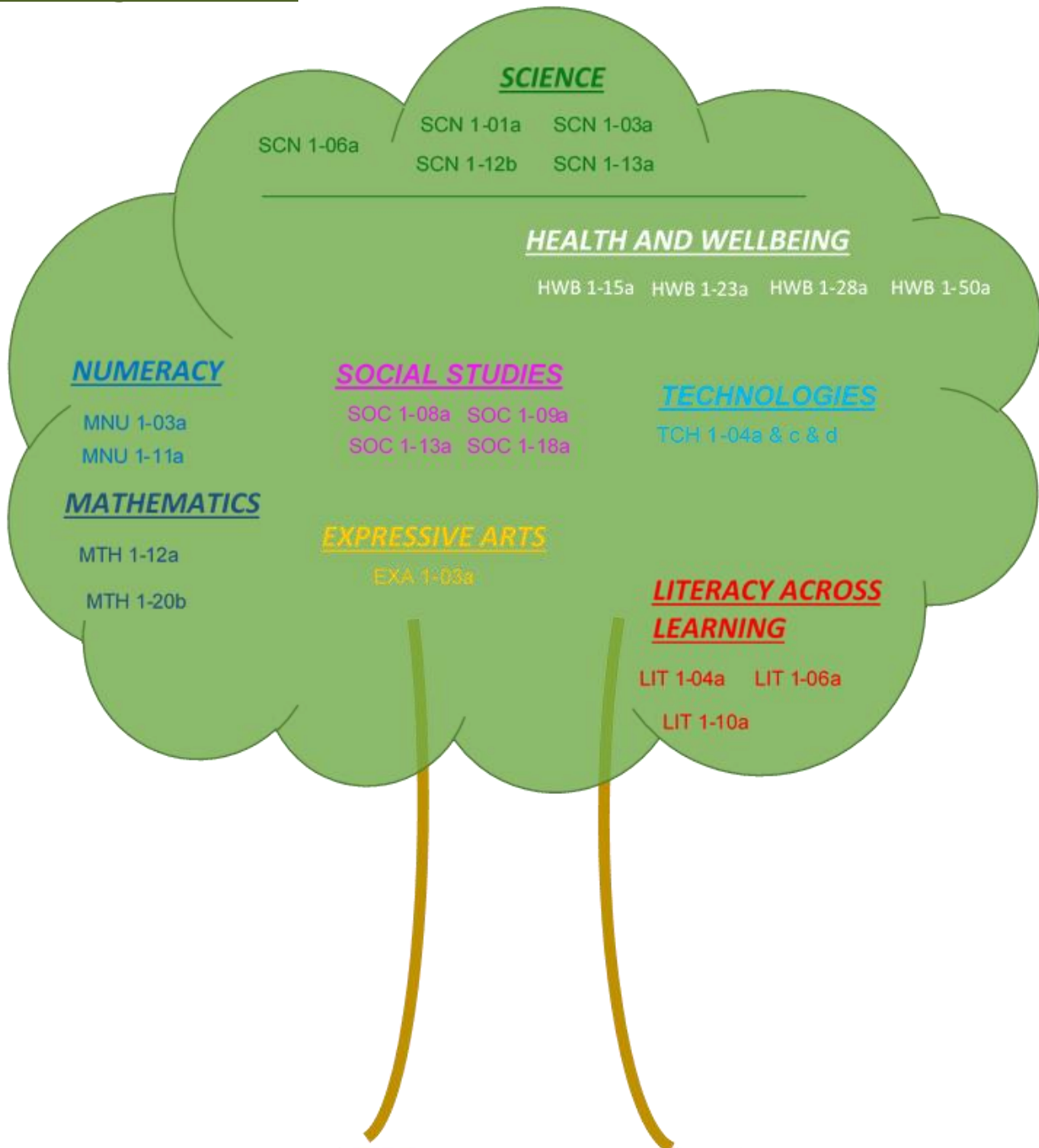
Everything in this pack is now property of the school and please feel free to use and share the resources with other classes. The aim of the project is to provide pupils with the opportunity to grow their own food while better understanding the story of where food comes from.

All resources will be made available on our website: [www.rnci.co.uk](http://www.rnci.co.uk)

Feel free to contact a member of the RNCI Staff if you have any questions or need any additional guidance.

The project is split into two sections with the growing stage taking place first and then the cooking sessions happening in term 4. The RNCI has portable cooking equipment and can offer limited sessions for classes.

## Learning Outcomes



**Plant it,  
Grow it,  
Taste it!**

## Location, Location, Location

Firstly, your class will need to decide where they are going to grow their seeds. But before they do that, you should discuss with them what a plant needs to survive:

### Light

Plants need light from the sun to grow.  
Make sure you put your pots somewhere in the light.  
You may wish to avoid direct sunlight or the leaves can get burnt – just like sun burn.

### Water

Plants need water to grow.  
Water your plants every 3 – 4 days and make sure that the soil is damp. It may be an idea to use this as a reward.  
Don't overwater your plants or they will go mouldy.

### Space

Plants need space to grow.  
Make sure that they're not planted too close together. If they are, you can give them more space by thinning explained later. Please note and record the growing area in m<sup>2</sup> you create as this is part of our evaluation for funders.

### Food

Plants need food to grow.  
They get this from the nutrients in the soil or compost. You can give your plants extra food by adding fertiliser to them.

**TIP:** Use a compass to work out which way is south and then your class can identify the sunniest spot in the classroom. Most smartphones have compasses built in.

If you have, and plan to utilise a suitable outdoor area, larger vegetable seeds can be provided to your school. Children can map and measure the different areas of the school grounds: identifying key play areas and making a decision on the best space to use for food growing. Factors to consider are; how much space will be occupied by plants, herbs and vegetables, how much sun any area will get, how far the growing space might be from the nearest door or water tap. You will need to ensure that the young plants are protected from frost.

If planting indoors, ensure that you protect your surfaces or carpet by sitting pots in trays or use the ones provided. You may wish to start the seeds off indoors then move them outside once the weather improves.

## Pots and Containers

Classes can be as innovative as they like when it comes to pots and containers. The Jiffy germination disks will expand with water as well as being fully biodegradable. Therefore, they can be transplanted into any garden or planter after use. The propagators provided are idea for protecting your seedlings. There are lots of waste items that can be reused as pots such as milk cartons, fruit packaging or even old shoes. All part of your bid for sustainability.



**TIP:** If you put up your class' innovative ideas on Twitter and tag @RNCI1, we will be sure to retweet.

We have provided 3 propagators each with 12 cells, but don't let us hold back your creativity and imagination. Create your own, utilise waste and grow tasty food.

## Planting, Feeding and Watering

All the seeds in your growing pack come with their own individual planting instructions on the reverse of the packaging. They are all really straight forward to plant and we have provided you with more than enough seeds. Please ignore the time of year to plant as the majority of seed will grow indoors.

We have provided 3 propagators for your class which should be waterproof although it is advised these are placed within a tray to prevent water leaking onto surfaces and spillages. The plastic lids are there to protect the plants from the cold as well as snails and other bugs. If you see lots of condensation the plants are too warm and the plastic should be removed. It would be advised that you split the 36 cells among your class so that they can all have a go at planting the seeds. There is plenty of compost for the pots, as well as any other additional containers you may wish to add. Make sure your class is told about the safety aspects with regards to handling compost.

### **Ensure that you wash your hands after handling all seeds and compost!**

When you have finished planting - water the seeds to give them a little boost to start the growing process. Watch your pots closely every day to make sure they're not too dry. However, don't overwater them as this can cause the soil to get water logged and rot your seeds. The compost should just be kept slightly damp. A record sheet can be found in Appendix 1: Growth Diary.

Once the plants are well established, continue to water regularly. You may find that growth stops or plants exhibit yellow leaves, this is due to the plant using up all the nutrients in the original compost. Counteract this with a high potash/low nitrogen soluble plant food or fertiliser which can be purchased in any garden centre. A proprietary tomato fertiliser is ideal although this is best left to an adult.

Any Eco schools may use their own compost. If you wish to use another product to feed the plants then this is entirely up to you. Please DO NOT use manure to feed your plants because of

the pupil involvement in their harvest. Again, ensure that hands are washed after handling seeds and compost.

## Thinning Out

If your seedlings are too close together, they should be thinned out so that they have enough space to grow. Seedlings can be transplanted into other pots using the left-over compost. Remember to water them after their move and cover all bare roots with soil.

## Now the tasty bit – Harvesting

Hopefully your salad crops are looking ready to harvest and your herbs are smelling and looking tasty. If you have planted vegetables, they will be ready to harvest by mid-June providing they are planted on receipt of this pack. If any of your produce has failed or not been very productive, don't worry! You can still complete all the activities in the project and other produce can be purchased for the completion of the cooking element.



The seeds you have been provided with are fast growing and should take between 45 and 100 days to reach harvest. Factors such as heat and available light will affect growth. Salad crops are the fastest maturing with some of the herbs taking longer to develop.

**TIP:** Don't leave your salad crops too long before harvest or they will go to seed. It is called rocket for a reason (although not actually where the name originates).

It is up to you whether you wish to stagger your planting in order to have a similar harvest date or simply harvest produce as it is ready. There is a quick reading exercise for your class in Appendix 2: Travels of a Grab & Go Salad.

### **REMEMBER: Wash all produce before eating!**

The RNCI has salad spinners for you to wash produce with and can help you prepare basic meals if you desire. Please check our website.

## Tasting

To incorporate the last sense, taste, the school will be supplied with local produce to complete a healthy meal idea for each class involved. There is only limited provision for this and booking forms are available on our website. Produce will be sourced where possible from the Aberdeen Allotment Market Stalls with help from CFINE.






Children tend to have a dislike for the healthy options, therefore creating the need for greater promotion. Portable cooking equipment can come to your school and be used to help the children incorporate their produce into a healthy meal which they will then eat, therefore tasting new flavours and exploring healthy options. Cooking can be a



great way for children to develop more confidence and to help ensure young people are provided with another healthy cooked meal.

To offer cooking sessions in the classroom we provide you with a risk assessment but we also require additional support from the school. All equipment will be provided but please make staff aware if the school has access to utensils etc. Access to a portable oven and hob has been made available. There should be at least one adult to every eight children in all cooking demonstration situations. To achieve this, teachers can recruit a parent or volunteer to help with the cooking class.

To prevent food poisoning/contamination:

-  Always wash and dry hands thoroughly before cooking.
-  Wait until the food is cooked before sampling it. Do not sample uncooked foods.
-  Tie back long hair and cover cuts and open wounds with a plaster.

Expect spills and messes, and clean up spills as they happen, it is always worth hosting the session on waterproof flooring. Please provide extra paper towels to handle messes. If you expect something to be particularly messy (e.g. grating beetroot) make sure to protect classroom flooring and tables.

Where practical the cooking of ingredients will be undertaken. When doing this it is important to remember to keep handles of pans, pots, etc. pointed towards the centre of the stove.

The cooking equipment provided has been carefully considered to ensure it will not break, such as plastic measuring cups rather than glass. Young children will be encouraged to use their fingers to break or tear foods rather than cutting them with a knife.

Teachers must provide constant supervision:

- Always watch students closely when they are using any piece of equipment.
- Closely supervise the use of ovens, stoves, and other kitchen appliances.
- Remind children that stoves, ovens, pans, and dishes can be very hot.

Each session will be tailored to fit the produce that the class has grown and all activities will be risk assessed. A copy of the RNCI's cooking method statement has been made available in this pack.

If you have further questions please contact a member of the RNCI staff.

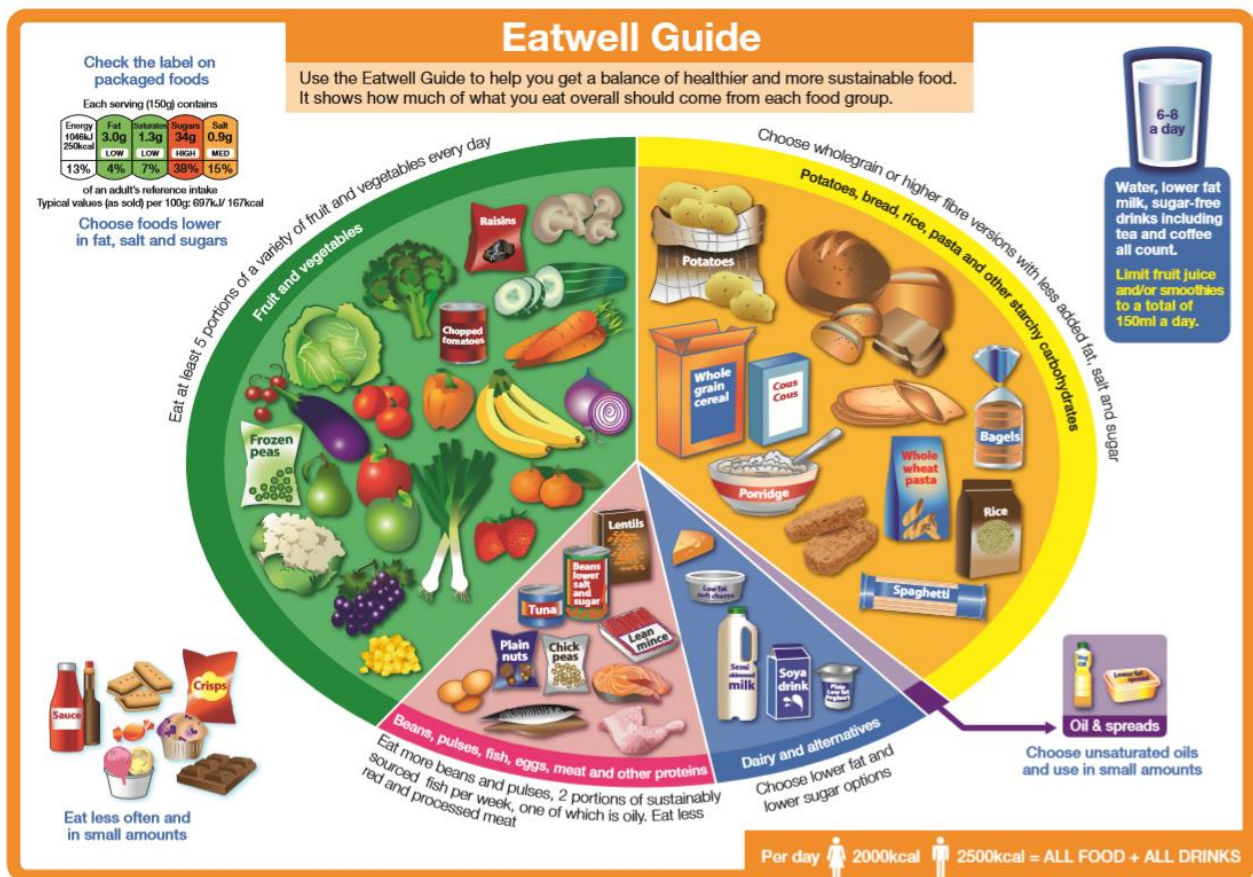
## What Makes a Healthy Meal?

Start by asking the class where they get their energy from compared to plants. The food we eat provides us with energy to live, but the amount of each type of food we eat must be right for us to remain healthy.

The Eatwell Guide shows us how much of each type of food we should eat for a healthy, balanced diet.

Choosing a variety of foods from within the 4 main food groups will add to the range of nutrients consumed. This includes:

- 🍌 Plenty of fruit and vegetables (recommended at least 5 portions a day),
- 🍌 Plenty of bread, rice, potatoes, pasta and other starchy foods,
- 🍌 Some milk and dairy products,
- 🍌 Some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein.



Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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The full-sized version of this poster is available to download for free at the Scottish Gov website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-guide>

Ask your class to think about what they have to eat and drink for their lunch. Identify which food group each item they eat belongs to. Remember to be mindful of disadvantaged children who may have poorer diets.





## A Farmer in the Classroom

You may decide that you would like to invite a guest speaker into the classroom at some point during the project to speak to the class and/or assist with your growing.

RNCI can provide you a volunteer link farmer who can share their many years of knowledge and experience of food, farming and the countryside. To request this, please complete and return the form available on our website (Classroom Speaker Request Form). Please note that we need a minimum of three weeks to deal with your request, so please give as much notice as possible.

### **Before the visit:**

It's a good idea to prepare your pupils for the visit by getting them to:

- think about what they already know about farming
- think of questions that they can ask the farmer
- remind them about manners and good listening skills

### **After the visit:**

Get the pupils to evaluate their visit by asking them to identify:

- what new things they learnt
- what they found most interesting
- what they would like to find out more about

All our farmers are volunteers and they give their time, knowledge and expertise free of charge for which we are very grateful.

The RNCI can also offer visits from our Countryside Classroom On Wheels (CCOW) to the school. The CCOW is a purpose built, bio secure trailer designed to bring livestock, crop and feed samples to the school playground with the aim of introducing pupils to farming, food production and the countryside. Raising Awareness of the kinds of animals and plants grown on Scottish farms. The trailer will be provided fully stocked with both livestock and crops supplied by local volunteer farmers and pupils will receive a talk about farming from a member of staff or an RNCI committee member. Booking forms and a video explaining how it works are available on our website.





## Appendix 1: Growth Diary

Record here the activities you have undertaken to grow your produce:

Date planted: \_\_\_\_\_ Date harvested: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Did you Water the plant?	How tall is the plant? (cm)	How much has it grown?	Your Name

How big did your plant get? \_\_\_\_\_ cm

How many days did it take to grow? \_\_\_\_\_ days

Did you have to do anything else to the plant to help it grow?

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## Appendix 2: Travels of a Grab & Go Salad

These sentences tell you the journey Salad takes to get to your plate, but they are in the wrong order. Can you sort them out?

### **You will need:**

- Scissors
- Glue
- A large sheet of paper
- Coloured pencils or crayons

### **Instructions:**

1. Cut out all the boxes.
2. Arrange them on a big sheet of paper in the correct order.
3. Ask a friend to check your work.
4. Glue down your sentences.
5. Draw a picture illustrating each sentence.

Customers buy the salad and eat it for lunch.

The crop is harvested from the fields.

The ground is ploughed and the seeds are planted in the soil.

The salad leaves are washed and dried.

The plants grow and are looked after by the farmer.

The salad is delivered to shops and supermarkets.

The salad is packaged into bags.



The Royal Northern  
Countryside Initiative

"increasing countryside awareness through education . . ."



## And finally...

**We hope that you enjoy this project!**

Once completed, if you could spare a couple of minutes to complete a short survey monkey evaluation questionnaire, we would be extremely grateful. This will allow us to improve the project for future years and report back to funders so that projects like this can continue in the future.

Questionnaire linked below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WPV6X3X>

*(the link is also available on our website)*



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