

Starting Seeds

A guide to necessary supplies and steps for starting seeds



Recommended Supplies

- Clean starter packs, pots, trays
- Peat pellets and pots
- Soilless or wool starter cubes
- Soilless, sterile seed-starting mix
- Good quality liquid fertilizer
- Humidity Domes
- Chopsticks
- Seed dial (for tiny seeds)
- Heat mats
- Plant labels
- Small, sharp scissors
- Full spectrum grow lights

At a Glance

Buy fresh seed: Look for germination time and whether light is needed for germination on packet.

Use sterile seed starting mix: Don't use potting or garden soil.

Water: Mist and water gently with room temperature water; don't keep trays soaking wet.

Light: Once sprouted, move to a south-facing window or use full spectrum grow light 3" from leaves.

Acclimate before transplanting!

Seed Starting Tips

- Buy fresh seed. Seed packets are date-stamped. Store leftover seeds or seed you've gathered in a dry, cool, dark place in a sealed container marked with variety and year.
- Cleanliness counts. Buy clean trays and flats or new peat pots. If using recycled containers, soak in a 10% bleach solution, rinse, and air dry. Punch drainage holes if necessary. Note: Yogurt cups have a habit of tipping over.
- Use sterile seed-starting mix. Don't use garden soil or old potting soil. Damping off, a fungal disease, is common. Moisten mix with warm water before filling containers and planting seed.
- Read the seed packet. Seeds state the number of days to germination and the number of weeks of growing time before transplanting. Some will also show what the seedling will look like, which is helpful if you've forgotten to mark trays.
- Provide the right light and temperature. Check seed packs for planting depth. Some seeds need light to germinate, and should be tamped onto the surface of the soilless mix. Heat mats are recommended. Steady heat from the bottom will speed germination time.
- Check your seeds often. If the mix starts to look dry, mist gently or water the flat from the bottom. As soon as the seeds have sprouted, move to a south window, or use a full spectrum grow light 3" above the leaves

for 12-14 hours daily. Don't use incandescent bulbs, as they give off too much heat. Turn flats daily. Leggy, leaning seedlings will remain weak and leggy.

- Water with room temperature water. Seedlings don't like cold baths. You may also want to consider watering from the bottom.
- Most seedlings prefer 50-70% humidity. Mist and provide air flow to avoid fungus and damping off.
- Sopping wet seed trays can spell trouble, so open the vent on your humidity dome if you see a lot of condensation.
- Fertilize only once seedlings have developed true leaves. Use half strength liquid fertilizer, transitioning to full strength after three or four weeks.
- Don't pull excess seedlings, but rather snip them out with sharp scissors to avoid disturbing the delicate root system of the remaining plants.
- It sounds silly, but gently caressing the tops of seedlings with an open palm helps to toughen them. This is important for plants that will contend with Colorado wind.
- Acclimate seedlings *gradually* before planting. All plants grown indoors, even in greenhouses, need to be slowly acclimated to outdoor conditions before being planted. Put seedling trays out during the day on warm days, and bring them in at night if temperatures will fall below 40° F. Do this for about a week before planting.
- If weather dictates that you keep seedlings inside longer, you can pot them into larger containers.
- Handle seedlings by the leaf or by the roots, never the stem.

Flowers that need light to germinate:

Annuals

Ageratum
Begonias
Browallia
Coleus

Godetia
Impatiens
Kochia
Lobelia

Mignonette
Petunias
Portulaca
Scarlet Sage

Snapdragons
Strawflower

Perennials

Alyssum saxatile
Balloonflower
Chinese Lanterns
Chrysanthemums

Columbines
Edelweiss
False Rock Cress
Feverfew

Gaillardia
Maltese Cross
Oriental Poppies
Primrose

Rock Cress
Shasta Daisies
Sweet Rocket

Flowers that need some light to germinate:

African Daisies
Balsam
Celosia

Cleome
Cosmos
Mimulus

Nicotiana
Stock
Tithonia

Gerbera
Torenia
California Poppies

The following plants develop large, fleshy taproots that resist transplanting

Cabbage, Chinese
Corn
Cucumbers
Melons
Pumpkins

Root Crops (except
beets)
Beans
Balloonflower
California Poppy

Celosia
Poppies
Portulaca
Borage
Salad Burnet

Caraway
Chervil
Coriander/Cilantro
Dill

Planting Times

March

Early March-Indoors

Ageratum
Alyssum
Asparagus
Carrots
Celery
Ch. Cabbage
Dill
Garlic
Iceland Poppies
Impatiens
Leeks
Lemon Balm

Lobelia
Onion seeds
Parsnips
Periwinkle
Phlox, annual
Salvia
Snapdragons
Strawflowers
Sweet William
Thyme
Tomatoes
Verbena

Mid-March – Indoors

Cauliflower
Celery
Endive
Fuchsia
Gaillardia
Leeks
Nicotiana
Pansies

Peppers
Petunias
Portulaca
Stafice
Sweet Peas
Tomatoes
Tuberous Begonias

Late March – Indoors

Chives
Lettuce
Sage
Turnips
Caladiums
Dahlias

Dahlia seeds
Callas
Marigolds
Swiss Chard
Tuberous Begonias
Zinnias

Mid to Late March – Outdoors

Asparagus roots
Bareroot Strawberries
Garlic
Onion sets

Pansies
Peas
Potatoes
Shallot sets

Late March – Outdoors

Protect all from heavy frost

Asparagus roots
Bareroot Strawberries
Garlic
Hardy perennials
Onion sets
Pansies

Peas
Potatoes
Shallot sets
Tomatoes (*only with Wall o' Water*)

April

Early April – Indoors

Beets
Collards
Eggplant

New Zealand Spinach
Other Annual Seeds
Peppers

Cannas
Dahlias

Spring Bulbs

Iris
Lilies

Mid-April – Indoors

Celery
Endive
Garlic

Leeks
Lima Beans

Early April – Outdoors

Asparagus roots
Broccoli
Carrots
Chinese Cabbage
Garlic
Kale
Kohlrabi
Lettuce
Onion sets
Pansies

Parsley
Peas
Perennials
Potatoes
Radishes
Sage
Shallot sets
Spinach (plants)
Tomatoes (*only with Wall-O-Water*)

Mid – Late April – Outdoors

Beets
Broccoli
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Collards
Endive
Escarole
Garlic
Kale
Kohlrabi
Lettuce

Onion sets
Pansies
Parsnip
Peas
Perennials
Potatoes
Radishes
Sage
Shallot sets
Spinach
Tomatoes (*only with Wall-O-Water*)
Turnips

May

Early May – Indoors

Corn
Cucumber
Mustard

Pumpkin
Snapbeans
Squash

Early May – Outdoors

Beets
Broccoli
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Collards
Endive
Escarole
Garlic
Kale
Kohlrabi
Lettuce

Onion sets
Pansies
Parsnip
Peas
Perennials
Potatoes
Radishes
Sage
Shallot sets
Spinach
Tomatoes (*only with Wall-O-Water*)

Mid-May – Outdoors

All Annual Flowers
Beets
Broccoli
Brussels Sprouts
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Collards
Chives
Dill
Endive
Escarole
Garlic
Kale
Kohlrabi
Lemon Balm

Lettuce
Onion sets
Oregano
Pansies
Parsnip
Peas
Potatoes
Potted Perennials
Radishes
Rosemary
Sage
Shallot sets
Snapbeans
Spinach
Thyme
Tomatoes (protected)

Spring Bulbs

Cannas
Dahlias

Iris
Lilies

Basil
Cucumber
Lima Beans
Peppers

Pumpkin
Squash
Corn
Tomatoes

Late May – Outdoors