

Starting plants from seed is an economical way to grow a wide variety of vegetables, flowers, and fruit and to get a head start on the season.

## You will need:

- quality seeds
- a high quality seed starting mix
- containers
- adequate sunshine or supplemental light
- heating mat (optional)

## Right Seed, Right Time

Become familiar with your plant's ideal temperature and soil conditions. If the seeds require a higher temperature to germinate, you may benefit from heating mats.

Use your best judgment, based on the current weather, to determine if extreme heat or frost will be harmful to that particular plant's temperature preference.

## Warm-weather crops

Warm-weather crops like peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, and melons, germinate best between 70-80°F. Cold temperatures can stunt their growth and freeze the sensitive leaves and roots.

## Cool-weather crops

Spring and fall crops, like cabbage, lettuce, peas and most root crops germinate best in temperatures between 55-70°F. Their thicker leaves protect them from freezing temperatures.

## Soil

Use a fine seed starting mixture like [Epsoma's Organic seed starting mix](#) for small seeds, or a mix like Coco Loco for larger seeds. Premoistened the mix until it is damp enough to stick together, but not dripping wet.

## Starting seeds

Plant seeds in the ground, with a few inches of seed starting mix, or grow in any container with drainage holes such as starting trays, pots, grow bags, or makeshift containers like egg cartons and recyclables.

A general rule is to bury the seed twice as deep as its width, then gently tamp the soil. Some seeds benefit from additional steps like presoaking, exposing to cold temps or scarring. See seed pack for specific details.

When **starting seeds outdoors**, protect the seedlings from the hot sun, harsh weather, insects, critters and foot traffic. An upside-down basket or a temporary shade cloth structure works well.

## Water

Do not allow seeds to dry out until germination begins. Once germination takes place, water your potted plants from underneath to encourage deep root growth and to prevent "damping off".

## Germination

Some seeds germinate in as little as 24 hours (like peas when soaked overnight) and others, like parsley and celery, can take 2-3 weeks.

## Light

Seeds sprout without light, when leaves appear, they will need sunshine or growlights. When growing inside, place the plants in a bright room (preferably a south-facing window with direct light) or supplement with growlights.

*NOTE:* High-quality, energy-efficient windows may reduce the amount of UV light your plant receives.

Their sensitive leaves are easily susceptible to sunburn, so gradually increase their exposure to the sun until they build up strength.

## Feeding

Once the first true set of leaves arrive, mix a capful of [FoxFarm Holy Mackerel fish emulsion](#) into the water tray every two weeks.

**Problems with your seedlings?** [Email](#) photos and a description to [info@rockledgegardens.com](mailto:info@rockledgegardens.com) or come see us.