

Home Gardener's Guide to Seed Planting



Planting seeds for your garden is an economic way to grow vegetables and flowers. Knowing when to start your seeds, and how to care for them is vital to making it a successful venture.

Getting Started

Knowing which seeds to start and when will help you succeed when planting your own seeds. Always keep in mind when you will be planting your plants outside, as you do not want your plants to become overgrown by planting seeds too early. Generally, seeds you will want to prestart indoors include but not limited to, tomato, pepper, eggplant, herbs, and many flower varieties.

If planning on planting your garden around May 15th, peppers seeds can be planted around March 5th or after. Planting tomatoes at the same time should lead to seed planting around March 15th, as well as eggplant. Herbs can be started mid March through mid April depending on the variety of herb. Flowers such as petunia should be planted in mid to late March, faster growing flowers like Marigolds can wait until early to mid April for mid May outdoor planting.



How to Plant and Care for Seedlings

Using the correct soil is vital in seed germination success. Seeds, especially smaller seeds will germinate better in a fine mix of peatmoss, perlite and vermiculite. *Fertilome Seedling and Cutting Mix* is a great formulation. Use smaller pots such as peat pots or plug trays to start seeds. Seedlings can then be transplanted into larger pots as the roots have expanded to fill the soil ball. Use the following instructions when planting seeds:

- Fill containers with soil mix and water so wet but not saturated.
- Bury the seed the appropriate depth. Many but not all seeds prefer darkness.
- Lightly water soil to settle soil and to assure soil is wet.

Place your seeds in either a window with at least 6 hours of sunlight or under a growing lamp. Temperature at the soil level should be 65-75 degrees. Continue to keep the soil moist through germination and beyond.

Fertilize your seedlings with a 1/4 formulation of 10-10-10 or 20-10-20 fertilizer when the first true leaves have developed. Gradually increase fertilizer rate as the plants continue to grow. A full dose should not be made until after transplanting. Continue to water so the roots do not dry out completely but do not saturate the soil until you are ready to transplant into a larger container.

When the plants' roots have grown enough to fill the soil area transplanting can occur to prepare the plant for planting outdoors. A week before planting outdoors, set your plants outdoors for increasing periods of time, starting with 1-2 hours to harden the plants off. This is a vital step for plants to be able to withstand outside conditions.

