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EST GREENHOUSES 2011

Soil Blocking

THE GREENHOUSE GARDENER'S SECRET TO SUCCESS

Discover how soil blocking is transforming the way gardeners, especially greenhouse growers, cultivate their plants. This innovative method involves shaping your soil into blocks and planting seeds directly inside. Learn about the numerous benefits for both your plants and your gardening experience. We'll delve into the science behind soil blocking, the materials you'll need, and some potential considerations.

Let's get started!

THE BENEFITS OF SOIL BLOCKING

Space Saving

One of the primary reasons I love soil blocking in my greenhouse is the space efficiency it provides. Unlike traditional seed trays, soil blocks can be packed closely together, making the most of every inch of your growing space.

Enhanced Plant Health

Soil blocks promote healthier root systems. Without the constraints of a pot, roots can grow naturally, leading to stronger, more resilient plants.

Air Pruning

The roots of seedlings grown in soil blocks are naturally pruned by exposure to air, preventing them from becoming root-bound and promoting a dense, fibrous root system.

Reduced Transplant Shock

When transplanting seedlings grown in soil blocks, there's less disruption to their roots. This minimizes transplant shock and encourages quicker establishment in the garden.

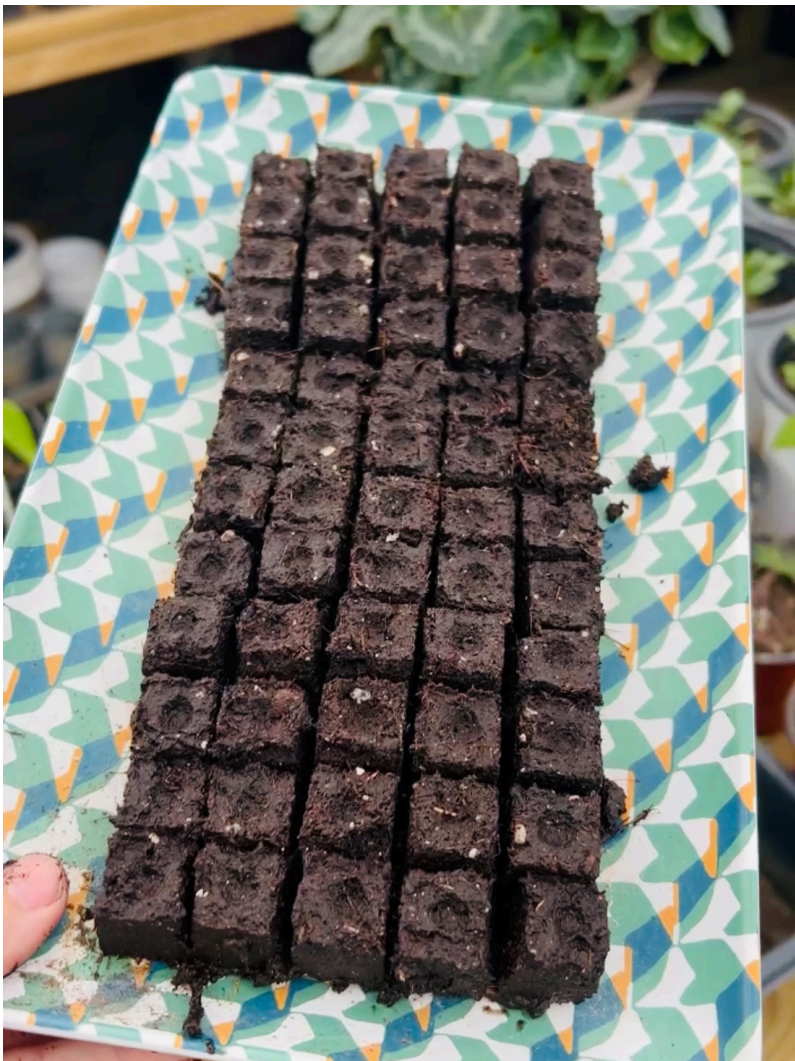
Eco-Friendly

Soil blocking eliminates the need for plastic pots, making it an environmentally friendly option. I love this one!

The Science Behind Soil Blocking

The key to soil blocking's effectiveness lies in its structure. Soil blocks are made from a mixture of soil, compost, and other organic materials, forming a dense, cohesive block. This structure supports the seedling while allowing air to prune the roots. The air pruning process stops roots from encircling the block, encouraging the development of a healthy, fibrous root system.

When roots reach the edge of the block, they are exposed to air, which causes them to naturally stop growing and branch out within the block. This results in a dense root network that is ready to expand when transplanted into the garden soil.





A Step-by-Step Guide to Soil Blocking

Materials needed:

> **Soil Blockers:** These tools come in various sizes to accommodate different plants.
>
> **Seed Starting Mix:** A high-quality, fine-textured mix is ideal.
>
> **Water:** To moisten the soil to the right consistency.
>
> **Seeds:** Choose the seeds you want to start.
>
> **Trays:** To hold and transport the soil blocks.

Step 1: Prepare the Soil

Moisten the seed starting mix until it reaches the consistency of soft putty. Squeeze the mixture to ensure moisture seeps out between your fingers.

Step 2: Fill the Soil Blocker

Press the soil mixture into the soil blocker, ensuring it's firmly packed but not overly compressed.

Step 3: Plant the Seeds

Carefully insert the seeds into the prepared soil blocks, following the recommended planting depth for each type of seed.

Step 4: Water Gently

Lightly water the soil blocks to ensure the seeds are adequately moistened.

Step 5: Place in a Warm, Humid Environment

Place the soil blocks in a warm, humid location, such as a greenhouse or a sunny windowsill.

Step 6: Monitor Germination

Keep an eye on the soil blocks for signs of germination. Once seedlings emerge, provide adequate light and water.

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Tips for Success

Practice makes perfect

Soil blocking may take some practice to master, so don't get discouraged if your first attempts aren't perfect.

Experiment with different sizes

Try different soil blocker sizes to find the best fit for your plants.

Label your blocks

Label each soil block with the type of seed planted and the date to keep track of your progress.

Want to take your gardening to the next level? Soil blocking is a fantastic technique that promotes healthy plant growth, saves space, and supports sustainable practices. While it may take a bit of practice, the rewards are well worth the effort. Give it a try and see why I'm hooked!

–Shannon

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