



Where our food comes from - Case Study

This case study about one of B&Q's plant suppliers Roundstone Nurseries Ltd, offers an insight into the work and expertise involved in producing a tomato plant. It provides a behind-the-scenes look at the processes involved in growing food before it makes its way to our plates.

We hope the photographs and accompanying text will support your classroom growing activity and inform discussions around where food comes from.

About Roundstone

Roundstone's plant nursery supplies B&Q with its entire organic plants range. Due to increasing demand, B&Q's organic plants range has been expanded this year to offer 50 varieties of salad, herb and vegetable plants. These plants are sold to customers wishing to grow their own at home or in allotments. Roundstone also supplies other growers, who develop the plants to full size and then sell the resulting fruit and vegetables. The nursery also supplies B&Q and other retailers with other non-food varieties such as bedding plants.

The nursery was established in 1985 and moved to its current site in Chichester, West Sussex, four years ago. Operating off 80 acres, the nursery produces in the region of 200,000,000 plants a year. This business has 80 full-time staff and creates up to an additional 220 jobs seasonally each year.

All plants at the nursery are grown undercover in controlled environments. This means no matter what the weather is outside, Roundstone is able to plan growing activity throughout the year, making the nursery operational year-round. Inside the controlled greenhouse environment, all the elements that determine a plant's growth, such as water, temperature and light can be controlled. This means a plant's growth can be speeded up or slowed down to fit with a pre-planned growing timetable. The timing of a plant's growth is of great importance to retailers such as B&Q, who require the plants they buy to be at a certain stage of development at certain times in the year, ready for resale in their stores.





About B&Q

B&Q is the largest home improvement and garden centre retailer in the UK. The retailer employs more than 40,500 people nationwide, 25% of whom are over 50 years of age. Across the UK, B&Q has 330 stores. B&Q recently became a partner to BioRegional's 'One Planet Living'

initiative. If everyone in the world lived as we do in the UK today and used the world's resources at the rate we are currently using them, we would need three planets to sustain our way of life - we only have one. By signing up to the 'One Planet Living' initiative, B&Q is promising not only to reduce its own operational impact, it is also committing to developing products and information to help its customers reduce their own personal impacts - encouraging people to 'grow their own' is one way in which people can do this. For more information about this please go to www.diy.com/oneplanetliving.

Growing a tomato plant from seed



Millions of tiny seeds are delivered to the nursery in foil packets to keep them fresh.

Only one seed is required to grow each plant.



Each seed is sown into a plug of compost by a special machine. The sown seeds are then placed into compartmentalised trays - just like the propagators you've received.

As the trays come out of the machine they are checked and then taken to the greenhouse to grow.

B&Q

 plantconnection

 ONE
PLANET
LIVING


**YEAR OF FOOD
AND FARMING**



There are a number of different rooms in the greenhouse, each of which is at a different temperature. The younger the plant, the warmer the room it will be placed in.



As the plant develops, it will be moved into different rooms in the nursery each decreasing in temperature so that the plant becomes hardened and more robust.



All the watering and feeding of the plants is done by another machine which looks a little like the wings of an aeroplane. This machine is suspended over the plants and travels from one end of the green house to the other, watering and feeding the plants by spraying them as it travels. The water and food are sprayed from the machine from these blue and green nozzles.



The nursery roof is cleverly designed to collect rainwater. The rainwater is funnelled to a reservoir in the grounds of the nursery. All the water needed to feed the plants is then pumped from this reservoir when it is required. This supplies the nursery with all the water it requires for its operation, meaning it is not dependent on mains water.



Once the plants reach the size required by the retailer they are placed into the packaging they will be sold in. Currently all plants in B&Q's organic plants range are transferred into this packaging by hand. However, the majority of plants will be packaged and labelled by machine.



The plants are then loaded onto stacked shelving trolleys and loaded into lorries for distribution. The plants then go one of two ways...



1. They are either delivered to retailers like B&Q, who then sell them on to customers who, like you, can enjoy growing their own vegetables.
2. The plants go to other growers, who sow them in the ground and continues to look after them until they are harvested. The fruit and vegetables are then sold to supermarkets and other food retailers, where they are displayed ready for you to go along to buy.

