

Starting Seeds

A guide to necessary supplies and steps for starting seeds



Recommended Supplies

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

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 soiless 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.

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!

- 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

Follow the link or scan the QR code for further information:

[CSU Extension - Growing Plants From Seed - 7.409](#)



Planting Times

March

Early March-Indoors from Seed

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 from Seed

Cauliflower
 Celery
 Endive
 Fuchsia
 Gaillardia
 Leeks
 Nicotiana
 Parsnips
 Peppers
 Petunias
 Portulaca
 Strofice
 Sweet Peas
 Tomatoes
 Tuberous Begonias

Late March – Indoors from Seed

Chives
 Lettuce
 Sage
 Turnips
 Calladiums
 Dahlias
 Dahlia seeds
 Callas
 Marigolds
 Swiss Chard
 Tuberous Begonias
 Zinnias

Mid to Late March – Outdoors

Asparagus roots
 Bareroot Strawberries
 Garlic
 Onion sets
 Pansies (SP)
 Peas (S)
 Potatoes
 Shallot sets

Late March – Outdoors

Protect all from heavy frost

Asparagus roots
 Bareroot Strawberries
 Garlic
 Hardy perennials
 Onion sets
 Pansies (SP)
 Peas
 Potatoes
 Shallot sets
 Tomatoes (*SP with Wall-o'-Water*)

April

Early April – Indoors from Seed/Bulbs

Beets
 Collards
 Eggplant
 New Zealand Spinach
 Other Annual Seeds
 Peppers

Spring Bulbs

Cannas
 Dahlias
 Iris
 Lilies

Mid-April – Indoors from Seed

Celery
 Endive
 Garlic
 Leeks
 Lima Beans

Early April – Outdoors

Asparagus roots
 Broccoli (SP)
 Carrots (S)
 Chinese Cabbage (SP)
 Garlic
 Kale (SP)
 Kohlrabi
 Lettuce (SP)
 Onion sets
 Pansies (SP)
 Parsley
 Peas (SP)
 Perennials
 Potatoes
 Radishes
 Sage (SP)
 Shallot sets
 Spinach (plants)
 Tomatoes (SP with Wall-O-Water)

Mid – Late April – Outdoors

Most can be started from either seed or starter plants.

Beets
 Broccoli
 Brussels Sprouts
 Cabbage
 Carrots
 Cauliflower
 Collards
 Endive
 Escarole
 Garlic
 Kale
 Kohlrabi
 Lettuce
 Onion sets
 Parsnips
 Parsnip
 Peas
 Perennials
 Potatoes
 Radishes
 Sage
 Shallot sets
 Spinach
 Tomatoes (*SP with Wall-o'-Water*)
 Turnips

S= Start these plants from seed

SP= Starter plants

May

Early May – Indoors from Seed

Corn
 Cucumber
 Mustard
 Pumpkin
 Snapbeans
 Squash

Early May – Outdoors from Seed or Plants

Beets
 Broccoli
 Brussels Sprouts
 Cabbage
 Carrots
 Cauliflower
 Collards
 Endive
 Escarole
 Garlic
 Kale
 Kohlrabi
 Lettuce
 Onion sets
 Parsnips
 Parsnip
 Peas
 Perennials
 Potatoes
 Radishes
 Sage
 Shallot sets
 Spinach
 Tomatoes (only with Wall-O-Water)
 Turnips

Mid-May – Outdoors from Seed or Plants

Most Annual Flowers
 Beets
 Broccoli
 Brussels Sprouts
 Cabbage
 Carrots
 Cauliflower
 Collards
 Chives
 Dill
 Endive
 Escarole
 Garlic
 Kale
 Kohlrabi
 Lemon Balm
 Lettuce
 Onion sets
 Oregano
 Parsnips
 Parsnip
 Peas
 Potatoes
 Potted Perennials
 Radishes
 Rosemary
 Sage
 Shallot sets
 Snapbeans
 Spinach
 Thyme
 Tomatoes (SP protected)

Spring Bulbs

Cannas
 Dahlias
 Iris
 Lilies

Late May – Outdoors from Seed or Plants

Basil
 Corn
 Cucumber
 Lima Beans
 Peppers
 Pumpkin
 Squash
 Tomatoes (SP)