

STARTING SEEDS IN CONTAINERS

OPTION A

A Garden in a Box
Workshop
hosted by
Greater Park Hill
Community, Inc
in conjunction with
the City and County
of Denver's
Sustainable
Neighborhoods Pilot
Grant



Starting seeds

- Fill clean containers with seedling mix. Use soilless peat moss and mix in equal parts vermiculite and perlite to hold enough water and allow oxygen to flow. Don't use potting soil.
- Pour soilless mix into a large bucket and moisten with warm water. Fill your containers to just below the rim.
- Plant your seeds according to your seed packet. Most seeds can simply be gently pressed into the mixture; you can use the eraser end of a pencil to push in seeds. When planting seeds, plant the largest seeds in the package to get the best germination rate.
- Cover containers with plastic. Prick holes with a toothpick for ventilation. Water as directed.

Watering and transplanting seeds

- Water newly started seedlings carefully. A pitcher may let the water out too forcefully. A mist sprayer is gentle but can take a long time. Try using a meat-basting syringe, which will dispense the water effectively without causing too much soil disruption
- Find a place in the kitchen where there is natural bottom heat—on top of the refrigerator or near the oven. (Move the tray if the oven is on, as it may become too hot.)
- Seeds sprout best at temperatures of 65 to 75°F (18 to 24°C).
- When seedlings appear, remove the plastic and move containers into bright light.
- When the seedlings get their second pair of leaves, prepare individual pots filled with a potting mix with plenty of compost. Move the seedlings carefully to the new pots and water well. Keep pots out of direct sun for a few days.

Additional resources

This handout was developed from Old Farmer's Almanac: almanac.com/content/starting-seeds-indoors

If you would like to get email reminders for your garden, sign up at almanac.com go to "Gardening" and then "Planting Calendar;" make sure to change your location to Denver, CO. Then enter your email address and you'll get an email reminder for each crop.

STARTING SEEDS IN BAGS

OPTION B

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Starting seeds

- Sprinkle a paper towel with water until it's completely damp. Lay it out on a counter.
- Spread several rows of seeds about halfway up the towel. The larger the seeds, the more space they need: Space tiny seeds like basil or parsley about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch apart and big seeds like zinnias or squash 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ inches or so. If you lay out more than one type of seed per towel, put those of similar size and germination times together (e.g., several varieties of tomatoes or peppers).
- Fold the unseeded portion of the towel half back on the seeds. (Alternatively, cut each wet towel in half. Scatter one type of seed on one half; cover with remaining half.)
- Write the seed type/s in order on the towel with the marker. Do the same to the bag label/s. Write the date on which you put the seeds into the bag. Later, check this date against the seed packets' predicted germination time. The paper towel method is usually quicker.
- Moisten the plastic bag's insides—but leave no standing water in it. Smooth the folded, seeded towel and slide it into the bag, keeping it flat. Close the bag, gently pressing out the air inside. Put it into your lightproof envelope. Store in a place that is 70° to 80°F.

Watering and transplanting seeds

- Every couple of days, check the seed towel to make sure that it is not too dry; sprinkle water off your fingertips, if necessary.
- In the days leading up to the predicted germination date, hold the plastic bag up to light to see if the seeds have sprouted. When they have sprouted, transplant them to flats or individual pots filled with potting soil. The white sprout coming out of the seed is the root. The leaves emerge from the seed head.
- Use a sharp pencil or small knife to gently pick up the seeds, which are usually sticky and adhere to the point.
- To plant long roots, poke a hole in the soil with a stick or knitting needle and drop in the seed so that the head is even with the surface; for small seeds, make a small hole.
- If the seed has sent roots through the paper towel, plant the piece of toweling with the root.
- Cover the seeds lightly with soil and water gently.
- In a day or two, the leaves will be up, stretching toward the Sun.
- Save all of your bags to reuse next year, and get ready to enjoy your veggies this season.

Additional resources

From Old Farmer's Almanac: almanac.com/extra/how-start-seeds-indoors
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STARTING SEEDS OVERVIEW

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- Do not start seeds indoors until approximately 6 weeks before your last frost.
- In Denver, our last frost is typically the last week of April.
- Exact time to start seeds depends on the germination date of each plant.
- You may need to research your plants individually.
- A great cheat sheet/planting calendar from The Old Farmer's Almanac is also provided at Station Three.
- If you have limited time, but ample space for keeping seeds indoors, you will want to use the container method (Option A).
- If you have limited space, but more time for transplanting seedlings, you will want to use the bag method (Option B).
- Let us know how your planting goes and remember: if you ever have extra produce, we operate a free farm stand for our clients and neighbors on Mondays throughout the growing season (June-Oct).
- Good luck!!