

Seed Starting

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DIY?



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No! GIY!



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Why Start Your Own Seeds?

Indoors:

- Lengthens the growing season by having your plants ready to plant out as soon as they can thrive
- Takes advantage of specialty varieties not available as plants
- Saves \$\$\$\$
- Save your own seeds, then replant next year for a sustainable cycle
- Share seeds with other gardeners
- Sheer joy of creating plants from nothing!

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Choose Carefully!

Most of us run out of room so choose to start those plants that benefit most from a head start:

-Tomatoes

-Eggplant

-Peppers

-Parsley

-Basil

-Some plants require direct sowing – most root vegetables such as carrots fall into this category

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Gather Your Supplies: Containers

You can start seeds in any container that will hold soil and drain. If you recycle, use a 10% bleach solution to sterilize, to avoid damping off.

Purchased trays can help save space where space is limited and usually fit nicely onto a seed heating mat.



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Gather Your Supplies: Seed Starting Mix

Commercial or Not?

You can make your own, but it must be sterilized in the oven which does not smell good!

Most gardeners use purchased seed starting mix. You don't need a lot of seed starting mix so its worth the few dollars

Seeds need a well draining medium. Do not use regular potting soil or garden soil to start seeds indoors.

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Plant your seed!

Put your seed starting mix into your containers, firm gently.

Water so the mix is damp but not sopping wet.

Now plant your seeds according to the label – smaller seeds are generally planted shallowly or scattered on the surface. Larger seeds are generally planted as deep as they are big

Label!

Place in a warm spot (on top of refrigerator, water heater, near woodstove, or on a seed mat.

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Caring for your Seeds

Bottom watering is preferable. If not possible, use a very fine spray and water at least twice a day

Usually covering the trays with newspaper will help germination. Be sure to check daily and remove paper when the seeds first appear.

Ensure that the seeds have adequate light once they germinate. In the PNW, lights are usually needed. If you use a grow light, start it two inches above the flat and raise as the plants grow.

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Transplanting

After the first true leaves appear, you can transplant them into a bigger container. Use new potting soil. You can use recycled 2 or 4 inch pots, but sterilize them with 10% bleach solution.

Carefully prick out the seedling using a knife. Try to avoid disturbing the roots as much as possible. Place into the new pot and gently firm the soil. Water well to settle in the seedling.

Ensure that the seedlings have adequate light once they germinate. In the PNW, lights are usually needed for 13-16 hours a day. If you use a grow light, start it two to four inches above the flat and raise as the plants grow.

Water gently every day, preferably from the bottom.

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Fertilizer

Don't fertilize your seedlings at first. Most potting soils have sufficient reserves for about two weeks.

After that, use a half strength solution of fertilizer every two weeks.



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Hardening Off

This is the most important part of seed starting, and the one that can cause the most problems.

Imagine you have been inside by the fire and are suddenly thrown out in the snow without a coat or boots... You wouldn't be too happy, right?

So do your seedlings a favor and harden them off! Its simple: A week or two before its time to plant out into the garden, set your seedlings outside in a sheltered area for a few hours a day, increasing to all day at the end of the week. The second week, leave them out all night, but cover if a frost is forecast.

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Planting Out

Pick a cloudy and cool day if possible. Full sun may shock your seedlings. If sun is your only option, cover your seedlings with a basket or fabric row cover.

Plant only into a prepared growing bed, not into unprepared ground. Be sure the ground is sufficiently warm and well drained. Use a soil thermometer if needed.

Dig a hole, place your plant at the same level as it is in the pot, and gently ease out the roots if needed. Then replace the garden soil gently around the plant, avoiding air pockets and water gently.

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Helpful Links



Photo by
Erin
Hicks of
Woodward
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Farm

[Australasian College of Health Sciences www.achs.edu](http://www.achs.edu)

[Apothecary Shoppe www.apothecary.shoppe.com](http://www.apothecary.shoppe.com)

[Erin's blog
http://confessionsofmastergardener.blogspot.com/](http://confessionsofmastergardener.blogspot.com/)

[Oregon Master Gardener Program http://
extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/](http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/)

Find the last frost date in your area and estimated times to
plant based on your Zip Code from the Farmer's Almanac

[http://www.almanac.com/garden/plantingtable/
index.php](http://www.almanac.com/garden/plantingtable/index.php)

Master Gardener Hotline for any questions: 503 725 2300

Metro Events (including Gardens of Natural Delights):

[http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by/web/
id-576](http://www.oregonmetro.gov/index.cfm/go/by/web/id-576)

Tour De Coops:

[http://growing-gardens.org/portland-gardening-resources/
chickens.php](http://growing-gardens.org/portland-gardening-resources/chickens.php)

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Don't overlook "volunteers" – self seeding plants in your garden
and free and require next to no work! Here are self seeded
yarrow plants in the ACHS garden.



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