

Seed Starting

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Diane Nagal

Why Start Seeds Indoors?

- Save money on seeds that don't germinate and on buying plants
- Access more plant variety than what is available at your local nursery
- Control growing conditions for healthier more productive plants
- Extends the growing season
- Allows for succession planting with shorter growing seasons
- Provides ideal germination conditions that nature can't provide
- Allows for more consistent germination, 70% to 90% success

Materials Need to Start Seeds

- **Seed Starter Soil Mix**
- **Seed trays**
- **Heat mats**
- **Humidity covers**
- **Grow lights**

Seed Starter Soil Mix

2 parts Peat Moss

2 parts Coconut Coir

1 part Perlite

1 part Vermiculite

Prepare Coconut Coir mixture ahead of time.

Combine all ingredients together in a clean bucket and mix with clean water.

Mix should be moist, not wet.

Tips for Selecting Seeds

- **Choose varieties suitable your Zone (Chino Valley is 7b - 8a)**
- **Choose heirloom or hybrid seeds**
- **Check germination rate of seeds and date of test on seed package**
- **Buy or obtain high quality seeds from dependable commercial seed companies**
- **If seeds are older than the current season do a germination test**
- **Also, if seeds are saved from yours or someone else's garden from last year or if date is unknown, do a germination test**

Germination Tests

Water Float Seed Test

- Place seeds into a glass of water for about 15 minutes
- Some seeds will float and other will sink to bottom of the glass
- Good seeds will sink to bottom of glass; bad seeds will float to top

Wet Paper Towel Seed Test

- Use a clean paper towel and moisten so it's damp, not dripping
- Spread 10 seeds on paper towel so they are not touching
- Fold towel over seeds and place in plastic bag
- Most seeds sprout in 7-10 days

Planting Seeds

- Fill seed trays with moist seed starter soil mixture
- Plant 2-4 seeds per cell
- Sowing depth is typically double the size of the seed
- Gently cover with soil
- Spray top lightly to moisten
- Place humidity cover or plastic dome over seeds to keep soil moist
- Place on heating mat

Temperature and Moisture

- Maintain a soil temperature of 70-80 degrees
- Place on heating mat and cover with plastic dome to keep soil moist
- Keep soil evenly moist, spray with water as needed
- Be sure to monitor your heating mat
- Moisture should be consistently moist, but not soggy
- Soil should feel damp, not wet for your moisture touch test

Lighting

- Most seeds need dark to germinate
- As soon as the seeds have sprouted, remove cover and transfer plants to under a grow light
- After a few days thin out the weakest plants by using scissors, leaving one strong plant per cell
- Using grow lights 12-16 hours a day mimics summer sunlight



Potting Up Plants

- Potting soil should be used.

Potting soil mix

4 parts peat moss or coco coir

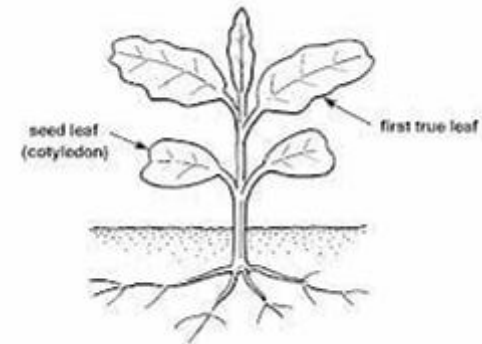
2 parts compost or worm castings

1 part perlite

1 part vermiculite

Mix all ingredients in clean bucket with clean water until moist.

- Start with clean containers to transplant seedling when you have 2 sets of leaves
- The first set of leaves are called “cotyledon”, they are not true leaves



- **Plants should be about 3” tall and have a healthy root ball**
- **Containers should have holes in the bottom so moisture doesn’t collect**
- **To contain soil put a coffee filter or paper towel in bottom**
- **When you pot up, you should pinch off lower leaves and plant deeper than the initial soil level**
- **Allows for deeper planting so the stems create a stronger root system**
- **Helps plants stave off transplant shock when planted outdoors**
- **Plants benefit from a gentle breeze from a fan**
- **Start feeding your new plants when they have 2 to 3 sets of true leaves with a diluted (1/4 strength) fertilizer**

Important Tips & Tricks

- Don't reuse potting mix and don't use garden soil or compost
- Clean all tools that will be used in planting and maintenance of the seedlings
- Leggy seedlings? Increase light intensity. Mold? Improve ventilation and reduce watering
- Transitioning seedlings outdoors
"Hardening Off:" Gradually introduce seedlings to outdoor conditions over 7-10 days.
"Transplanting Tips:" Wait until frost danger has passed. Handle gently and water thoroughly