

All About Seeds

SEEDS TO GROW AND SAVE

The types of seeds available to home gardeners are often either **Open-pollinated** (including heirloom varieties & native plants) or **Hybrid** varieties. **Organic** seeds indicate that the parent plant was grown according to the USDA's National Organic Program standards. There are few **GMO** seeds approved for use in the US and are only available to commercial growers.

If you plan to save seeds, only collect seeds collected from open-pollinated plants. Dry the seeds completely, label with variety and growing details, and store inside a sealed glass jar in a cool, dark, and dry place for 1-5 years.

HOW TO PLANT SEEDS

1. Measure space between seeds
2. Loosen soil using a shovel, trowels or your hands
3. Make holes to the right depth (*often 3x the seed's width*)
4. Add 2-3 seeds per hole
5. Cover with soil & press down gentle
6. Water slowly, letting water soak in and preventing seeds from being moved

COMMON SEED STARTING PROBLEMS

1. Soil is too cold – aim for temperatures between 50°F and 75°F
2. Soil is too wet – soil should be able to form a ball when squeezed but the ball should crumble easily when poked; too much water can kill roots
3. Not enough light – most young plants need 12-16 hours of bright direct light; artificial lights are recommended for indoor seed started
4. Damping-off Disease – causes young plant stems to wilt at the soil level
5. Fungus Gnats – larvae from fruit fly-like insects eat roots of young plants; mostly affects indoor plants
6. Cutworms – soil-dwelling grub cuts down young plants at the soil level; mostly affects outdoor plants

INDOOR SEED STARTING

While not strictly required, specialized tools are recommended for growing seeds indoors. These include: Small pots or trays with covers, potting soil, adjustable light source, small-size watering tools, and, if you are growing in a basement or heated garage, an electric heat source. Water and temperature sensors are recommended.

LEARN MORE WITH THESE RESOURCES

- **It's time to start your seeds -** <https://extension.umn.edu/yard-and-garden-news/its-time-start-your-seeds>
- **Seed Saving Basics -** <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/seed-saving-basics>

*PRO-TIP: Google "site:edu **Seed Starting**" (or site:gov) for research-based advice*

CLASS NOTES

APPLYING THE KNOWLEDGE

If you plan to start seeds, what kinds of plants? Should they be planted inside or outside?

Do you have old seeds? Are they still good? How do you know?

What is the best place to store seeds in your home?