

Tips For Starting Seeds INDOORS

Growing your own seedlings is fun, rewarding and economical. While many crops can be sown directly in the garden, others will be more productive if started indoors. You can refer to the back of the packet for variety-specific planting information—but here are some general guidelines to help you get started.

The first thing to find out is your last frost date to determine when you should start your seeds. Just enter your zip code at bit.ly/lastfrostdate to find out yours. **Next make a list of all the crops you plan to grow** in your garden. If any of the crops on the back of this card are on your list, we recommend starting them indoors. Mark your calendar with the dates to start and plant out different crops so you don't forget.



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Next gather your soil & containers. Ask around for recommendations of good quality potting soil, then lightly moisten it with water before filling trays or pots to within ½" of the top of the container, lightly packing it down as you go. Tip: If using pots, place in a tray so they can be moved easily. Use a pencil to mark plant markers with the variety name and date of planting, then sow seeds in each cell or pot according to packet directions, covering with a thin layer of soil. **Water in lightly, then cover the tray with a germination dome and place on a seedling heat mat** or other warm location that is consistently 70-85°F. Never let the soil surface dry out while seeds are germinating. Once the seeds have germinated, remove from the heat mat and **place under full spectrum fluorescent lights** (such as shop lights), making sure the plants are within 3" of the bulbs at all times. Raise the lights as the plants grow, keeping them on for 10-16 hours per day to provide adequate light. Please note that sunny windows do not provide enough light and result in seedlings that are weak and "leggy". **Start hardening off seedlings a week before planting by placing outdoors** for 1 hour the first day, then increasing by an hour each day until they're always outside.

CROP TYPE	WHEN TO START	WHEN TO PLANT OUT
Onions, leeks, chives & celery	10-12 weeks before planting	3-4 weeks before last frost
Eggplants & artichokes	8-10 weeks before planting	After last frost
Peppers & tomatoes	6-8 weeks before planting	After last frost
Brussels sprouts, kale, broccoli & cabbage	4-6 weeks before planting	2-4 weeks before last frost
Melons, cucumbers, pumpkins & squash	3-4 weeks before planting	1 week after last frost

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