

# How to make a conker grow!

Conkers grow on Horse Chestnut trees and this year has been a very good year for conkers. However, the Horse Chestnut tree is under threat. The UK has nearly 2 million trees but nearly half of them are infected by a tiny moth larva, known as the horse chestnut leaf miner. Because they cause leaves to turn brown, they reduce the amount of energy a tree can make through photosynthesis.

Growing conkers can help preserve the population of Horse Chestnut Trees, offset our school's CO2 emissions, provide wildlife habitats and enhance the natural landscape.

## Planting your conker...

1. Check your conker is healthy by putting it in a container of water. If it sinks, it's good but if it floats its dried out and is unlikely to grow.
2. Plant your conker in a pot of soil. You should put just one in each pot and make sure it's about 2cm below the surface of the soil.
3. Next you need to water your conker. But, not too much you don't want to wash the soil away.

## Getting through the winter...

4. The pot needs to be in a sheltered spot outside where it will get some sunshine through the winter.
5. You'll need to protect your pot from predators (like squirrels) and keep watering it. Check the pot every few days to see if the top of the soil is wet or dry. If it's dry give it a little water.
6. When the weather gets really cold, you'll need to protect your conker from frost. A plastic fizzy drink bottle with the bottom cut off is ideal for this.

## Starting to grow...

You probably won't see your conker grow at all over the winter but going through this cold time is important for the conker. In the spring hopefully you'll see the first signs of life as little green shoots appear!



A Horse Chestnut Seeding (I, Opuntia / CC BY-SA (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>))

7. Remember to keep your young tree watered and protected from predators.

8. As your tree gets bigger, you'll need to put it in a bigger pot with more soil so it has more space and can grow even bigger! It's time to move to a bigger pot when you can see roots coming out the bottom of the existing pot.