

PLANTING THE GARDEN

Seeds

- Every seed in a packet will not germinate. (Some seed packets and catalogs tell the percentage of germination that may be expected.) Discussing this ahead of time will save disappointment for children.
- Some seeds are more difficult to germinate than others.
- Good germination in containers requires constant moisture, air, sterile soil medium, proper soil temperature and correct light. Soggy wet conditions may cause the seed to rot.
- Do not mix a fertilizer into the seed-starting medium as it will hinder germination.
- When transplants are to be grown from seeds, they must be sown 4-8 weeks prior to the time they are to be planted in the garden.
- Good seedling growth requires correct light intensity, correct moisture, moderate temperature and light feeding to promote growth.
- The first light, 1/2 strength feeding should be applied after the plant has grown its first set of “true” leaves.
- Seedlings should be thinned when they begin to crowd one another. Carefully cut off all but one or two with a scissors.
- Seedlings grown indoors generally need a period of time to become accustomed to the variation in outdoor temperature and light before being planted in the garden. This is called “hardening off”.
- “Hardening off” calls for the seedlings first to be exposed to a sunny location in the classroom or greenhouse; then they are moved outdoors each day to expose them to increasingly longer periods of sun and air over a period of a week or more. In this way, when the seedlings are planted out into the garden area they will experience less shock.
- No “hardening off” is required for seedlings purchased from a nursery because this was accomplished prior to shipping the seedlings to the nursery.
- Some seeds, such as carrots, need to be planted directly into the garden because they do not transplant easily. The seed packet will indicate whether the seeds can be sown indoors or whether they should be sown directly into the garden.
- If seeds are to be sown directly into the garden, thoroughly soak the bed one or more days prior to planting day. On planting day, lightly rake the area to loosen the soil to a depth of one inch. Then broadcast the seeds over the bed, or make shallow furrows and sprinkle the seeds thinly in the furrows. Lightly cover the seeds with compost or a small amount of soil; gently pat the soil to ensure the seeds are in good contact with the soil.
- Water gently so that the seeds are not dislodged. Seeds must be kept moist until germination, but the soil should not be soggy.

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- Some seeds, such as peas or beans, will rot if kept too moist; therefore, the bed needs to be deeply watered before planting and only misted to keep the seeds moist until germination.
- Some seeds require light to germinate; therefore they should be only very lightly covered with soil, just enough to keep them from washing away when watered. Many lettuce seeds fall into this category.