

Seed Starting 101

Let's get growing!

Why start plants by seed?

If this is your first time gardening or you're revisiting gardening:

- Make it easy on yourself and buy plant starts (with few exceptions)
- Buy from a reputable nursery/garden supply store

Reasons to start by seed:

- Cost effective
- Easy to do
- Great way to jump start your garden
- Better control of plants right from the start
- Exponentially increases your options for plants

Notes about seed starting:

- Some seeds are best directly sown in the garden: carrots, radishes, beets)
- Some plants are much easier to start from seed than others. Some are very slow growing

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Seed Options

Things to pay attention to:

- Buy from a reputable seed company
- Non-GMO seeds
- Organic where you can
- US sourced seeds

My favorites (all non-GMO, US sourced seeds):

- Burpee Seed Company: based out of Pennsylvania, one of the oldest US seed companies. Old industry standard company. Good flat rate shipping. Website: www.burpee.com
- Johnny's Select: based out of Maine, good customer service, good germination rates, lots of good organic options, pricier shipping. Website: <http://www.johnnyseeds.com/>
- Baker Heirloom: based out of Missouri, purveyors of heirloom seeds, non-GMO, lots of rare seed options. Good prices on shipping. Website: www.rareseeds.com
- Renee's Garden: based out Santa Cruz area of California. Non-GMO seeds, lots of good organic options, lots of unique options. Great smaller company. Good seeds, great customer service. Website: www.reneesgarden.com

Note when seed shopping:

- "Resistant to ____" or hybrid doesn't necessarily mean modified

How long do seeds lasts:

- Store sealed in a cool, dry place.
- Stores for several years.
- Germination rates go down each passing year.

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Supplies you need

- Soilless seed starting mix (Miracle Grow is my fav!!)
- Sterilized containers:
 - Re-usable seedling trays
 - 4 inch pots for bigger plants
 - Paper/cardboard cup
 - Peat-moss cups dry out too fast
- Light source:
 - Grow lights with plant bulb (during winter months)
 - Sunny porch
 - Greenhouse
- Seedling heating mat (during winter months)
- Seeds
- Tags
- Bucket
- Fish emulsion fertilizer (a seaweed extract fertilizer will work, too!)

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How to begin?

- Get soil moist in bucket (should feel like wet sponge)
- Fill containers
- Read seed packet directions (planting depth)
- Plant seeds according to recommended depth
- Label
- Start more than one seed per container, thin later as needed
- Seed has all the nutrients to get to a point
- Once first set of true leaves emerge, fertilize with half-strength fish emulsion fertilizer (seaweed extract fertilizer works great, too!).
- Be sure you have good air circulation
- Top watering vs. bottom watering
- Don't let soil become too wet or too dry