

Comfrey

Symphytum officinale · Boraginaceae

DIFFICULTY Easy

TYPE Herbaceous perennial, grown from root cuttings

MATURITY First season for light harvest

Comfrey leaves are traditionally used externally for bruises and sprains, but internal use — teas, tinctures, or eating the leaves — carries a liver-toxicity risk from pyrrolizidine alkaloids. This guide covers growing it, not using it; speak with a health professional before any internal use.



SUN
Full–part sun



WATER
Regular,
tolerates some
drought once
established



SOIL PH
6.0–7.5



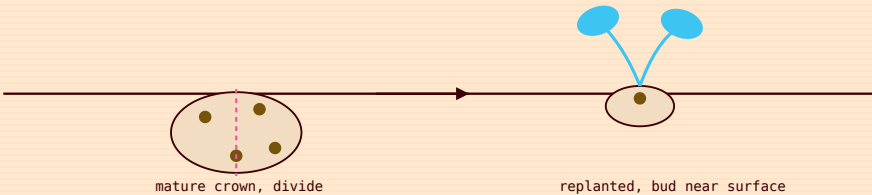
SPACING
60–90cm



DEPTH
root cutting 5cm
deep

01 A compost accelerator

Comfrey's deep taproot pulls up nutrients other plants can't reach, making its leaves an excellent addition to compost or steeped into a nutrient-rich liquid feed — see the safety note above for its traditional topical use.



02 Planting

METHOD	Plant root cuttings or crown divisions with the top just below the surface.
SOIL	Tolerant of most soils, but thrives in rich, moist ground.
TIMING	Plant dormant root cuttings in late winter to early spring.

Planting timing varies significantly by Australian climate zone. Set your zone above (or use the Find My Climate Zone tool) for guidance tailored to your own area.

03 Growing care

- Water regularly while establishing; tolerates some drought once its deep taproot is down.
- Cut back hard 3-4 times a season — this is a vigorous regrower.
- No feeding needed; it's a nutrient accumulator that feeds itself and everything around it.
- Choose a permanent spot — its deep taproot makes an established plant hard to move.

04 Problems

- **Spreading beyond the bed** — persistent from root fragments; choose the spot carefully.
- **Rust** — orange spotting in humid weather; remove affected leaves, improve airflow.
- **Slugs and snails** — target new spring growth; use barriers or hand-pick at dusk.
- **Very few other pests** — a hardy, easy-going perennial.

05 Harvest & storage

SIGNS	Leaves ready to cut once the plant is well established, from the first season onward.
METHOD	Cut leaves back to a few centimetres above the crown; wear gloves, as leaves are bristly.
CURING	Use fresh — wilts quickly and is best added straight to compost or a liquid feed brew.
STORAGE	Not stored fresh; steeped into liquid feed or dried for later mulching.
PRESERVING	Steep cut leaves in water for 3-4 weeks to make a nutrient-rich liquid feed.

06 Companions & rotation

PLANT NEARBY	AVOID NEARBY	ROTATION NOTE
Fruit trees Compost bay	Best given its own dedicated spot, away from garden beds	Not applicable — long-lived perennial, difficult to relocate once established.