

How to grow sprouts in a jar

Growing your own sprouts is fun and easy if you follow the six rules of sprouting:

1. Rinse often (2-3 times/day).
2. Keep them moist, not wet.
3. Keep them at room temperature.
4. Give them air to breathe.
5. Don't grow too many in one container.
6. Keep them in a dark place.

The first step is choosing which seeds to sprout. The standard sprout is the alfalfa sprout. This is the sprout often served on salads and sandwiches and your favorite restaurant or deli. However, there are many other seeds that make excellent sprouts, each with their own flavor and nutritional composition. You can sprout barley, broccoli, buckwheat, cabbage, fenugreek, garbanzo, green peas, lentils, mung beans (found in Chinese food), radishes, red clover, wheat, soy beans, sunflowers and more.

Always use seeds packaged for sprouting. Buying bulk seeds and grains may seem cheaper than seeds packaged for sprouting, but they may not be worth it. Unless they are packaged as high-germination sprouting seeds, only a portion of them will sprout. The ones that do not sprout, will likely ferment and spoil the batch. Do not use seeds meant for planting. They are often treated with chemical pesticides, fungicides and mercury coatings. Also, do not use seeds that have molds growing on them. Molds produce toxins which can cause food poisoning.

Growing sprouts in a jar

The easiest method is to grow sprouts in a glass canning jar. Any size jar will do. To provide plenty of fresh air, cover the top of the jar with muslin, cheese cloth or nylon mesh screen and secure with a rubber band. You can also buy specially sprouting lids designed for this purpose.

Step One: Soaking

For a quart-sized jar, put 1 ½ to 2 tablespoons of small seeds (up to 1 cup if using larger seeds like green peas or garbanzo) in the sprouting jar. Cover top of jar with cloth or sprouting lid and rinse the seeds in warm (not hot) water. Drain and refill so that water is about an inch above the seeds. Let the seeds soak 8-12 hours (overnight). Protect from light by covering with a dish towel or placing in a cupboard.

Step Two: Rinsing

Rinse 2 to 3 times per day for 2 to 3 days. After thoroughly draining the rinse water, lay the jar on its side to spread out the seeds. Do not expose to light. After 2 to 3 days the sprouts should be filling up the jar.

Step Three: Removing Hulls

After 2 to 3 days the sprouts will have thrown off their hulls. To remove the hulls, place the sprouts in a bowl and run cool water over them. Most of the hulls will either float to the top or sink to the bottom making them easy to remove. (Note: not all seeds have hulls.)

Step Four: Harvesting

Rinse sprouts in cool water and remove any remaining hulls. Drain in a colander, but do not allow the sprouts to dry out. Place in an air-tight bag leaving room for air circulation. If your sprouts need to develop chlorophyll or carotene there is one final step. (The seed package directions should tell you whether greening is necessary.)

Step Five: Greening

Once the hulls are removed, place the sprouts back into the sprouting jar or into a clear plastic airtight bag. Put the sprouts in indirect sunlight. It takes about a day for the chlorophyll and carotenes to develop. Once the sprouts are ready rinse, drain, and eat, or refrigerate.

Storing:

Sprouts will keep for about a week in the refrigerator if you rinse them once every day or two. Be sure to keep the sprouts from freezing as they are frost sensitive.

Seeds are easy to store. Put them in a glass jar with an air-tight lid and keep them in a cool, dark storage area. They will keep for a year or more.