

## Starting Seeds Indoors

**Starting seeds indoors is an inexpensive way to raise an assortment of bedding plants and vegetables. If you can, get children involved with the process. They will really enjoy watching the seeds grow.**

### Before you start, just remember a few points:

- Don't sow too many different types of seeds unless you can give them away.
- Know what you want. Read through books and horticulture magazines to get ideas and information.
- Visit the seed rack and note the types of seeds available and when they should be sown. If you are not sure of availability of specific seeds, ask any of our staff members for help. Take notes on planting methods and dates from either the back of the seed packets or seed catalogues found in our seed areas.
- Determine where in the house you want to start the seeds. If it is near a window, make sure that the temperature does not fluctuate. The best spot is an area out of direct light in a cool room (16°C to 21°C during the day).

### Materials

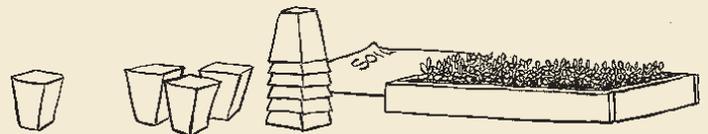
- An assortment of seeds
- Soiless mix for seeds e.g. Eddi's All Purpose Starter Mix or Sunshine #4 Mix. Soil from the garden is inappropriate as it is too heavy for container use and also may contain many harmful bacteria and fungus that young seedlings can't handle.
- Seed flats and inserts in either cells or rows (*please refer to NOTE*)
  - or Peat pots placed in plastic seed flats
  - or Azalea pots (pots that are short and wide)
  - or Jiffy Peat Pellets
- Mister bottle
- Water insoluble marker and plant labels

### Jiffy Peat Pellets



**BEFORE and AFTER**  
expansion in luke-warm water.

NOTE: The type of inserts that you purchase is dependant on type of seed and length of growing time before transplanting outside. If you are sowing very fine seeds such as begonias, use the inserts that have rows of seeding areas. This makes it easier for you to transplant and also to sow a large number of seeds. If you wish to have a large sized plantlet when you set them in the garden, choose the large celled packs to encourage unhindered root growth.



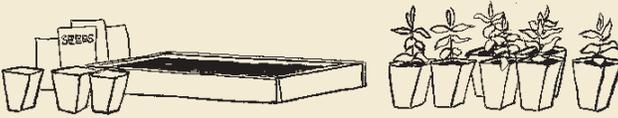
**Jiffy pots, a bag of soil and a flat of growing seedlings**

### Starting your Seeds

To begin, clear off an area (preferably on a counter) where you can make a mess without disturbing the rest of the household. Moisten your starter mix with warm water and work through the mix with your fingers. Try to eliminate all dry clods. Place moistened starter mix in the flats, flat inserts or peat containers to about 1/4" from the rim of the container. Tap down to rid the soil of air bubbles. In the case of jiffy pots, place them on a tray of warm water at about 1/4" deep and let them absorb the water.

**See Page 2 for More Information on Starting Seeds.**

# Starting Seeds Indoors Continued



## The method of sowing a seed will depend on the type of seed

1. For large size seeds such as sunflowers, cosmos, calendulas and beans, sow each seed in individual peat pots, individual cell inserts or in pre-soaked jiffy pots. The depth of planting is approximately 2.5 X the width of the seed (e.g. a sunflower seed is about 1 cm wide, plant at 2.5 cm deep). Usually large seeds, germinate and develop very quickly. Some seeds such as peas need to be soaked first overnight to help soften the seed coat.
2. For broadcasting very fine seeds, mix seeds with some sand in a cup and sprinkle on to either prepared flats or azalea pots.
3. Some seeds do not need to be covered with soil. Usually it will state this on the seed packet. Just tap the seed from the packet on to the prepared containers and leave the seeds alone.
4. For all others:  
**In row inserts:** tap seeds from the packet into these rows and cover gently with soil, or with washed horticultural sand.  
**In flats:** Make ridges with your finger and cover gently with soil or washed horticultural sand.

*Note: As each type of seed is sown, make a label for it so you know what the seedlings are later.*

Once the seeds are sown and appropriately labelled, mist the surface of the flats, container or peat pots (do not soak). Place these newly seeded containers in your designated seedling area.

In a few days (sometimes weeks), the seeds will germinate. It is of the utmost importance that the seeds are not over-watered or left to dry out. Seedlings that are over watered may "Damp Off" - the seedlings will suddenly fall over. To avoid this, do not overwater, place seedlings in a well ventilated area and do not overseed. To further prevent "Damping Off" from occurring, use "No Damp" mixed into your water.

You need not fertilize the seedlings at the moment for they have enough food source stored up in the seeds to take them to the first leaf stage.

When the seedlings grow their first set of real leaves (refer to diagram), it is time to space them out. Use a dibbler (a pointed object for transplanting seedlings) to gently dig the seedling out and with your other hand, guide the plant by the true leaves (not the stem or seed leaves) in to a pre-made hole.

Lower the roots in to the hole gently and make sure that the plant is at the same level as it was in the seed tray. Gently firm the soil around the base of the plant. Seedlings may be transplanted into cell paks in groups of 4 or in to smaller cell paks individually.

The seedlings should be fertilized after transplanting. Use either a well balanced water soluble fertilizer such as 20-20-20, or a slow releasing fertilizer such as Osmocote. Make sure you read the rates prior to mixing the solutions as strong mixtures of fertilizers can easily hurt your young seedlings.

The next step is "hardening off" of the plants prior to planting them in the garden. Hardening off is a process of preparing the plants to outdoor conditions. You may begin this process two weeks before planting them in the garden by placing the plants outdoors (out of direct sun) everyday and taking them in during the night, when cooler temperatures may put your seedlings at risk. Dates for planting out are also mentioned on the back of seed packets.



## IMPORTANT!

Some seeds should be sown directly outside. Seeds for root crops like carrots and beets should be directly sown in to the ground where they are to grow. These plants do not transplant very well and moving them will result in malformed roots. Also cool weather crops (eg. lettuce, radish, and spinach) should be directly sown.