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# HOW TO START A GARDEN FROM SEEDS

As growers, we all know why it's beneficial to tend to a garden. A garden provides healthy and natural food, it's safe, the end product is packed with more nutrients, it provides less environmental impact and waste, and saves us money. Above all else, there's nothing better than the taste of your own homegrown vegetables on the dining room table, and the sense of personal satisfaction that comes with harvesting your own veggies.

Starting your garden doesn't mean you need to wait until early May to plant. Many vegetables can be started by seed indoors, or planted directly into your garden in early spring. When you start your garden from seed, you have more control. Choose from a larger variety of vegetables and herbs, and plant when it makes the most sense for you. Plus, planting your own seeds is fun, and educational for the kids too.

## COLE CROPS & COOL WEATHER VEGETABLES

Many veggies can be started earlier than you may think. Cole crops, cruciferous vegetables in the mustard family and descendants of wild cabbage, are hardy plants that grow well in cooler temperatures and can be planted earlier outdoors.

In fact, cole crops—such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, onions, radishes, leeks, artichokes, swiss chard, spinach, and head lettuce—prefer cooler weather more than summer heat. Some of these early options may be started indoors and transplanted to the garden, while others can be planted directly outdoors. Start planting 8-12 weeks before the last frost date, usually around February or March.



## TOMATOES, PEPPERS, HERBS, AND OTHER SUMMER FAVORITES

Along with broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, and lettuce, some of the best vegetables to start inside are tomatoes and peppers. By starting your tomatoes and other more tender warm weather plants indoors, you can get a head start on the growing season. Start planting these seeds indoors about 6-8 weeks before the last frost, and, in all cases, be sure to follow the recommendations on your seed packets.

If you want ripe tomatoes before all of your neighbors, you can transplant the seedlings outdoors sooner than the last frost. Just make sure the plants are protected from freezing temperatures.

Many herbs and flowers start well from seeds too! Try growing your own basil—or any of your favorite herbs—and colorful, summer flowers for beds and planters this year.



## HOW TO START SEEDS INDOORS

Your time and efforts will be most worthwhile if you start early and grow the vegetables you love to eat. Here are a few tips for soil, watering, and lighting to get started.

- Start with peat pellets or growing medium (seedling soil mix/potting soil) in clean containers that drain well with a saucer or pan underneath. Garden soil might be too heavy. You might consider planting trays, egg cartons, plastic cups, aluminum pans with plastic lids or even empty toilet paper rolls with the bottom folding in.
- Fill the container with the soil mix and plant the seeds as deep as the recommendations on the packet.
- When watering, keep the soil moist but not soggy. Avoid standing water by draining your pan after 1 hour. If you are growing your plants in a tray, pour the water into the tray and let it soak into the soil. It's also a good idea to review the seed packet's watering instructions.
- To fertilize, lightly sprinkle a mild liquid solution on the soil and place it in a sunny window or under a light. You may cover with a plastic wrap or dome, then set the tray on a heat mat to speed up germination. This increases humidity in the enclosed area so it retains moisture and needs less watering. Day temperatures should stay between 60 and 80 degrees and 55 to 70 degrees at night. Setting your tray on a heat vent will also increase soil temperature and improve germination.
- Once germinated, remove the plastic/dome and remove the trays from the heat mat if used. Place in a spot with light for 12-14 hours; whether it's a greenhouse, sunny window, or table with growing lights. For artificial light to be effective, make sure the light source is within 6-12 inches of the plant. Provide consistent moisture only as needed and fertilize after leaves emerge.

- When the true leaves—the second set of leaves that develop shortly after seedlings push through the soil—emerge, you can thin the plants to one per container. The one plant will be healthy and not have to compete with the other seedlings. To do this, cut the others down to the soil. Be careful when handling the seedlings and be sure the root is below the soil.

Tip: Make sure all the plants are tagged clearly for easy identification.

## WHEN TO TRANSPLANT YOUR SEEDLINGS

In our experience, the best time to transplant seedlings is between April and June (depending on where you live), when the soil temperatures are 65 to 70 degrees and the risk of freezing is gone.



At least two weeks before the transplant, it's important for you to harden your seedling or allow them time to acclimatize by taking them outside a little bit each day and gradually increasing the exposure day-to-day. We recommend direct sunlight for one or two hours daily for the first week.

As hard as it might be to wait, some plants grow better if planted directly into the ground, including: melons, squash, cucumbers and corn. If you want to get a head start with direct seeding in your garden, use a frost blanket to warm the soil for a few weeks before planting. After planting, place the frost blanket over the newly-seeded spots for an additional two weeks. Another early planting technique is to place Walls O' Water, HotKaps, or an empty milk jug with the bottom cut out over the seedling.

Once your garden is successfully transplanted or directly planted, continue to monitor, nurture and care for it. Don't be afraid to try new seeds. Then enjoy the healthy, tasty rewards and let us know how we can help.

*Information for this article was provided by Brenda Christophersen, Garden Center Manager, Ogden IFA Country Store; Brinn Hutcheon, Garden Center Asst. Manager, Riverton IFA Country Store; and Kent Mickelsen, Utah Certified Nurseryman, IFA Country Store.*

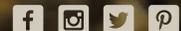




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# VEGETABLE *Planting Guide*

VEGETABLE	SEEDS PER 100'	PLANTING DEPTH	SPACING AFTER THINNING	SPACE BETWEEN ROWS	DAYS TO HARVEST	WATERING**
<b>GROUP A – HARDY:</b> Plant as soon as soil dries out in spring. Typically mid-Feb. to Apr. 1						
Broccoli*	1/2 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	18-36"	50-55	M-A
Brussels Sprouts*	1/2 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	18-36"	50-55	M-A
Cabbage*	1/2 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	24-36"	60-75	M-A
Cauliflower*	1/4 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	24-36"	60-70	M-A
Lettuce	1/4 oz.	1/4"	6-12"	12-24"	45-60	M-A
Onion*	1 oz.	1/4"	2-4"	18-36"	60-90	A
Peas	1-2 lbs.	1"	1-2"	36"	60-70	M-A
Radish	1 oz.	1/4"	2-3"	12-36"	35-40	M-A
Spinach	1 oz.	1/2"	2-4"	12-36"	35-40	M-A
Turnip	3/4 oz.	1/2"	2-6"	12-36"	35-40	A
Kohlrabi	1/2 oz.	1/4"	3-6"	18-36"	55	M-A
<b>GROUP B – SEMI-HARDY:</b> Plant 2-3 weeks after Group A. Typically Mar. 15 to mid-May						
Beets	2 oz.	1/2"	2-4"	18-36"	45-55	A
Carrots	1/2 oz.	1/4"	1-3"	18-36"	60-70	A
Parsnips	1 oz.	1/4"	3-4"	12-36"	105-120	A
Swiss Chard	2 oz.	1/2"	4-6"	18-36"	50-60	A
Potato Seed	10 lbs.	6"	12-18"	24-36"	70-110	A
<b>GROUP C – TENDER:</b> Plant on date of last frost. Typically May 1 to May 31						
Beans, Bush	2 lbs.	1"	1-2"	18-36"	55-65	A
Beans, Pole	1 lbs.	1"	3-6"	18-36"	60-70	A
Corn, Sweet	1/4 lbs.	1"	12-18"	36-48"	65-85	A
**WATERING GUIDE • M - MOIST - TWICE A WEEK • A - AVERAGE - ONCE A WEEK • D - DRY - EVERY 10-14 DAYS						
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1 ounce = 28.35 grams • 1 gram = 1000 mg						





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<b>GROUP D - VERY TENDER:</b> Plant when soil is warm. Typically mid-May to mid-June						
Cucumber*	1 oz.	1/2"	4-12"	36-72"	45-60	M
Cantaloupe*	4 oz.	1/2"	24-48"	36-72"	65-85	D
Pepper*	1/2 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	18-36"	65-85	A-D
Pumpkin*	1 oz.	3/4"	36-60"	36-72"	85-110	A-D
Summer Squash*	2 oz.	3/4"	36-48"	36-48"	45-55	A
Winter Squash*	1 oz.	1"	48-72"	36-72"	85-120	A-D
Tomatoes*	1/4 oz.	1/4"	24-72"	36-48"	65-85	A-D
Watermelon*	1 oz.	1/2"	24-36"	36-72"	75-90	D
<b>GROUP E - FALL CROPS:</b> Plant mid-July to August						
Beets	2 oz.	1/2"	2-4"	18-36"	45-55	A
Broccoli*	1/2 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	18-36"	50-55	M-A
Cabbage*	1/2 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	24-36"	60-75	M-A
Cauliflower*	1/4 oz.	1/4"	12-24"	24-36"	60-70	M-A
Lettuce	1/4 oz.	1/4"	6-12"	12-24"	45-60	M-A
Onion*	1 oz.	1/4"	2-4"	18-36"	60-90	A
Peas	1-2 lbs.	1"	1-2"	36"	60-70	M-A
Spinach	1 oz.	1/2"	2-4"	12-36"	35-40	M-A
Asparagus Plant Mar.-Oct.	N/A	6"	18-36"	2-3 ft.	2-4 yrs.	D
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