

Tips for Growing Plants from Seeds



CHOOSE YOUR SEEDLING MIX

It should hold moisture, be free draining and have good air flow.

CHOOSE YOUR CONTAINER

If you are using recycled pots or trays, give it a good wash to remove possible weed seeds. Peat pots, toilet rolls and pots made from newspaper make excellent biodegradable pots and allow you to plant the seedling in its pot straight into the ground when ready. These biodegradable pots work well for seeds that do not transplant well and are best sown directly in garden beds, such as legumes (peas and beans) and root vegetables (e.g. carrots, onions, beetroot). You simply sow one seed into each biodegradable pot, then when it is time to plant out, plant the whole thing into the patch.

FILL THE CONTAINER AND GENTLY WATER

ADD SEEDS

The general guide is to bury the seed to twice its size. Fine seed should be sprinkled lightly on the soil, or on the surface of the seedling mix, with a fine layer of soil or seed raising mix to cover. Pre-soaking seeds speeds up germination and checks seed viability. Some sources recommend soaking seeds in water for a couple of hours before planting, while others recommend overnight soaking. Large seeds, such as beans, peas and zucchini seeds, benefit from soaking them in water or on moist kitchen paper for several days before planting.

MULCH

Vermiculite is ideal and is a super-heated expanded clay that lets the light through and helps keep the seeds from drying out while they germinate. If planting straight into the patch, be careful not to mulch too thickly as newly sown seeds may not be able to penetrate. In some cases a 'scatter mulch', eg fine straw, can be used to help retain soil surface moisture. A down side with any mulch is that it provides shelter for pests such as earwigs and millipedes.

KEEP THEM IN A WARM, SHELTERED POSITION, AWAY FROM FROST

KEEP THEM MOIST

GERMINATION PERIOD

Seeds generally germinate between 7 and 21 days after sowing. The first two leaves of the seedling that appear are called cotyledons. They are often different in appearance from the subsequent 'true' leaves. When the true leaves appear it is an indication that the seed has successfully germinated.

THINNING AND PRICKING OUT

'Pricking out' means to gently move the new seedling into a larger pot, using a pencil or chopstick to lever the seedlings from below. Once the first set of true leaves appear you can thin out to the strongest plant and/or prick out the seedlings to larger pots.

TRANSPLANTING SEEDS

Once the seedlings are about 15cm tall they are ready to be planted out into the patch at the recommended planting spacing. Take care not to damage the roots and water in gently after transplanting with a diluted seaweed emulsion.

PROTECTING YOUNG SEEDLINGS

Earwigs, millipedes, slaters, slugs and snails love young seedlings. Some tricks to deter them include; sprinkling coffee grounds or dried and crushed eggs shells around your seedlings, or using a physical barrier like recycled plastic bottles or old pots. Traps also work well, such as a beer or oil traps, or a roll of old newspaper, where the insects will harbour over night for you to dispose of in the morning.

INFORMATION SOURCED THROUGH:

<https://www.abc.net.au/gardening/> and www.sgaonline.org.au

