

How to grow kidney vetch

The caterpillars of the small blue butterfly are starving and need your help!

The tiny but mighty small blue is the UK's smallest butterfly, and its caterpillars are very fussy eaters - they only eat one thing! All they eat is a special plant called kidney vetch and we need your help to grow some extra plants.



How to grow kidney vetch in five easy steps:

1. Collect your kidney vetch seed from your Species on the Edge or Butterfly Conservation team. The seed comes in its own special case to protect it and you can leave it in this case when you plant it. Kidney vetch seed is best planted in spring or autumn.



2. Use a gritty seed-potting compost or mix some gravel through seed compost. Plant two seeds in each seed compartment of your tray. Or, rather than a tray, you can use old toilet roll holders and plant the seeds in these. Remember to always use peat free compost, it's better for our environment.

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3. Cover the seeds lightly with grit or more potting compost. Water the seeds, but make sure they can drain. You don't want your plants to have a soggy bottom!

4. Make your own labels and place the trays outside in a sunny sheltered spot and wait for them to grow!



5. Once the seedlings get bigger, they will want a bigger pot. When they are ready, your Species on the Edge team will take them and plant them where the small blue caterpillars will find them. If you're not able to help plant them, we will take lots of pictures to send to your school so you can see where your plants are.



Can you spot the small blue caterpillar in the picture?
Clue: it's hiding in the kidney vetch!

