



Success With Seeds

*C.L. Fornari for Sunday Seminars @
Hyannis Country Garden*

- Read seed packets to learn what special requirements your particular seeds have and when to start them.

Indoors

- Use fresh seed-starting mix or potting soil, *not* garden dirt. Use clean containers with drainage holes. The earlier you start the seeds, the larger your containers should be, otherwise you'll need to transplant frequently.
- Don't start seeds in pure compost...usually too heavy.
- Don't start seeds in eggshells...there isn't enough space for roots to grow!
- Get the mix damp to wet *before* you fill the containers. (A large bowl or plastic bin is good for this. You'll need to stir the potting mix with your hands to break surface tension.) If you fill the pots with dry mix it will be hard to water because the peat's surface tension repels H₂O.
- Fill pots or flats with damp soil but don't push it in too firmly – air spaces are needed! Better to settle soil by watering lightly instead of pushing hard.
- The smaller the seed, the more likely you'll just need to put it on top of the soil/seed mix. Again, the package will guide you about how much to cover the seeds.
- Cover indoor flats etc. with plastic wrap or recycled dry cleaner bags to keep seeds moist while germinating.
- Leave where the seeds are exposed to light unless instructed to start particular seeds in darkness. Most seeds germinate better when exposed to light.
- Remove plastic wrap once seeds start to germinate.
- Don't overwater – if you start seeing a green algae grow over the top of your seed-mix, you're keeping it too wet or you've fertilized too much.

- Once seedlings start growing, provide ventilation with a fan. Provide strong light close to the plants. Have an oscillating fan on a timer, 2 hours in AM and again PM.
- Thin plants as needed. Transplant some to other pots, or pull some seedlings out! One seedling per pot.

Outdoors

- Most seeds don't germinate well in cold soil. Don't plant too early on Cape Cod.
- Plant outdoors according to directions.
- Sift the soil over the seeds? Not really necessary.
- Don't let your seed-rows dry up while they are germinating.
- Slugs and Earwigs *love* new seedlings...dust rows with Diatomaceous Earth when seedlings first appear. (If you have these pests, repeat after a rain or every 4 days until plants get a third set of leaves.)
- Don't hesitate to thin plants out.

In general, don't start seeds too early; don't let them wilt but don't keep constantly wet either; don't over-fertilize. Timing for starting seeds indoors and outside on Cape Cod: https://bit.ly/seeds_cape_cod

Seeds to start indoors:

Vegetables: Peppers, tomatoes, eggplant, broccoli, kale, onions, most herbs.

Flowers: Marigolds, zinnias, etc annuals, and most perennials.

Seeds to put right in the soil outdoors:

Vegetables: Lettuce, beans, carrots and other root crops, peas, leeks, squash, cucumbers, chard, coriander.

Flowers: All poppies, alyssum, nasturtiums, sunflowers, maybe Zinnias.

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