

'How to Start Seeds'

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Seed starting does not require a complicated set up and can be fun, especially on those days when we just need to see something growing. Starting with seeds that are easy to grow is the first step to success.

1. Selecting what to grow.

Starting with good quality seed is most important. There are lots of seed companies that offer just that and they include: William Dam, Vesseys, West Coast Seeds, High Mowing, Jonnys, Terra Edibles

Also look out for a Seedy Sunday event in your area. In Perth it happens on the first Sunday in March

If you are new to gardening, select food crops that you eat most often and ones that give most rewards like tomatoes, lettuce, herbs etc.

2. Indoor or outdoor seeding.

There are lots of plants that can be started indoors but some of them can't. Plants with taproots such as carrots, beets and parsnips should be direct seeded. Read the back of the seed packet carefully to find how and when to plant your seeds. In this area the last frost date is May 26. After that date we can start planting our most tender plants such as tomatoes, peppers, squash, eggplants, beans. Those would have been started indoors prior to this date.

3. Seed treatment

There are 3 terms that apply to seed treatment and are used with more advanced seeding.

Stratification-Seeds of many perennial and woody plants need to go through a cold treatment before they can germinate. This information will always be on the seed packet. Seeds can be kept outside overwinter or in the fridge/freezer for a specific length of time.

Scarification-Some seeds have a very hard seed coat that keeps moisture out and prevents germination. In nature they are worn out by the elements and eventually germinate. We can mimic this process by using sandpaper or a knife, making sure that we do not damage the embryo of the seed.

Soaking-Sometimes the seed coat must be softened and this is done by soaking for 24 hrs. Make sure to not soak your seeds for an extended period of time or they will drown.

4. Containers

Seeds can be started in almost any type of container as long as it has drainage. The best containers are relatively shallow, about 2-3 "deep. Some plants are sensitive to transplanting and benefit from being direct seeded into cell packs. There are lots of seed starting supplies around in the spring time.

5. Soil

Soil mix is one of the most important components of successful seeding. Little seedlings are very sensitive and need light soil to germinate and grow. Two options are: seed starting mix or a soilless mix. The latter can also be used for transplanting once compost has been added to it.

Main ingredients of a light mix are: Peat Moss, Perlite and Vermiculite. No compost or top soil is needed at this point. The seeds have all the nutrition they need stored inside. Any soil or compost has organic matter and soil bacteria in it which can lead to fungal problems.

Common challenge with seedlings is damping off. Some plants are more sensitive to this than others. Make sure that you are using a sterile potting mix, clean containers and have only good quality soil. Place containers where they have good air circulation. Don't sow seeds too thickly and do not overwater either.

6. Light and Heat

Most seeds germinate in complete darkness but some need light. Check the back of the seed package for this information. It will specify the depth of planting. Once the seeds germinate they will need ample light. Pink-tinted fluorescent lighting is best suited for this. Using a timer allows us to control the length of time they need to be on. 12 hrs is sufficient.

Seeds germinate best at 18-24 C. Many perennials can tolerate lower temperatures. Placing a flat of seeds on the top of a fridge may be enough or you can purchase a heating pad available from garden-supply catalogs.

7. Watering

Soil mix should be wet prior to planting. Make sure that it is not 'sopping wet' as this might create mold problems. Cover the seed flat with a plastic dome, ceran wrap or clear plastic bag to keep the humidity in. Check your trays regularly to ensure that they don't dry out. Water from the bottom if possible or use a gentle shower watering can.

8. Seeding

Place about 1.5 " of soil in your container. Level and pack it, not too tight. Scatter seeds making sure they are not too crowded. Cover accordingly to the seed packet instructions. Label with name and date. Place it in a warm area and check daily. Once germinated, bring into light. Transplant once the second leaves have appeared. Make sure to use soil with compost in it at this point.

HAPPY GROWING!!

**Feel like you need help to get started?? or would like to garden in community.
Talk to us about joining the TABLE COMMUNITY GARDEN PROGRAM**

CONTACT joanna@thetablecfc.org or call 613 267 6428 x28.

Check our website for monthly garden workshops.



