

# Gourmet Vegetables

**I love April, it's such a super month in the garden and there are so many beautiful vegetables that you can sow now.**

Did you know that it's just as easy to grow a purple coloured carrot, as it is to grow an orange one? Carrots come in an array of colours – white, yellow, red, purple and many shades in between. Each variety has a slightly different taste and texture. I think they are all delicious and they look fantastic mixed together on the plate. Conveniently, many seed companies sell 'Rainbow Mix' packets of carrot seed. Carrots are very easy to grow, but you do need to take steps to avoid their nemesis, the carrot fly. By covering your carrot seedlings with Enviromesh, you will prevent the carrot fly from laying its eggs near your carrots.

Globe artichokes are glorious to grow! Yes, they take up quite a bit of room, but nothing beats freshly harvested artichokes cooked until tender. 'Gros Vert de Laon' is a great tasting variety, as is 'Imperial Star', which produces a great crop of large heads even in its first year. Don't forget that you can eat the inner part of the stem of the artichoke as well as the beautiful globes.

Mangetout peas are super plants to grow. I enjoy growing varieties such as 'Shiraz' with its attractive purple pods, and the pretty, yellow-podded 'Golden Sweet', which is sweet and tender and probably my favourite. Both of these varieties produce easy to spot pods – a real bonus when you're harvesting, and attractively coloured flowers.

For pea shoots, my preferred variety would be 'Oregon Sugar Pod' which is marketed as a mangetout pea, but in all honesty any variety of pea would be suitable. Just cut the tops off your plants when they reach about 12cm (5 inches) and wait for them to re-grow. Pea shoots can easily be grown in a window

box or container.

Kohlrabi is an absolutely delicious vegetable, often hard to find in the shops, but it's easy to grow in the garden. For some years now I have been growing a variety called 'Gigant', available from Real Seeds, which is an amazing variety. It's delicious harvested at a much larger size than traditional kohlrabi varieties, which you don't want to allow to grow much larger than a golf ball, or they become rather tough and woody. I've regularly eaten Galia melon sized 'Gigant' and have found it to be delicious and very tender. Later sowings of 'Gigant' are great for storing over winter.

Almost instant gratification can be found if you sow coloured radishes, which will be ready to eat just a few weeks after sowing. Radish seed can be sown direct into the soil or in containers. If you're sowing a row of parsnip seeds, sow some radish seeds in the same row – parsnips take a long time to germinate, whereas your radish seed will have germinated, been harvested and eaten before the parsnip requires the space. Do purchase new parsnip seed each year, this is one variety of vegetable seed that doesn't remain viable for long and cannot be stored – why not share a packet with your friends or neighbours?

There are many other gourmet vegetables that you can sow now: rapini, salsola soda, kale, salsify, scorzonera, amaranth, shallots, quinoa and pak choi. That should keep you all busy!

*For more tips, advice and ideas of other lovely jobs that you could do in your garden or at your allotment this month, more ideas of seeds that can be sown now, and much more besides, please visit my website [www.pumpkinbeth.com](http://www.pumpkinbeth.com).*