

SEED STARTING AND PROPAGATION

This is the time of year that gardeners begin to think about what they would like to plant in their gardens. Seed starting can be cheaper than buying plants.

The Seed

Make sure you purchase seed from reputable suppliers.

Soil

Your seed starting soil is what gives your seeds the best start possible. Many people agree that a soilless mix is the best way to go, or you can mix your own. A good recipe is a soilless seed starting mix with a small amount of potting soil added, about a 3 to 1 ratio.

Planting Depth

A correct planting depth will help to ensure good germination of seeds. This is because if you plant the seed too deeply, it will run out of energy before it reaches sunlight to make more. If you plant the seed too shallow, you run the risk of letting the seed dry out, and it will die before germinating. Carefully reading the seed package will provide excellent information.

Temperature

Most seeds require an average soil temperature of about 75 degrees F to germinate. This means if you are starting your seeds in an unheated greenhouse, cold basement or other area that is not at a controlled temperature, you will need to provide additional heat to ensure proper germination. This can be as simple as adding a heat grow mat to your indoor setup. Because there are seeds that require lower or warmer temperatures, it is important to check out your seed packet for any soil temperature information.

Light

Most seeds do not require direct light to germinate, but once they sprout they will need about 14-16 hours of light per day. If you are growing on a windowsill you may still need to provide some artificial light- especially if you are starting your seeds in the winter when the days are shorter. Adjustable grow lights are a good investment.

Consistent Water

Too much water can cause disease, mold, or fungus and too little will cause you seedlings to die.

Transplanting

As the plant grows it may become necessary to transplant it from the original pot into a larger container. Transplanting actually strengthens the seedling. It's very important to carefully handle the roots or the leaves, but not the stem.

Resources:

<https://thefreerangelife.com/gardening-2/>

University of Wisconsin Master Gardener Manual, 2009