When & How to Start Seeds Indoors



VIDEO

When & How to Start Seeds Indoors

Published September 14, 2022

TRANSCRIPT:

TERRY ALLAN:
Hi, I'm Terry Allan with SEEDS OF CHANGE™, and today we're visiting Luther Burbank's historic home and garden in Santa Rosa, California. In today's video, we're going to learn how to start our own seeds inside. And we have the privilege of learning how to do that right here in the greenhouse that Luther Burbank built in 1889 to carry out his plant breeding work.

Luther Burbank is one of America's most famous plant breeders. In the early 1900s, Burbank developed hundreds of plant varieties, many of which are still important today, like the Burbank Potato, the Santa Rosa Plum, and the Shasta Daisy.

While all of us don't have access to a beautiful greenhouse like this one, we can follow these same easy steps to get our seeds started at home. All you need to get started is a great selection of seeds, some containers and some potting mix. You can use any kind of containers you have around to start your seeds in, including left over six packs from the nursery last year, the four inch pots, you can use biodegradable containers, and you can even use free containers you have around the house, like this egg carton — as long as you put some holes in the bottom so that water can drain out — this makes perfect little cells for starting plants.

The first step is to fill your planting containers with potting mix. The germination station comes with a lid, a bottom to prevent the water from leaking out on your counter, and these are the cells that we're going to plant into. Now, I like to take my potting mix and pour it into a bucket or container like this and moisten it the night before so it's already nice and moist the next morning by the time I'm ready to plant. See how the peat moss can absorb the moisture overnight and become nice and moist — this is especially important if the peat moss in your bag is really dry.

To fill the containers, simply take your nice moist soil mix and get it evenly in all the holes. Alright! And once you have it generally full you can tap it down a little to settle it in the cells, and then top it up where it might have gone down pretty deep. One bag of our soil mix is generally enough to fill two trays plus a few of four inch pots. Before you start your seeds, be sure to read the back of your seed pack carefully. It has a lot of important information, and it may have special instructions for planting your seeds.

Let's start with Beefsteak Tomato, because that's everyone's favorite. And, on the back of the pack, it says plant them a quarter inch deep. So I'm going to make a small impression with my finger that's just about a quarter inch deep and then I'm going to plant two seeds per spot. When two plants come up, I'm going to have to choose one or the other and just keep one plant in each of these cells.

Reseal your packets well, so if you don't use all your seeds they'll keep 'till next season if they're stored in a cool, dark, dry location.

Once you're done with your seeds in that row — now I'm going to plant a lot of things in this tray so I want to remember that I'm going to remember that I'm going to cover the seeds that I've already planted with a little bit more soil mix and gently press them down. And then I like to use these nice wooden labels. I write the name of the plant: Beefsteak Tomato; and the date that I planted it so that I can remember, because even though you think you're going to remember, you're not going to. When you label your rows, you can tell that you've already planted that row and you remember the date and what's in it so later you'll know what you have.

Continue planting your flat until you've filled it up with all the things that you want to plant in your garden. When I'm handling small seeds, there's a good little trick that you can do to make it easier to fill your holes, which is fold a piece of paper, pour the tiny seeds in here and then you can just tap them out — they come out rather nicely just a couple at a time — and you can easily get just a couple of seeds per cell. This is a nice, easy technique to use.

But, some of the seeds, like cucumbers, melons and squash that have large seeds, I like to start them in a larger container than the small cells here. Four inch pot is usually the right size. These kinds of plants are large, they grow fast and they don't like to have their roots disturbed when you transplant them, so that's why I like to give them a good start. Fill a pot with soil, take out your seeds. The back of the packet says three quarter inch depth, so I'm going to make two holes here and put one seed in each hole. That way if both of them come up, I'll have to choose the best one to plant, and snip the other one off at the base so that they don't crowd each other. Cover with soil and label.

Once you've planted your seeds, you need to keep them evenly moist while they germinate while not drowning them which makes them rot. I like to start with my soil mix already moistened, and then, especially for the surface zone seeds like the Shasta Daisy, if you

pour water onto them, they can just float away. So I like a simple mister bottle, and as the surface of the soil dries out, you can give them a few spritz of water with your spritzer bottle. Or, you can use a watering can and give them a gentle soak so that it seems like rain. These watering cans are fabulous for a nice gentle soak. And when you're watering, be sure to take care of the corner and the edges and the middle will take care of itself.

How do you tell when it's time to water your seedlings. Your finger can tell you. If the surface is moist, you don't need to worry. If the surface is dry, though, it may be moist below the surface. So just stick your finger in the pot and if it feels moist, you don't need to water; but, if it's dry down by the roots of where the plant are, time to give it another drink. Once your seedlings have come up, you can let the soil dry out at the surface in between watering.

If everything goes well, soon your seedlings will all be green and healthy and happy-looking, waiting for their chance to go out and be transplanted in your garden.

A week or two before transplanting in your garden, we do a process called "hardening off," which basically means getting them used to the outside conditions because they've been pampered in the greenhouse or in your house for the last several weeks. To harden off your seedlings, we bring them out every day. First we'll put them in the shade. Then, after a couple days, we'll put them in the sun, and we'll gradually increase their exposure to outdoor conditions so that we'll have nice strong, healthy seedlings at transplanting time.

Follow these simple steps, and before you know it, you'll have plenty of seedlings for your own garden and probably some to share with your friends as well. And if you're looking for inspiration, go visit one of your local public gardens like Luther Burbank's home here in Santa Rosa and you'll get lots of ideas and inspiration that work well in your region.

…

For more great organic gardening tips, visit SeedsOfChange.com.

Start gardening now

Preparing Soil For Planting an Organic Vegetable Garden

Learn how to prepare your soil to support the growth of healthy plants, from proper depth and aeration to using compost and fertilizer.

EXPLORE

Planning an Organic Vegetable Garden

There are five keys to setting up a successful organic vegetable garden, and we want to share them with you.

EXPLORE

How To Make An Organic Compost Pile

See how easy it is to make your own nutrient-rich compost by using a few simple ingredients and investing a little time, effort, and backyard engineering.

EXPLORE

Pruning Apple Trees

Get tips on stimulating fruit production by pruning your apple trees in the winter season.

EXPLORE

Source URL: *https://www.seedsofchange.com/articles-and-videos/starting-seeds-indoors*