



# Making a cloche



Photography © Ray Spence



Cloches are designed to protect outdoor crops from the worst of the weather, especially cold and wind. They are temporarily placed over individual plants or rows of crops. They boost growth for an earlier and/or more reliable crop. This activity shows you a simple tunnel cloche design that can be adapted to fit your space with a range of covering materials.

## Resources

- **Stout galvanised wire**
- **Clear plastic sheeting**
- **Wire cutters**

## Activity

1. The following are crops that commonly benefit from using cloches.
  - a. Early or late sown crops, eg lettuce.
  - b. Cold sensitive plants when late spring or early autumn frost is forecast, eg peppers.
2. Follow the instructions below for building a simple tunnel cloche.

## Extended activity

1. Make a more robust cloche by replacing wire with plastic tubing, eg 2.5cm diameter from builders' merchants. Start by making a square/rectangular wooden batten frame to match the width of a bed (see photo). Then position one tube at each end of the frame to make two hoops, screwing the ends to each corner of the frame. Cover the outside with plastic, nailing to the battens to secure. Ventilate by lifting up one end of the structure and supporting with a brick or large stone.
2. Cover the design on the next page with netting as a pest barrier or with horticultural fleece for temporary frost protection.

### Work safely

Be careful when handling wire, wearing gloves and ensuring that, when bent under tension, wire doesn't snap back and hit anyone. Ensure adult supervision, especially when using sheets of plastic.

### Making your own

A simple cloche made from an upturned 2lt plastic bottle with the bottom cut off. This is a good use of a waste product and also protects against slugs.



## Instructions for making a cloche

**1.** Cut lengths of wire about 150cm long. You need at least two lengths, more for longer cloches.



**2.** Push one end of the wire in the soil about 10cm and carefully bend over the other end, pushing into soil the same amount to create a hoop around 45-60cm wide. Continue to make hoops for the length of the row, positioning around 75-90cm apart.



**3.** Cut a sheet of plastic or fleece to cover the hoops. Calculations for size follow.

- Width: equal to length of wire hoops (150cm). The spare plastic for tucking into soil in the next step is available since 30cm (2x15cm) of wire is buried.
- Length: distance between two furthest hoops (eg 180cm) plus 60cm each end to allow for tucking in plastic in next step (180cm + 2 x 60cm = 300cm long).



**4.** Lay the plastic or fleece sheet over the hoops, gently pushing in the sides with a spade or burying.



**5.** Tie and peg down each end. These ends can be later opened up for ventilation.

**Note:** In windy conditions, you may also need to secure the plastic with string over the top, pegged down on both sides.

