

## Win A Vegetable Garden Like Delilah's Sweepstakes with The Home Depot

- ❶ Tomatoes
- ❷ Red and Green Peppers
- ❸ Rhubarb



- ❹ Giant Sunflower
- ❺ Yellow Sweet Corn
- ❻ White Sweet Corn
- ❼ Radishes
- ❽ Tomatoes



# STARTING VEGGIES FROM SEED INDOORS



Want to save money and get a head start on your veggies? Teach your kids about small-scale agriculture and have fun, all while enjoying the satisfaction that comes from producing your own flavorful food? Then starting seeds indoors is for you!

Your indoor planting timeline will depend on two factors: the seeds in question and your growing locale. To find your ideal planting time for starting specific seeds indoors, work back from the average last frost date in your city or town. Once you know your last frost date, check the seed packet to find out if the young plant should be transplanted *before* the last frost date (broccoli) or well after the danger of frost has passed.

The seed packet will also indicate how many weeks it takes for the seed to grow into a young plant. For most vegetables, that will be 4 to 10 weeks of indoor nurturing.



## Step 1 Tools and seed selection

Start by purchasing the tools you'll need to sow seeds indoors. You can find what you need at The Home Depot Garden Center. Look for trusted national brands like Scotts, PW, Vival, Vigoro and Ortho EcoSense.

Choose your seeds. Your choices will be dictated by your personal taste, as well as your backyard space.

Some vegetables are easier to grow than others. Squash, pumpkins and melons require more room to spread out, some are more difficult to grow successfully (spinach) or need to be planted in a large group for effective pollination (corn), making them less beginner-friendly.

Some of the most popular backyard veggies, due to their culinary popularity, resistance to pests, small-space friendliness, good yields and ease of growing include beans, carrots, cucumber, peas, potatoes, radishes and squash. Varieties such as leaf lettuce, peppers, tomatoes and zucchini also do well in pots.

Most vegetables require full sun, so even before you start your seeds indoors, select a portion of your garden that gets lots of light for your future vegetable patch or raised beds.

In a small space, you can use deep pots (minimum of about 18 inches of depth, 12 for leaf lettuces) for container gardening, which means even a deck, patio or porch can be home to a mini vegetable patch.

## Step 2 Where to place

Most seeds will have to be started indoors, regardless of what region you live in.

Exceptions include carrots, spinach and peas, all of which can be sown straight into the garden soil as soon as the ground can be worked.

When planting seeds indoors, look for a warm place to set the potting tray. Maintain a temperature of about 65 to 75 F, using warming pads under the trays if necessary. (Remove them once the seedlings are a few inches tall.)

If you're sowing seeds into little pots or repurposed egg cartons, use potting soil as your growing medium (never garden soil, which is too dense and may harbor parasites). Some trays come with tiny pellets of organic growing medium that expand into mini "pot" form when soaked in water.

Follow instructions and set up the trays, watering the soil.

## Step 3

Plant the seeds, following the seed packet instructions. Some seeds are dropped directly onto the soil, others have to be gently covered and some need to be pre-soaked prior to planting.

Always water the potting tray so the pots can absorb water from their bottoms. If you water from above you might wash seeds out of their growing medium. Cover the tray with plastic to maintain warmth and moisture until the seeds germinate, which could take anywhere from a few days to a couple weeks, depending on the vegetable.

Be sure to label each row of pots so you know what's coming up and keep the seed packets for future reference.

## Step 4

Once the seeds germinate, eliminate the plastic cover. Place the potting tray in a draft-free space where it is exposed to 12 to 18 hours of sunlight per day. In most regions that's next to impossible, so set a fluorescent grow light nearby on a timer.

Give the seedlings their first feeding of organic fertilizer when the second set of leaves appears.

## Step 5

The hardness of your region affects your transplant time. As annuals, vegetables have fewer limitations than perennials. Once your plants are several inches high, sturdy and the weather outside is past the date of last frost, you're ready to transplant your seedlings.

Start by hardening them off (acclimatizing them to the outdoors). Move the tray to a shady spot outdoors and bring them indoors or cover them if the nights are still cold.

After about a week, the plants will appear strong and healthy and will be ready for transplanting into the vegetable patch (which should be enriched with a special vegetable-growing soil and compost beforehand) or into large pots if you are container gardening.

Plant them on an overcast day or in the early evening, not at the peak of the afternoon heat. Keep them watered and give them regular feedings for maximum success.



# GARDEN CLUB