Yoderbilt
EST GREENHOUSES 2011

How to Start Seeds

INDOORS



Starting seeds indoors opens a whole new world for backyard gardening. You save time and money while discovering new varieties of your favorite plants. Growing seeds indoors is also an incredible way to give your garden a tremendous jump start on the season, equating to about a six to eight-week extension of your growing season.

Benefits of Starting Seeds Indoors

There are numerous benefits to starting seeds indoors. Not only does it save you money, but it gives you the freedom to experiment and allows for a jumpstart on the growing season.

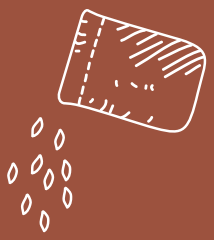
The best thing about growing your seeds indoors is that the more you grow, the more you learn, and the more comfortable you become with pushing the limits in your garden—making changes that best suit what you want your desired outcome to be.

With that said, let's get started!

WHAT YOU NEED



Potting soil



Seed Starting Mix

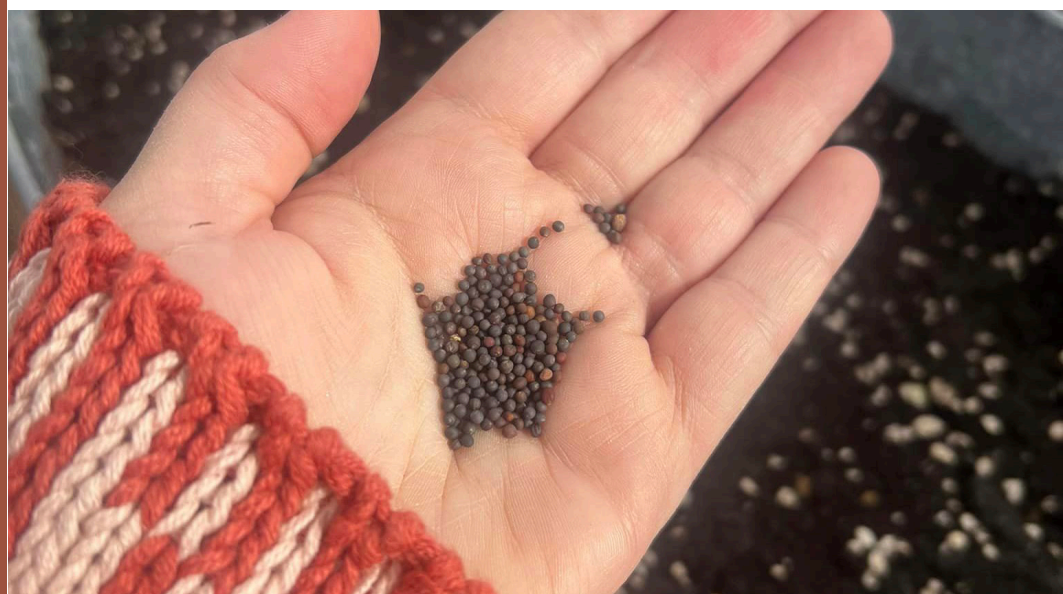


Containers

TIP

Make sure the soil you're getting is potting, not gardening soil. Though similar, they have different applications. Gardening soil is a blend of topsoil and organic matter meant to be mixed with native soil, while potting soil is used alone for container gardens like potted plants. Better yet, and ideally, when starting seeds the optimal soil media will be a seed starting mix. It is specifically designed to allow the seeds to root easily as it is lightweight and allows for good water drainage.

If you don't have seed trays, pots or planters on hand, no worries! Use what you have and get creative. Think recycled nursery containers, bottom trays, egg cartons, red plastic cups, etc. These containers don't have to be anything fancy! But, they do need to have good drainage holes even if you have to add them yourself.



STARTING YOUR SEEDS

1

Determine your Last Frost Date

Following the instructions on your seed packet, you'll also want to determine your last frost date. A common mistake we see from customers is getting overly excited and planting all of their seeds without knowing that crucial bit of information.

The last frost date guides you on when it's safest to plant, or transplant your seedlings.
You can determine what your last frost date is by visiting The Old Farmer's Almanac or other online resources for your specific zone. Take your last frost date and count the weeks back to start planting in accordance with your seed packet.

2

Add Water Into Your Seed Starting Mix

You'll want to add water into your seed starting mix until it's thoroughly wet but not dripping. A good example is the consistency of crumbly brownie mix.

3

Fill Your Container to the Top with Soil

Before you fill your containers, ensure that each container has drain holes. Fill your container to the top with soil, and pack the soil down lightly, ensuring there are no air pockets.

4

Make Holes in Each Cell Using Your Fingers or a Pencil

Place 1-2 seeds into each cell packet or hole/indentation. Don't plant your seeds too deeply, as they will need light to germinate well. Follow the depth the seed packet recommends. This is a recommendation I follow closely.

> A general rule is to plant the seed to a depth twice its size in width.

5

Cover the Planter Lightly with Vermiculite

Make sure all seeds are covered per seed packet instructions. Label the tray with the plant name and date. You can use a seed starter mix to cover as instructed, I tend to use a fine vermiculite as it carries other beneficial properties such as assistance with the avoidance of mold or seedlings damping off.

6

Set Your Planter Into a Tray With 1-2 inches of Water

Watch until the seed trays or plants are moist at the top, draining off any excess water. Refrain from watering overhead until the plants have their first set of true leaves. It doesn't take much water force to knock the seeds out of place. I also use a rechargeable automatic hand-held mister that sprays the perfect amount to keep them moist while keeping them in place. When you have as many seed trays as I do from late winter to early spring, this can be a tremendous help.

7

Keep Your Plants Warm

Aim to keep your plants at an average of 70-80 degrees consistently for optimal growth. Cover trays with plastic dome lids or plastic wrap and set them on a 70-degree heat mat, or in a warm area that stays above 65 degrees.

8

Check Trays Once a Day

Once at least half of the seedlings sprout, remove the plastic dome lids or plastic wrap and move the seedlings from the heat mat into a well-lit area.

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TRANSPLANTING THE SEEDLINGS

Before you transplant your seedlings into your garden, you'll want to begin the hardening off process. For most plants, you'll want to start the process 7-10 days before the final frost date of your area.

What is Hardening Off?

Hardening off is the process of transitioning a plant from an indoor or greenhouse environment to harsher outdoor conditions. move them out.

How-To

Place your seedlings outdoors under a covered area for two to three hours a day, returning them back into their indoor space after that time. You'll want to repeat this process for 1-2 weeks.

Over this period, you'll want to increase the sunlight your plants receive little by little, getting them to a point where they can spend the entire day outside.

Tips & Tricks

- Keep your seedlings indoors on days where the weather is too harsh, such as days with hard wind, heavy rain, and extreme heat.
- As you gradually increase the exposure to sunlight, you'll want to decrease the amount of water they're given, but make sure the seeds don't wilt.
- Once you increase the exposure to sunlight, you'll want to gradually increase exposure to colder conditions. Refer to your seed packet to know what weather conditions your seeds can tolerate, this will determine at what degree you begin hardening them off.
- Running a fan daily and keeping your windows open on weather-appropriate days in your Yoderbilt Greenhouse will also help with the hardening off process.



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