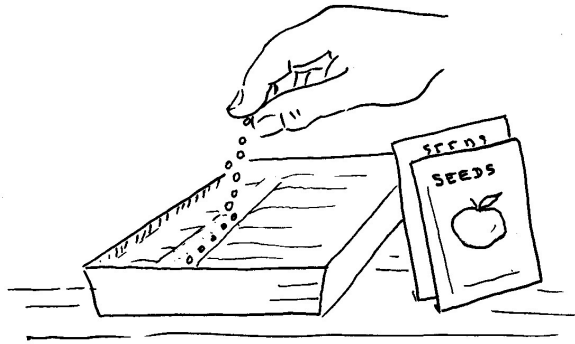


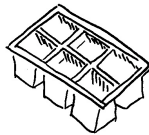
STARTING SEEDS INDOORS



Starting seeds indoors gives a head start on the gardening season and opens the door to growing endless varieties. It's a fun way to kick off the gardening season!

What You Will Need

- **Seeds** of your favorite vegetables or flowers
- **Containers**
- **Potting mix** or peat pellets
- **Spray bottle of water**
- **Sunny window or fluorescent lights**



When do I start seeds indoors?

It varies according to the crop and the date of the last frost in your area. In many areas of Massachusetts, the last frost date is usually around May 15th. **Count the number of weeks back from the date you plan to transplant seedlings into the garden** to pinpoint when to start seeds indoors. For example:

- 7 - 9 weeks: eggplant
- 6 - 8 weeks: onions, peppers, tomatoes
- 4 - 7 weeks: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower
- 3 - 5 weeks: lettuce
- 2 - 3 weeks: cucumbers, squash, melons



In general, plan to sow seeds of peas, beans, corn, mesclun mix, root crops, and spinach directly into the garden. Read the back of the seed packet for timing instructions.

Containers

Seeds can be started in most any kind of container: trays, flats, paper cups, pots, peat pots, compressed peat pellets or cut-off milk cartons. **Clean and sanitize previously used trays or pots** in a 10% bleach solution (1 part bleach to 9 parts water) before use; **rinse well.**

Growing Mix

Use a **soil-less potting mix** for seeding. Soil-less mixes contain peat moss, vermiculite, perlite (or similar ingredients) and a wetting agent (to hold water). **Avoid using garden soil** to prevent waterlogged soil, weeds, insects, and diseases.

Seeds need a warm, moist environment to germinate.

Plant seeds in 5 easy steps.

1. **Moisten potting soil before planting.** Put potting mix in a bucket and add water. Mix it up with your hands or a trowel. Moisten evenly, until just damp - **like a squeezed-out sponge.**
2. **Fill the containers loosely with the mix;** level with the top edge. **Do not pack down!**
3. Plant **large seeds**, such as cucumber or melon, **directly into individual containers** in which they will grow until transplanted. Press 2 - 3 seeds 1/4" inch deep in the potting mix and cover gently with the same potting mix.
4. **Small seeds**, such as lettuce and peppers, can either be **seeded in rows** and later transplanted to individual containers, **or directly seeded into individual containers.** Small seeds require less cover and some require no cover at all. Read the sowing instructions on the back of the seed packet.
5. **Water lightly with warm water.** A spray bottle will moisten newly planted seeds without disturbing them.



To Keep Seeds Moist

Mist them each day. Place the seeded container in a plastic bag, **or** lay plastic wrap over the top of the pots, **or** use an indoor seed starting kit with a clear plastic lid. **A plastic cover acts like a mini greenhouse.** Each day, lift the cover or open the bag to check seeds closely. **Remove the cover to vent if it is dripping water.**

Place the newly seeded containers in a **warm spot (70° -75° F) until the seeds sprout.**



www.mass.gov/agr/
www.massflowergrowers.com/
www.extension.umass.edu/landscape/