



Useful Reusing

- How to make a window-sill plant-raising box



If you grow plants on a window-sill, you may find that the plants tend to grow long, weak stems due to lack of light - the fancy name for this is “etiolated”. The picture on the left shows some plants which were grown on a windowsill that have grown in this way - they literally stretch towards the light, so they end up out-growing their strength, so they are too weak to plant out. Compare them to the plants in the second picture which were grown with plenty of light, but were planted around the same time as the first ones. They have much shorter but stronger stems and they have greener leaves because

they haven't had to look for the sun. The solution for anyone who has to raise plants somewhere with light coming from one side, is to use a reflecting surface behind the plants. If you have a mirror, this can be used, but aluminium foil will do the job quite well, and is probably easier to handle. We find that plant-raising boxes are a good way of setting this up. They also have the advantage of being easily covered, providing some insulation. This can be really useful if you have to draw curtains and leave your plants beside a cold window at night.



To make a plant-raising box, you will need:

A strong cardboard box - wine boxes are ideal, and often already cut to the correct shape in some shops.

A craft-knife or pair of strong, sharp scissors.

Aluminium foil

Tape

Bubble wrap or clear plastic sheeting

Plant pots

A tray big enough to sit the box on or other protection for your windowsill.

How To:

1. You should be able to get 2 boxes from a single box, if you cut carefully. Make up the box and tape any loose flaps.
2. On one side of the box, measure about 4cm up from the bottom edge and draw a line. Now repeat this for the top side of the box, on the opposite edge to your first mark.
3. Draw a diagonal line between the two marks.
4. Turn the box round and repeat on the other side, so that you end up with two lines that run parallel to each other at opposite ends of the box.
5. Now mark a line along the front of the box using the 2 end marks for reference, and another at the back the same.
6. Use a craft knife to cut along all of the lines. You will end up with 2 boxes the same, that will hold together, with a shallow lip along the front to keep plant pots in place.
7. Place aluminium foil on the back wall of the box and then put plants or seeds in pots into the box.



8. It can sit in any light area, facing the light so the foil reflects as much as possible onto the plants. Cover with bubble wrap or plastic for an extra warming effect, especially at night. This can also help if the room tends to be dry, as it will keep the moisture in, especially with seeds.

