Since 1943
The Gardener's Resource

PRIMEX

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HOW TO SUCCEED AT SEED-STARTING

Seedlings can be purchased, of course, but for many reasons you may wish to start your own plants. By starting your own seeds, you have a much greater selection of flowers, vegetables and herbs to choose from. Old favorites like hollyhocks and less common varieties of herbs and perennials might not be available as plants.

We offer a huge selection of seeds including many hard-to-find Heirloom varieties. Plants with fine seeds should also be started indoors because they can easily wash away in the rain and they may have a difficult time competing with weeds.

CONTAINERS

Traditionally, seeds are started in flats or peat pots. At Primex, we carry various sizes of plastic trays, cedar flats, peat pots and the popular ***Jiffy-7,*** a peat-moss wafer. When moistened, the ***Jiffy-7*** expands to form a small, self-contained pot of soil into which a seed is sown directly.

SOIL

It is best to use a light, soiless mix like ***Country Cottage Seed Starter*** or ***Promix***. These mixes are sterile and contain adequate nutrients to carry seedlings through until it's time for transplanting.

Do not use garden soil, as seeds will not germinate well in the heavy soil, and a fungus disease (damping off) is common.

TEMPERATURE

Most seeds require warm soil in order to germinate. You will need to heat the soil of the seedling flats with a heat mat, heat tray or heating cable. Seed trays can also be placed on top of the refrigerator or hot water heater.

Do not put seed-starting trays on a windowsill. Night-time temperatures are too cool to allow for good germination. Seeds need consistent warm temperatures of 75 degrees or warmer for optimum germination.

MOISTURE

Seeds need to be kept constantly moist in order to germinate. Moisten the soil thoroughly before planting. Water when the surface is dry with a ***Centrospray*** water sprinkler, Foggit superfine nozzle or plastic spray bottle until the soil is saturated. The medium should be constantly moist, but not soggy. It is important not to overwater, but also not to permit the flat to dry out.

SOWING YOUR SEEDS

Seeds should be sown 2 to 10 weeks before the last spring frost date, May 15.

Fill your containers almost to the top with a moist growing medium. Tamp it down gently and smooth it out. Gently press the seeds into the medium or simply set them on the surface of the soil and place milled sphagnum moss over the top to prevent damping-off.

Cover the container loosely with plastic wrap or a clear dome. Be sure to label your containers with plastic or wood plant stakes and write the plant name and the date sowed. Set trays in a warm spot and check daily to keep evenly moist.

CARING FOR YOUR SEEDLINGS

Once seedlings have grown a half-inch or so, you should water less frequently. Let the soil dry slightly between waterings.

Seedlings will also need light and the best method is to use fluorescent fixtures. Suspend lights just an inch or two above the plants. Lights must be on at least 16 to 18 hours a day.

As your seedlings grow, raise the lights accordingly. If your seedlings do not get enough light, they will become weak and spindly. Fertilize with half-strength ***Miracle Gro***, ***Jack's Classic 20-20-20***, or use a liquid fertilizer such as ***Neptune's Harvest Fish Fertilizer 2-4-1***.

Thin seedlings if they become overcrowded.

HARDENING OFF & PLANTING OUT

When the weather is warm, move your seed trays outside gradually over a five to seven day period. Start by putting out for a few hours, then gradually increase until they are left out all day and night. Keep them in a lightly shaded, protected spot.

After you have "hardened off" your seedlings, gently transplant into the garden. Try not to handle the root ball too much, as they are quite fragile. Water thoroughly after transplanting and again every day for about a week. Newly set-out plants will look sparse at first, but they will grow and fill in quickly! ■

Seed Planting Temperatures

Seed	(ideal / minimum)	
Basil	70°	
Bean	80°	
Beet	85°	50°
Cabbage	85°	45°
Carrot	80°	45°
Cauliflower	80°	45°
Celery	70° *(not over 85°)*	60°
Swiss Chard	85°	50°

Seed	(ideal / minimum)	
Chives	70°	60°
Corn	85°	60°
Cucumber	95°	60°
Eggplant	85°	75°
Lettuce	75°	40°
Melon	90°	75°
Onion	75°	50°
Parsley	75°	50°

Seed	(ideal / minimum)	
Pea	75°	40°
Potato	75°	45°
Pumpkin	95°	70°
Radish	85°	45°
Spinach	70°	45°
Squash	95°	70°
Tomato	85	60°
Watermelon	95	70°

Seeds That Require Special Treatment

Seed	Treatment
Annual Phlox	cool/resent transplant/sow early
Asparagus	soak
Baby's Breath	sew early
Bachelor's Button	sew early/dark
Balloon Flower	light
Beet, Swiss Chard	sow early
Begonia	light
Bells of Ireland	sow early/light/cool
Borage	dark/resent transplant/sow early
Broccoli, Brussel Sprouts, Cabbage, Cauliflower, Chinese Cabbage, Collards, Kale, Kohlrabi, Mustard, Turnip	sow all early
Carrot	sow early, resent transplant
Coleus	light
Corn	resent transplant
Dill	sow early/resent transplant/light
Flowering Tobacco (Nicotiana)	light
Forget-Me-Not	dark

Seed	Treatment
Impatiens	light
Larkspur	dark/sow early
Lettuce	sow early/light
Lupine	resent transplant/soak/scarcify
Maltese Cross	light
Morning Glory	soak/scarcify
Nasturtium	resent transplant/dark
Onion	sow early
Pea	sow early/resent transplant
Petunia	light
Phlox	dark
Poppy	resent transplant/cool
Primrose	light
Radish	resent transplant/sow early
Shasta Daisy	light
Snapdragon	light
Spinach	resent transplant/sow early
Sweet Pea	cool/soak/dark
Viola	stratify/dark

KEY:

Light = *need light to germinate*

Dark = *need darkness to germinate*

Soak = *require soaking before sowing*

Scarify = *require scarification (nicking or filing) before sowing*

Cool = *need cool temperatures (55°) to germinate.*