

HOW TO SEED INTO CONTAINERS

This handout is an accompaniment to the hands-on class “How to seed into containers”. It is specifically tailored for cool season crops seeded in early April. However, the basic information will translate across seasons. For warm season crops like tomato, eggplant and peppers, use the advanced seed starting handout as they need special handling to germinate.

What you will need:

- Seeds
- Potting mix (soil-less mix)
- Recycled seed containers & tray
- Saran wrap or humidity dome
- Plant marker and Pen
- Water
- Warmth
- Light

Instructions for germinating seedlings for cool weather crops in March:

- 1) Sift out the big particles from your potting soil using a sifter. The large pieces of wood can be tossed in your flower bed.
- 2) Put your potting mix in a bucket or container and moisten it enough so that it's not sopping wet. If you grab a handful of the wet potting mix and squeeze it, it should stay together but crumble if you roll it around your hand. If it doesn't crumble it's too wet and if it doesn't hold together, it's too dry.
- 3) Fill your container with the moist seedling mix to the top of the container and tamp it down a couple of times to slightly compress and settle the soil. Don't over-compress, remember seeds need air to grow!
- 4) Here is a rule of thumb for seeding: The depth you plant your seed is twice its width.**
- 5) If you are sowing large seeds, with your finger make a slight divit in each well of your container or make a divit in each spot you will be sowing a seed.
- 6) Put two or three seeds into the divit and then cover with dry sifted seedling mix.
- 7) If you are sowing very small seeds don't make a divit but simply sow a few seeds on top of the seedling mix in your tray and cover **very** lightly with dry seedling mix.
- 8) Press down the tops of the soil very, very slightly to ensure that your seeds have contact with the soil both below them and above them.
- 9) Make your plant labels with the name of the vegetable you are sowing, the date and the variety on the other side: Eg. Zucchini 4-1-2023 and Dark Star on the back of your plant label. Put your plant labels into the container.
- 10) You are now ready to water. Using your spray bottle or anything that dispenses a gentle spray, gently water your seeds. Don't use a heavy spray or jet of water on your tiny seeds. The smaller the seed, the more they will move about the soil with the action of the water and possibly wash away. So water gently. Allow the water to soak into your potting soil.
- 11) Cover the containers with saran wrap or your dome, if you have one, to encourage a

moist environment. Put your containers on your tray and bring them in the house and put them in a warm place to germinate. Cold season veggies germinate at about 50 – 65 degrees. If your home is as warm as this or warmer, the seeds will germinate. Don't remove the cover until they germinate. Check every day for signs of germination.

- 12) Once they have germinated, remove the saran wrap or dome and put the seedlings in a warm sunny location where they will receive at least 14 - 16 hours of light. Move the trays around into the sun if you don't have a spot that gets that much sun all day.
- 13) The next thing you will need to do is water. You have seeded and covered your seedlings until they germinated without watering them. Check the soil and see if it looks dry. It will be lighter in color and possibly pull away from the sides of the container. If you need to water don't water over head. Water from the tray. You will pour water into the tray and let the plants wick up the water. Fill the tray about a quarter inch up the side of your containers and let them sit for about 15 – 20 minutes. Whatever water is remaining in the tray after that time, toss it out. Don't leave your plants sitting in water. This is a great way to invite fungus and gnats to come. Green algae will grow on top of your soil when it's too wet over a long period of time.
- 14) The last thing you will do is fertilize your seedlings. Once there are two true leaves*, and have grown large enough you can acclimate* them then transplant them out doors. To fertilize, use a very, very diluted solution of compost tea or fish emulsion or kelp extract. These organic products are diluted with water. Use the diluted solution as the water during watering time. Do this every two weeks until transplant into the garden.
- 15) Getting your plants outdoors requires that you acclimate or harden-off your plants. This is where you get them used to outdoor weather a little at a time. Start them off by taking them out for an hour in shade, the next day make it 3 hours, the third day put them in dappled shade, eventually get them outside in the full sun for most of the day.

Timing for when your seedlings should go out doors

Veggie	Date seeded	Weeks to TP	Date of TP	Days to maturity	Date of first harvest
Bush bean- Contender	4/2/23	3 weeks	4/23/23	48 days	April 30th
Lettuce - Buttercrunch	4/2/23	4 weeks	4/30/23	65 days	May 7th
Lettuce - Romaine	4/2/23	4 weeks	4/30/23	65 days	May 7th
Basil – Sweet Italian	4/2/23	6 weeks	5/14/23	90 days	May 21st
Cilantro – xtra slo bolt	4/2/23	4 weeks	4/30/23	45 days	April 23rd
Napa Cabbage - Michihili	4/2/23	3 weeks	4/23/23	65 days	May 14th
Mustard - Spinach	4/2/23	4 weeks	4/30/23	30-60 days	May 7th

These are approximate harvest dates. Actual harvest date depends on your garden, how much sun you get, any pest pressure, and your soil conditions. Use the table above as a guide to harvest time.