

Seed Starting Supplies

By Tara Schatz

- Containers for growing.** Choose any of the following, or be creative and use what you have:
 - commercial seed-starting trays
 - egg cartons
 - yogurt or other plastic food containers with holes punched in the bottom
 - tin soup cans with holes punched in the bottom
- Soil for starting seeds.** This is the most important of your seed starting supplies. Your mix should drain well and be light and fluffy. Use a commercial seed-starting mix, or make your own using:
 - 4 parts compost, homemade or store bought
 - 1 part peat moss
 - 1 part vermiculite
 - ½ part perlite
- Seeds.** Choosing seeds is a great winter activity. Scour seed catalogs for new and exciting varieties, trade seeds with your gardening friends, or attend a community seed swap.
- Water.** Once you have filled your containers with the seed-starting soil, water the containers thoroughly. After you have planted your seeds, you should mist everything gently with a sprayer full of water twice a day.
- Fertilizer.** Your little plants won't need fertilizer for a few weeks. After they have grown several sets of leaves, use a diluted mix of organic, liquid fertilizer in a spray bottle. Give them a good spraying every 5 days. This is called foliar feeding.
- Plastic wrap or commercial seed tray covers.** Cover your trays with clear plastic to keep the seeds warm and reduce moisture loss. The plastic covering can be removed once your plants sprout and start to grow.
- Light.** You can put your seedlings in a south-facing window that gets lots of sunshine, or you can supplement with a commercial grow light.
- Warmth.** Most plants will germinate and grow well when kept between 65 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit (18 to 24 degrees Celsius). If your room is much cooler than this, you will have to use an electric heating pad that can be positioned under your containers. Made especially for starting seeds, these heaters will warm your plants from the roots up for optimal growing conditions.
- Patience.** Your seeds will take between 4 and 10 days to germinate, and another six to eight weeks to grow big enough to move outside. Give them plenty of water, warmth, and light, and you will soon have a thriving young garden ready for planting.