

Starting Seeds

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Timing

Timing is critical in producing good, healthy transplants. If they are started too early the plants will be stretched and weak. When to start depends on:

1. Your growing environment
2. Germination set up
3. The particular plant
4. The time that they will be planted out into the garden
“take this date and count backwards”

Growing environment

1. Fluorescent lights
Plants can only grow for a certain amount of time under these
They will begin to stretch (etiolate)
Limited amount of foot-candles
2. Window sill

Germination set up

1. Fluorescent lights
Probably the best setup
2 or 4, four foot 40 watt bulbs
Expensive grow bulbs are not needed, use cool white
The temperature can be kept constant
Usually the heat from the lights is sufficient
16-24 hours a day
A timer helps automate the process
2. Window sill
Hard to control temperature
Can get very hot or very cold
Inconsistent
3. Top of refrigerator

Temperature

A good average temperature for most seeds is 68-70 degrees

Humidity

The container or flat should be put in a plastic bag
Domes can be purchased for flats

Growing media

1. A soil mix
The soil should be sterilized
Soil should be mixed with peat moss and vermiculite (1:1:1)

2. Soil less mix
These are superior to mixes with soil
Redi earth, Jiffy Mix, straight vermiculite (fine grade)

Seeding

1. Direct seeded into final container
2. Seeded into a community container and later transplanted
3. Seeded into a rottable container such as Peat pots, Jiffy 7's
This works best for plants like cucs, pumpkins, melons, zinnia,
nasturiums,etc.
4. Cover the seeds with one layer of fine vermiculite

Moisture

The seeding media should be kept moist at all times

Fertilizer

In the beginning, the plants live off of the stored food in the cotyledons
No fertilizer is needed until they fall off
Use a weak mix in the beginning (1/2 strength)

Transplanting

1. Most plants are safe to transplant when they have there first set of true leaves
2. Don't confuse the cotyledons with first leaves

Hardening off

It is best to subject the seedlings to outdoor conditions before
transplanting them into the garden
This can be accomplished by placing them outdoors during the day in a
cold frame or sheltered spot out of wind

Seed dormancy

See attached sheet