

## Lighting:

It is better to grow seedlings under fluorescent lights than to rely on natural light. Seedlings will stretch and lean in natural light, producing a poor quality seedling. Keep lights about 2" above your seedlings and raise them as they grow. Plants do need 12 to 16 hrs of daylight and a simple light timer can be used to automatically turn the lights on and off.

## Watering & Fertilizing:

Potting mix needs to be moist while seeds are germinating. A spray bottle to water the surface gently without washing potting mix away is very useful.

Seedlings do not need fertilizer until they have several sets of true leaves. A weak, general purpose fertilizer, mixed at 1/4 strength applied once a week is adequate. Use fresh water at other times.

## Transplanting:

You may need to transfer seedlings to a larger container. Lift seedling by the root ball, using a spoon for support if necessary. Never hold it by its stem as you may crush it or harm the growing tip.

## Moving Your Seedlings Outdoors:

New seedlings have not yet been exposed to full sun, drastic changes in temperature or wind. They need to be gradually introduced to outdoor conditions by "hardening off".

About 2 weeks before planting outdoors, move seedlings outside for increasingly longer periods each day. Start with placing them in the shade during a warm afternoon for a few hours, away from wind. Bring back in for the night. Continue this process daily, slowly increasing the time and amount of sunshine.



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## Garden Guide

# Seed Starting Tips

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# Seed Starting Tips



## Benefits:

Sowing seeds indoors can give you a head start on spring garden planting.

Most annuals and vegetables should be started indoors about 6 weeks before the last frost in our area, which is approximately May 15th.



Many vegetables and annual flowers are best started directly in the garden such as...beans, peas, zucchini, carrots, beets, radishes, turnips, leaf lettuce, spinach, swiss chard and kale. Sweet peas, marigolds, impatiens, foxglove, cleome, cosmos, forget-me-nots and amaranthus will also do well sown directly in the garden.

## Select Your Seeds:

Purchase good quality, packaged seeds that indicate germination percentage, crop, cultivar, planting and care information. Purchase seeds in a package size you will plant within 2 to 3 years.

## Growing Media:

A commercial seed starting, soil-less mix, composed of vermiculite and peat moss, is sterile, lightweight, weed free, porous and recommended for seed starting. Vermiculite, alone, can also be used. You can make your own seed starting mix; however, you will need to sterilize any soil used in the mix.

## Timing:

Follow package catalog directions, as each plant has its own requirements.



## Choose Your Container:

Fiber trays and plastic trays can be used to save space; however, plants will need to be transplanted into individual pots at a later date.

Clay and plastic pots are excellent for growing transplants, but you will need to separate the seedlings from the root ball, carefully, at planting time.

Peat pots, peat pellets and paper egg cartons are convenient to use. The entire pot, pellet and egg compartment can be planted directly in the ground for minimal root disturbance.



Plastic flats, packs and plugs (as used in greenhouse growing) also work well as a container. New plants can be popped out of the cell and planted in the garden.

## Sowing Seeds:

Sow fresh seeds individually into each container according to package directions. When in doubt about seed depth, a rule of thumb is to plant seed 4x as deep as it's with. If planting older seeds, use two or more seeds per space, as germination will be less.

Be sure to label your seed pack, pot or tray right away so you won't forget what you planted.

Some seeds require light to germinate. Cover these with a thin layer of vermiculite and keep medium moisture. Those varieties requiring darkness to germinate can be covered with dark plastic bags or several layers of newspaper until seeds sprout.

## Location, Location, Location:

A windowsill is **NOT** a good location for starting seeds. This is the coldest area of your home at night and the hottest during the day, if the sun is shining. Bottom heat is best, and if you have room, the top of your refrigerator is an excellent seed starting area or invest in a heat mat. Otherwise, choose a safe place away from your pets, heavy traffic, cold drafts and excess heat in average home temps to place your crops.