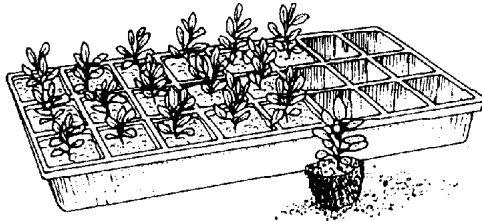


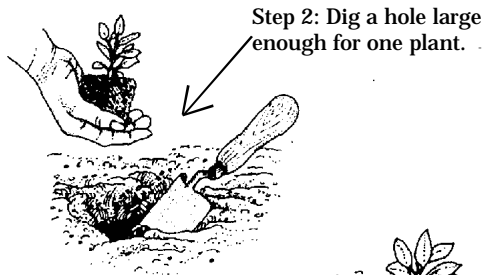
Lastly an application of dry fertilizer such as 6-10-4 or 12-12-12 is a good idea. Follow the directions on the package. Level the soil after adding the fertilizer.

Sow seeds directly into the prepared soil as you would for container growing. Keep soil moist until seedling appear, then water regularly.

### Transplanting Seedling to the Garden



Step 1: Remove plant from flat or container.



Step 3: Place plant level with ground



The following varieties can be started inside for earlier blooms in the flower garden. Dates are approximate, but work for most gardeners. Charts are based on midwest planting conditions.

### Flowers for Transplanting

Variety	Planting Time	Transplanting Time
Ageratum	March 1st	8 to 10 weeks
Alyssum	March 1st	6 to 8 weeks
Begonias	February 1st	12 to 16 weeks
Coleus	March 1st	7 to 9 weeks
Geranium	February 15th	8 to 10 weeks
Impatiens	March 1st	7 to 9 weeks
Marigolds (dwf)	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks
Marigolds (tall)	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks
Petunia	March 1st	8 to 9 weeks
Salvia	March 1st	8 weeks
Snapdragon	February 15th	8 to 10 weeks
Verbena	March 1st	8 to 10 weeks
Zinnia	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks

### Vegetables for Transplanting

Variety	Planting Time	Transplanting Time
Broccoli	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks
Cabbage	March 1st	7 to 9 weeks
Cauliflower	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks
Cucumbers	April 1st	3 to 5 weeks
Eggplant	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks
Muskmelon	April 1st	4 to 5 weeks
Parsley	March 1st	8 to 9 weeks
Peppers	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks
Tomatoes	March 15th	6 to 8 weeks
Watermelon	April 1st	4 to 5 weeks

# Starting Seed Indoors



### Sample of Popular Flowers and Vegetables you can Sow Inside to Grow Outside

#### Annuals

Alyssum  
Celosia  
Cleome (up to 4' tall)  
Cornflower  
(Bachelor Buttons)  
Cosmos  
Nasturium  
Nicotiana  
Marigold  
Portulaca  
Sunflower  
Sweet Pea  
Zinnia

#### Perennials

Achillea (Yellow)  
Coreopsis  
Gaillardia  
Primula  
Ornamental Grass

#### Cut Flowers

Aster  
Bells of Ireland  
Gomphrena  
Snapdragon  
Statice  
Lisianthus (Eustoma)

#### Vegetables

Broccoli  
Brussels Sprouts  
Cabbage  
Cantaloupe/Muskmelon  
Cauliflower  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Onion  
Peppers  
Squashes  
Tomatoes  
Watermelon

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Shenandoah, Iowa 51603

Your Earl May Garden Center does carry thousands of started plants in the spring, but each year seed companies introduce new vegetable and flower varieties that are new and improved. These sometimes become hard to locate in started plants.

### Why Start Seed Indoors

Starting seed in your home either in a sunny window or in a hobby greenhouse is a fun way to get the jump on spring.

Children may be introduced to gardening by growing seedlings. The thrill of watching the plant emerge from the soil is a wonderful experience. The satisfaction of watching the plant grow indoors, transplanted to the flower or vegetable garden and then produce blooms or fruit is the final result of that tiny little seed. Watching a child witness the wonder of "creation" is the reward that can be obtained from that seeds' beginning.

First decide what to grow and when to start the seed. Most seeds require from 4-8 weeks from starting to transplanting in the garden. Check the frost free dates in your area or consult your garden center personnel if you have any questions.

### Choosing a Potting Mix

When choosing a potting mix, use a mix that is soilless, which is a mixture of peat or sphagnum moss and/or perlite and vermiculite. **Do not use garden soil.** When starting either in your seed tray or containers, the container should be filled with premoistened potting mix to within  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of the top.

### Container Selection

Many different forms of seed starting equipment are available from seed starting kits to seed starting trays only.

Make sure your container has drainage in order to not have standing water in the base of the container.

Be sure to sterilize your containers if you are using a container that has been previously used. One way of sterilization is washing the containers in a solution of  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups household bleach to a gallon of water.

Options for containers range from plastic or peat pots

to the Jiffy peat pellet, which is compressed peat in a mesh bag that expands when soaked with water. This is the growing medium and container all in one. Any of the peat containers can be planted directly in the garden. When planting the peat container make sure that none of the container shows above the soil surface because it will wick moisture away from the plants roots.

### Planting

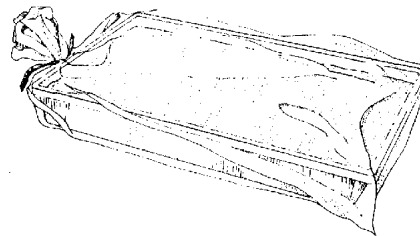
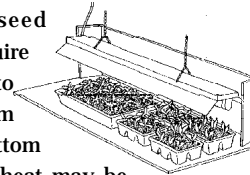
Some gardeners prefer a single step method of sowing seeds two to three seeds into individual containers. After the seeds germinate, pinch off the smallest seedling, leaving only the most vigorous one in the container.

If you are seeding into a seed tray, the seedling will be easier to transplant if the seeds are sown thinly, covering the seeds with perlite will aid in keeping them moist. After the first set of leaves develop, transplant the seedling into a tray with more growing room or into individual containers.

### Environmental Conditions

Correct temperature is one of the environmental conditions critical for seed germination. Most seeds require temperatures of 70 to 75° to germinate. To keep the medium at 70° or above, gentle bottom heat is recommended. This heat may be obtained from a warm spot such as the top of a refrigerator or from using a heating cable or heating tray. If you have the space, germination under lights is the most productive.

Covering the container with glass or plastic covering minimize the need for watering – check the medium often to make sure it isn't drying out. Once the seeds have germinated, remove the plastic or glass from the seed flats. Gradually move the seedlings into the full sun, sudden changes in light may injure tender seedlings.



### Hardening Off

A week or so before indoor – grown seedlings are shifted to the garden, start to harden them off. This process acclimates the tender plants, and gradually gets them used to their new environment.

Move trays or flats of potted plants outside into a sheltered, shady area, cold frame or under a tree. If the weather gets cold at night, move back inside. After two or three days give the plants a half day of sun gradually increasing to a full day. Make sure the transplants are well watered during this "hardening off" period.

Double check your planting dates before you move plants outside. Most vegetables and flowering annuals must wait until danger of frost is past.

By starting plants from seed, gardeners become involved in the growth process from the very first day. They see the start of spring while it is still too cold to do any gardening.

### Getting Started Outdoors

Part of the fun of seed gardening is often said to be watching the plants get started indoors. You don't have to start everything inside. Many vegetables are best handled by sowing the seed directly into the garden soil. The soil must be well prepared to ensure success. This preparation is also necessary for plants that have been started indoors and transplanted to the garden.

### Soil Preparation

Your outdoor soil should be loose and rich for most plants. Heavy soil will need the addition of organic material such as peat or composted materials, or the incorporation of soil looseners such as gypsum, vermiculite and or coarse sand. If you have a small area, start by using a spade or fork to turn over the top layer of soil to a minimum of 6 to 8 inches. Break up large clumps of soil and remove any debris such as branches and rocks. If your garden consisted of a larger area, using a roto tiller can make the job much easier.

Spread a one inch layer of peat moss or organic matter over the top and rake into the top two inches of the garden surface. Level the garden surface as much as possible.