

# Success with Seeds

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# Advantages of starting your own

- Access to 100's of unique varieties
- Not limited by what is available locally
- The joy of seeing them start as seeds
- Most challenging yet rewarding



# What you need: Light

- Sources
  - Natural direct sunlight
    - South-facing window if possible
  - Grow light (*strongly* recommended)
    - Buy or build your own
    - Bulb types: fluorescent, HID, LED
    - Automate with timer



# What you need: Water

- Use lukewarm/room temperature water
  - Store in water jugs
- Water with
  - Small watering can
  - Hand-held sprayer (get a good quality one)



# What you need: Soil

- “Soilless” medium
  - Purchase
    - Seed starting mix
    - Potting soil
  - Mix your own
    - Peat moss or coir
    - Perlite
    - Vermiculite
    - Compost



# What you need: Other

- Flats/trays (with inserts)
- Containers
  - Jiffy® pots
  - CowPots™
  - Plastic cups\*
  - Yogurt cups\*

\*Must have drain holes





# What you need: Other

- Small hand cultivator or trowel
- Labels (wood, plastic, etc.)
- Pen or marker
- Colander (or other screen)
- Towels



# What you need: Records

- Record dates or tasks
  - Calendar
  - Notebook
  - Smart phone apps
- Helpful next year
- Garden tracking websites
  - MyFolia.com
  - Zukeeni.com
- Old seed packets



# What you need: Seeds

- Keep at room temperature or cooler
- Check expiration date
  - Last year - OK
  - Two years or more - ?



# Seed viability test [Demo]

- You will need
  - Gallon-size plastic bag
  - Seeds
  - Paper towel
  - Spray bottle
  - Pen or marker
- Moisten seeds in paper towel
- Put in dark location
- Check in 5-7 days



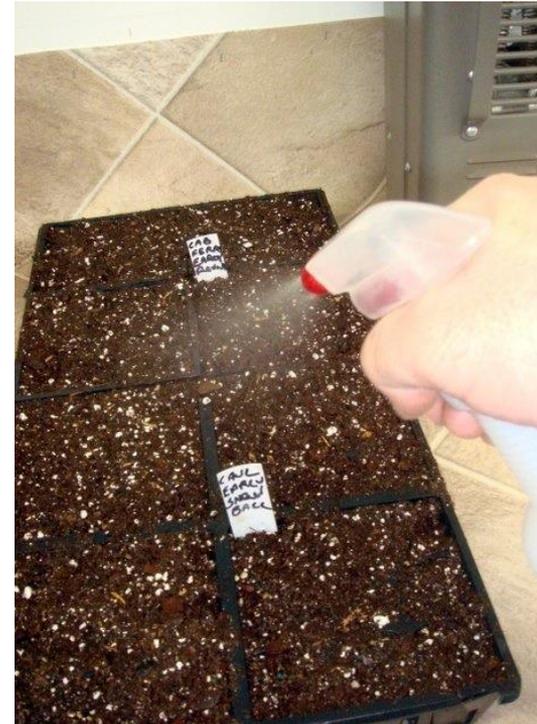
# Planting seeds *[Demo]*

- Same plants, same tray
- More than one seed per cell – plant in corners
- Correct depth
- Use tray bottom to flatten soil
- Use empty pens to make holes



# Watering seeds [Demo]

- When planting seeds
  - By wetting planting medium (“moist cake” consistency)
- After seeds are planted
  - Spraying or misting (stop after seeds have germinated)
  - From the top (watering can)
  - From the bottom up using a tray or pan (wicking via capillary action)



# Watering tips *[Demos]*

- Spray or mist surface first to break surface tension (before seeds germinate)
- Add potting soil or compost to seed starting mix to increase drainage
- Use craft sticks as “moisture meters”
- Let seed starting mix dry between waterings (mostly)
- DO NOT OVERWATER!





# “Leggy” Seedlings

- Prevent or minimize by:
  - When using grow lights:
    - Position close to seedlings as possible
    - Leave on at least 12-14 hours
    - Use foil to help reflect light
  - Reduce heat after germination
  - Strengthen seedling stems with fan, hairdryer or by brushing with hands



# Feeding

- After seeds germinate
  - Root stimulator (optional)
- When seedlings have two sets of “true leaves”
  - Fish emulsion or seaweed
  - Compost tea
  - Worm tea
  - Other organic fertilizer



Thank you!

Encore!  
Encore!

# Transition to outdoors

- Seedlings have “had it easy” so far
- Time to “toughen ‘em up”!
- “Hardening off” is the process of acclimating plants to outdoor conditions



# Transition to outdoors

- Harden off your transplants by:
  - (Inside) Simulating wind with a fan, hairdryer or brushing with hands
  - (Outside) Gradually expose them to sunlight and outdoor temperatures



# Transition schedule

- Day 1:
  - NO direct sun exposure
  - Protect from all wind if possible
  - Bring inside overnight
- Day 2:
  - Direct sun for only 1-2 hours
  - Watch very carefully
  - Moderate wind protection
  - Leave in garage or cooler location overnight

# Transition schedule

- Day 3:
  - Direct sun for 4-6 hours
  - No wind protection
  - Leave outside overnight unless there is a frost/freeze threat
- Days 4 & 5 (if possible):
  - Direct sun for 6-8 hours
  - No wind protection
  - Leave outside overnight unless there is a frost/freeze threat

## Misc. Tips *[Demos]*

- Use permanent marker on plant labels
- Watering wand with removable head
- Quick Connect Kit
- Cutworm protection
  - Toilet paper/paper towel rolls
  - Coffee sleeves
  - Chopstick, nail, etc.
- Metal blind labels

