



How to Start Vegetable Seeds Indoors

Many vegetable seeds can be planted directly in the ground, but there are a handful of vegetables that you can start from seed indoors and then transfer them into your garden. By learning how to start vegetable seeds indoors, you can allow them to establish themselves while the weather is still cold outside.

Steps

- 1 Gather the vegetable seeds and begin preparing them for planting.** You should do this about 6 to 8 weeks before the average date of the final frost. Some vegetables to consider may include cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and peppers. Fill your cell tray, old egg carton, or cut-off milk carton with some potting soil mix. You want to make sure the soil is damp before placing it in the container.
- 2 Sow your seed into the soil.** Place 1 or 2 seeds in each cell. You can always thin out the extra seedling. Read the seed package to determine the depth you should be planting vegetables. Sprinkle more soil on top of the seeds, enough to cover them.
- 3 Use a waterproof pen to write on a craft stick the name of the vegetable you've planted as well as the date.** This is ideal to do if you are sowing numerous types of seeds or the same seeds at different time intervals. Place the stick in one of the planting containers.
- 4 Cover the planting containers with a plastic bag or plastic wrap and close the ends.** If secured correctly, you won't need to water your seeds until after seedlings sprout.
- 5 Remove the plastic bags or wrap once the seeds begin to sprout.** They should appear in 10 to 14 days, but some may take as long as 21 days. If for whatever reason your vegetable seeds don't grow, just plant vegetable seeds again.
- 6 Move your vegetable seedlings to a sunny south-facing window.** If you don't have a south-facing window, you may need to improvise and find constant lighting. You can do this by purchasing lighting equipment or just placing the seedlings near lighting fixtures.
- 7 Water your seedlings just enough to make the soil moist.** You can use a spray bottle with a mist function to ensure the soil doesn't get too wet.
- 8 Harden your vegetable seedlings 2 weeks before planting in the ground.** Place the cell trays outside for 2 to 3 hours per day in full sun. After 1 week, you can leave your seedlings outside day and night provided the frost threat is over.

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Tips

- It is better to keep the seedlings inside longer if the weather is too cold. This way you will have larger transplants with better developed roots and they will have a better chance of survival.
- By starting vegetable seeds inside, you can gain 4 to 6 weeks over crops that are started directly in the ground.

Warnings

- Don't place the planted seeds in a cool, drafty area or one that is too warm. You should locate a place that is evenly warm, such as on top of your refrigerator. You don't need to worry about sunlight until after the seeds have sprouted. Light that is too bright can dehydrate the soil or cause too much moisture to form underneath the plastic, causing the seeds to rot.

Things You'll Need

- Vegetable seeds
- Cell trays, old egg cartons or cut-off milk cartons
- Potting soil
- Water
- Waterproof pen
- Craft stick
- Plastic bag or plastic wrap
- Spray bottle

Sources and Citations

- <http://www.weekendgardener.net/plant-propagation/vegetable-seeds-020702.htm>

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