

Starting Seeds Indoors

Decide what you want to grow – Make a list of the plants you want in your garden and consult the attached seed starting schedule to see which plants need to be started indoors and when. Decide how many of each type you will need. Identify a place in your home that is large enough.

Gather your supplies –

Quality soil-less seed starting mix - sterile, light and fluffy for good root growth

Clean containers – planting cells, milk jugs, plastic cups, and small plastic pots all work

Lighting – Windows can be drafty and even south-facing windows may not provide strong enough light for good seedling growth. Consider the purchase of a shop light.

Florescent T5 (preferred) and T8 bulbs work well and are inexpensive. Look for bulbs described as daylight white or 6500 Kelvin in color. LED bulbs are also available and will use less energy over the life of the bulb, but are more expensive.

Heating mat - beneficial for warm season vegetables like tomatoes, peppers and eggplant.

The extra warmth will speed up germination and reduce the likelihood of rotting or mold.

Seeds – use quality, untreated, non-GMO seeds. If you want to save seed from your vegetables, use only open-pollinated or heirloom seeds.

Labels – eliminate confusion and label everything

Planting and care of seedlings –

Plant seeds at the depth indicated on the packet. Some require light for germination and will be sown at or near the surface of the seed starting mix.

Keep pots moist but not waterlogged. Water from the bottom if possible.

Provide 12-18 hours of light/day. Timers can help with this.

Keep light as close to plants as possible

After seedlings have a few true leaves, they may be moved to larger containers and a potting mix with some nutrients.

Hardening Off –The week before you want to transplant them, start getting the seedlings accustomed to being outside. Put them outside in a protected place for an hour the first day and gradually increase the time each day to get them used to the sun and wind. This process is very important and inadequate hardening off can result in sunburnt plants.

Transplanting – Amend the garden soil with compost and plant the seedlings at the same depth they were in their pots. One exception is tomatoes. You can bury the tomato plant up to its first set of true leaves in order to give the plant a stable start. The buried stem will form roots underground. See package recommendations for spacing between plants. Water all transplants well and make sure they stay moist during the first 2 weeks as they get rooted in their new locations. Mulching will help preserve soil moisture.

ROCHESTER SEED LIBRARY SOWING AND TRANSPLANTING GUIDE

This chart is based on an "average" year and is only a general guide. All transplanting and direct sowing decisions should take current weather conditions into consideration.

"X" indicates when seeds should be started indoors for Rochester, MN (Zone 4)

"O" indicates when to transplant outside if weather is favorable

"D" indicates when seeds should be sown directly into the garden

	FEBRUARY		MARCH				APRIL				MAY				June		
	Wk. 3	Wk. 4	Wk. 1	Wk. 2	Wk. 3	Wk. 4	Wk. 1	Wk. 2	Wk. 3	Wk. 4	Wk. 1		Wk. 2	Wk. 3	Wk. 4	Wk. 1	Wk. 2
START INDOORS																	
Bulbing Onion (from seed)	X	X	X							O	O			O			
Opo/Bottle gourd**	X	X	X	X										A		O	O
Eggplant		X	X											V	O	O	
Bitter Melon**			X	X	X									E		O	O
Peppers			X	X										R		O	O
Tomatillo				X	X	X								A		O	O
Basil				X	X	X	X							G	O	O	O
Tomatoes				X	X	X	X							E		O	O
START INDOORS OR DIRECT SOW																	
Bunching onions (scallions)		X	X	X				O/D	O/D	O/D	O/D			L			
Kale			X	X	X				D	O/D	O/D			A	O/D		
Parsley			X	X	X					O/D	O/D			S	O/D	O	O
Mint (starting indoors preferred)			X	X						O/D	O/D			T	O/D		
Squash/Pumpkin								X	X	X					O/D	O/D	O/D
Watermelon								X	X	X					O/D	O/D	O/D
Cucumber								X	X	X					O/D	O/D	O/D
SOW DIRECTLY OUTSIDE																	
Spinach							D	D	D	D	D						
Peas							D	D	D	D	D						
Radishes							D	D	D	D	D		D	D	D	D	D
Dill							D	D	D	D	D		D	D			
Mustard Greens							D	D	D	D	D		D	D	D	D	D
Beets									D	D	D		D	D	D	D	D
Carrots									D	D	D		D	D	D	D	D
Lettuce									D	D	D		D	D	D	D	D
Bokchoy													D	D	D	D	D
Cilantro													D	D	D	D	D
Mizuna													D	D	D	D	D
Epazote													D	D	D		
Beans - all types															D	D	D
Nasturtium															D	D	D

**Soak seeds overnight before planting. Keep in warm location. 75 to 78 degrees is best for germination.