

Design a Dig for Victory garden



1 Imperial War Museum

This is your chance to design your own wartime garden. **Dig for Victory** meant digging up your garden to grow as much of your own food as possible.

Before the Second World War, Britain produced less than half of the food we needed. The rest came from other countries and arrived on ships or aircraft. When the war began, many of our ships were being sunk by the enemy to stop the food reaching us.

There were shortages of many kinds of food, including meat, so rationing was brought in to make sure everyone had enough. People were asked to grow vegetables and fruit instead of grass or flowers, so we wouldn't starve.

Here is a rhyme lots of children sang. Can you make up a tune for it?

Dig! Dig! Dig! And your muscles will grow big
Keep on pushing the spade
Don't mind the worms
Just ignore their squirms
And when your back aches, laugh with glee
And keep on diggin'
Till we give our foes a wiggin'
Dig! Dig! Dig! to Victory

Betty and Eric lived in Exeter during the war. They told us what it was like.

Betty:

"We always had food fresh from the garden because it goes off so quickly if you don't eat it right away. Mum made jams and chutneys, and I helped her. It took hours, and made the whole house smell of vinegar or sweet fruit."

Eric:

"Dad had an allotment, and we children pushed the wheelbarrow down there. Sometimes we sat in it! I was in charge of a little patch with lettuce and onions, and Dad looked after the potatoes and cabbages. We all did our bit, and it helped with the food rationing."

Betty:

"We had chickens in a little coop and we had pigeons, so we always had plenty of fresh eggs. People used to knock on the door asking us for eggs."

Eric:

"You had to share things a lot more in those days. There were people who couldn't do their own gardening or didn't have an allotment, so Dad sometimes used to send me up the road to give Mrs So-and-So some potatoes, a cabbage or whatever was going."

What do you see in this 1943 cartoon for the Dig for Victory campaign poster?



Now it's up to you to design a Dig for Victory Garden to feed your family. What vegetables and fruit will you grow? Will you share food with the neighbours?

Here are some ideas for things that you could include: beetroots, carrots, courgettes, peas, pumpkins, potatoes, runner beans, strawberries.

Do you want to keep chickens? Will you have a greenhouse?

Be as adventurous as you like.

- You could draw it out on paper
- You could plot a life-size garden by spreading out a duvet cover and then using scrap paper, newspapers or recycling to represent the fruits and vegetables you want to grow on top of it.
- Draw a picture for each plant, or just write its name.
- How much space do you need between them?
- Take a photograph to show your teacher.