

scenic bloomz



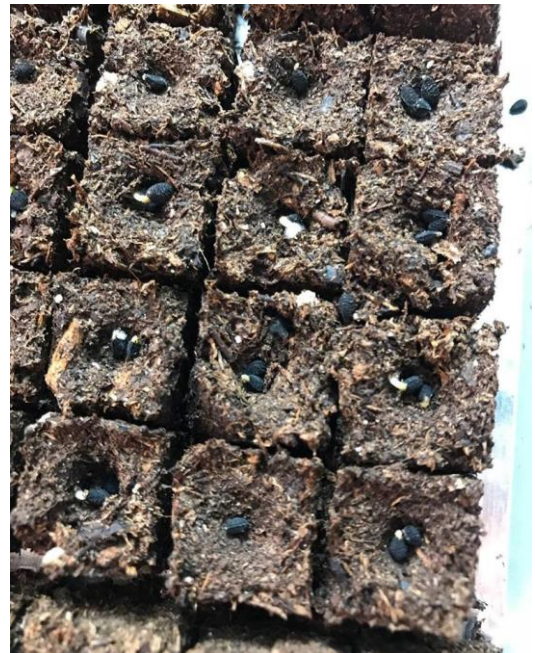
Tips for Starting Seeds Indoors

- Start with the right potting mix:
 - You maybe asking yourself “Why can’t I just any old potting mix from the store?”

Well, you can, but you aren’t going to get the best results. When looking for potting soil for giving your seeds a head start find a “seed starting mix”. I know that sounds redundant. Seed starting mixes have a finer texture that helps the seeds get the proper amount of water. The better the seed to soil contact, the better your germination will be.
 - If you can’t find a “seed starting mix”, try an organic mix. I have had wonderful germination rates with organic mixes. The biggest reason I look for organic mixes is most times they don’t have harsh fertilizers in them. These fertilizers are great for plants that are larger, but they can burn seedlings. A seed has all of the food it needs inside of it to begin life. This is why you can germinate a bean seed in a wet paper towel. Once the seedling has a couple sets of leaves you can start feeding them or transplant them into a mix with a slow release fertilizer.
 - If you can’t find a seed starting mix or an organic mix ,you can always mix your own potting soil. This spring I did this for the first time since college. I’ve had great results.
 - The recipe I’ve been using is simple:
 - 9 parts peat moss
 - 1 part vermiculite
 - 1 part perlite
 - A little bit of soap to help wet the mix (sometimes it can be difficult to get the potting soil to get evenly moist. The soap acts as a wetting agent)



- Sowing your seeds:
 - Once you have your potting mix picked out fill your pots, trays, cups, soil blocks or whatever you are using with moist soil.
 - One easy mistake to make when starting seeds is burying the seeds too deep. Many seeds need light to germinate. If they are completely buried they aren't able to get the light they need. This results in poor germination or even no germination.
 - A good rule of thumb is to bury the seed the depth of $\frac{1}{4}$ of the seed's width. I only follow this rule for seeds that are too large for my mini soil block maker, such as sunflowers, nasturtium, love-in-a-puff, beans, peas, pumpkins, watermelons, etc.
 - For small seeds I firmly press them to the top of the soil making sure there is good soil to seed contact. I don't cover them. If you want to cover them you can sprinkle a thin layer of vermiculite on top. The layer should be thin enough to allow light. The vermiculite helps keep the seed from drying out before it's germinated.
 - I use soil blocks to start most of my seeds, especially if they're small. It's a lot like making sand castles. The mix is wet enough to stick together well but not soupy. Because of this I don't generally water my seedlings until they have germinated and/or the blocks look dry.
 - You can find videos on how to use a soil block maker at <https://www.johnnyseeds.com/>. You can also purchase them on the Johnny's Seeds website or from Amazon.



- Lighting:
 - You've picked your potting mix, you've sowed your seeds. Now you need to put them under lights.
 - You can use any grow light or florescent light. Do not use incandescent lights. They get too hot and will dry out or burn your plants.
 - If using a shop light or other florescent bulb, position the bulb 3 to 5 inches above the seedlings. You may have to move the lights up as the plants grow.
 - Grow lights are a bit brighter and don't need to be as close. 10 to 12 inches is probably close enough.
 - If you notice your seedling getting tall and thin and "reaching" for the light, then you know the light is too far away. Move it closer. If the seedlings become too elongated they will not survive outside conditions.
- Hardening Off:
 - As your seedlings begin to grow. It is a good idea to turn a fan on them. There are two main benefits of the fan. First, the air flow prevents the growth of bacteria and fungus that can cause young seedlings to suddenly die off. This is called damping off. Second, it helps strengthen their stems and prepare them for the outdoors.
 - Once you're ready to transplant your plants in the garden or containers outdoors, you need to "harden them off". This means to acclimate them to outdoor conditions. You can do this by placing them outdoors in a semi-protected area. This could be a covered deck, a carport, a back deck, or anywhere that isn't full sun and has a little wind protection.
 - Let your plants adjust to the outdoors for about a week. Keep a close eye on them and water them often. They can dry out very quickly.

After your plants are hardened off, you are ready to transplant them to their permanent home and enjoy them all season long!

Happy Seed Starting!

-Jessica

