

Indoor Seed Starting



1. Pick out clean inserts, trays and domes. You can re-use old ones but be sure to clean and sterilize them with a weak water and bleach solution (9:1) to kill bacteria and fungus.

2. Fill the inserts with seed starting mixture. Once the inserts are filled, lightly water the top so the mixture is moist but not boggy. Use a high quality seed starting mixture that provides good drainage and retains moisture. Don't use regular potting soil. Potting soil is too chunky and often contains added fertilizer that is too much for little seedlings. Potting soil can also cause damping off, a fungus ailment that causes plants to stretch and die.



There are a number of great seed starters available. We like to recommend **Espoma Organic Seed Starter.** It's a rich blend of peat moss, humus, perlite and dolomite limestone. It also has 11 different kinds of mycorrhizae, naturally occurring fungi that help enhance plant growth and reduce the amount of watering needed.



3. Now it's time to select your seeds. All seeds have different needs and germination times. Check the back of your seed packets for the exact germination time and other growing info. Plant your seeds in the soil to the depth recommended by the package. Cover with the clear dome.



4. Before they germinate, seeds don't need any light or fertilizer. But they do need heat and water. The clear dome will help keep the moisture in, but check often to see if the seeds need water. If the seed mixture feels dry, gently mist with a spray bottle to keep everything moist but not soggy.

5. Once the seedlings emerge they'll need all the light they can get, about 14-16 hours of light a day followed by 8 hours of darkness. When seedlings don't get enough light, they grow weak and spindly. You'll need to use an artificial fluorescent light. We like to recommend the **HydroFarm Jump Start System.** It comes with a high quality fluorescent light and an adjustable stand that makes it easy to position the lights. Hang the light 1" - 2" above the seedlings. You can also use a mirror to reflect the light on all parts of the plants. Use an inexpensive timer to turn the lights on and off.



7. After the last average frost date, start hardening off your seedlings. Seedlings grown indoors need to be slowly transitioned to the harsher outdoor environment. Place them outside in a sheltered, shady area. Over the course of a week, gradually increase their exposure to direct sunlight.

TIPS & HINTS!

- Start with a small test crop of seeds. You can try out new techniques or tricks on your test crop without losing a whole batch of seeds. Most of the professional growers do the same thing.
- Test seeds in a small glass of water. In general, seeds that sink are heavy and full of nutrients while seeds that float to the surface are nutrient poor and no good. Skim them off the top and plant the sinkers.
- Use medium size inserts. They give the seedlings a little more room to grow and you don't need to transplant as quickly.
- Before the seedlings emerge, use a seed heat mat or place the tray on top of your refrigerator to keep the seeds warm.
- Place a small fan near the seeds. This will keep the air circulating and reduce the chance of fungus build up.

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