

# KITCHEN SCRAP GARDENING

Lesson developed by: Geoff Kennedy, Summit County Master Gardener Volunteer

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW:

Studies have shown that people benefit from having plants around them, or even being able to look outside at trees and flowers. In this activity residents can enjoy planting something and watching it grow, and they can do it using things that would normally be thrown away or composted.

## Items needed:

Containers. These can be plastic cups or dishes, portion cups, empty yogurt cups or other recycled containers, or small plastic pots.

Potting soil (for some plants)

Kitchen scraps:

- Carrot tops
- Beet tops
- Radish tops
- Parsnip tops
- Turnip tops
- Celery bottoms
- Lettuce bottoms
- Onion bottoms
- Green onion bottoms
- Garlic cloves
- Avocado pits
- Lemon, Lime or Orange seeds

Different scraps need different growing methods. In some cases you are re-sprouting the plant, in others you are growing the seeds or bulbs.

## Re-sprouting

Unlike most animals, plants have the ability to keep growing throughout their lives, producing new roots, stems and leaves. They are able to do this thanks to *meristem tissue* which contains special cells called *meristematic* cells. These are cells that stay forever young in the plant and are capable of forming all the other parts of the plant. If you have ever taken the stem of a plant and rooted it in a glass of water or pinched off the tip of a stem to make the plant grow side shoots you have seen meristematic cells at work. To get your kitchen scraps to regrow you need to make sure that the part you use has some of these meristematic cells. With different plants these can be located in different places.

**Tops:** Root crops like carrots, beets and radishes will re-sprout from the tops. Cut off the top leaving about 1 to 1 1/2 inches of the root. (If there are still leaves attached, cut them off, leaving about 1/4 inch of each leaf's stem.) Place it cut side down in a cup or dish with about 1/2 inch of water in it. Place the container on a windowsill where it will get good light. Make sure there is always water in the container and change the water every day or two to keep it fresh. In a week or so you should start seeing new leaves sprouting.



**Bottoms:** Celery is one of the easiest plants to get to re-sprout. (According to the Seattle Times, "By most definitions, a whole head of celery is a stalk and a single 'stick' from the stalk is a rib." But the parts we eat are really stem-like appendages called petioles that hold the leaves to the stems.) Just cut off the bottom inch or so of the head of celery and put it cut side up in a container with about 1/2 inch of water in it. Place the container on a windowsill where it will get good light. Make sure there is always water in the container and change the water every day or two to keep it fresh and in a week or so you should start seeing new leaves sprouting. You can do the same thing with lettuce.



You can also get the bottoms of onions, scallions and leeks to re-sprout. Just cut off the bottom 1/2 inch and treat it the same way.



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**Bulbs:** A head of garlic is a collection of garlic cloves, and each clove will grow a new head of garlic. Just break the head apart into individual cloves. Be careful not to damage them and don't peel the cloves. Plant a single clove in a small garden pot or recycled container (make sure it has some drainage holes) of potting soil. Potting soil is sterile and will not have any diseases, weed seeds, or insects in it. Dampen the potting soil so it has the texture of chocolate cake before filling your container. Plant the clove point end up so it is just below the surface of the soil. Place on a windowsill and after it starts to sprout water it as the soil dries out.



**Seeds:** Citrus seeds are easy to grow. Fill a small garden pot or container (make sure it has some drainage holes) with dampened potting soil and poke several lemon, orange or lime seeds about half an inch deep. Cover lightly with soil. Keep the soil moist, but be careful not to overwater. Avocado seeds will also sprout and can be planted in a pot of potting soil or suspended over a cup of water using toothpicks stuck in the seed. Citrus and avocado trees are tropical plants that generally grafted. And seedling won't produce fruit but are a lot of fun to grow.

#### **Related questions to ask participants:**

- ❖ Did your family have a vegetable garden when you were young? Did you work in the garden? What tasks did you perform?
- ❖ Did you have a vegetable garden after you became an adult? Did you ever teach children how to garden?
- ❖ What did you like best about gardening?
- ❖ Did you ever do kitchen scrap gardening? If so, with what plants?

#### **Contact Information:**

If you have any questions about this activity, please email [mgs SummitCounty@gmail.com](mailto:mgs SummitCounty@gmail.com).

We hope you benefitted from this activity. Please let us know if you utilized this with a quick email to the above address. Please send your name, facility name, number of participants involved in this activity, and your feedback for improvement so we can measure our impact and improve this product. Thank you!