

Passion fruit

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This is slow from seed but easy to grow, and it makes an attractive climbing plant.

A passion-fruit plant is a large, attractive, quick-growing climber with shiny, dark green leaves. When the plant is about two years old, it will have amazingly exotic blue-and-white flowers all summer, which may produce fruit. When the fruits grow, they start off green but ripen to shiny black and are full of very sweet, delicious, orange-coloured flesh.

How to grow passion fruit

The seeds of passion fruit are part of the fruit you normally eat. They are the grey pips inside the orange flesh. You can extract passion-fruit seeds by carefully cutting open the passion fruit and scraping out the contents on to tissue paper.

Use a teaspoon to separate the pips from the flesh and put the pips into a container. When you have collected about 10 pips, wash them carefully in the container with warm water so that they are no longer sticky and covered in orange flesh. When they are clean, put them on a fresh sheet of tissue paper to dry before you sow them.

You will need a pot measuring about 10cm across, with holes in the bottom to let water drain out. Fill your pot with multi-purpose compost and water it very well so that water drips out

of the bottom. Scatter the seeds you have collected on the surface of the compost, and cover them lightly with more compost.

Put the pot in a see-through plastic food bag such as a sandwich bag, and tie the ends together. This keeps the moisture in the compost and stops the seeds from drying out. Passion-fruit seeds need to be in a warm place to grow, somewhere like an airing cupboard or on a sunny windowsill.

The seeds will take several weeks to germinate but you should check them every day. As soon as they begin to sprout, remove the plastic bag, and put the pot on a sunny windowsill.

As the seedlings get bigger they will need to be potted into individual pots measuring about 8cm across. Use the same compost as you first sowed your seeds in and put them back on the windowsill. As the plants grow, they will need canes to climb up and will need to be repotted into larger pots every so often. You can tell when your plants need repotting because you will see roots growing out of the holes at the bottom of the pot.

Caring for your passion fruit plant

Passion fruit like lots of sunshine, and this plant needs to be grown on a bright windowsill or in a sunny conservatory. The more light you can give these plants, the more likely they are to produce fruit. Water your plants regularly throughout the year, and feed them with a general house-plant food every two weeks in the summer. If the plants become too large, you can cut them back a little in the autumn.

