



The WEST·HARTFORD·GARDEN·CLUB

in collaboration with

West Hartford Public Library

## DIRECT SOWING YOUR GARDEN SEEDS



**Starting seeds** outdoors is a great choice for many different kinds of plants. Purchase seed packets that contain the number of seeds that will be used in one season. Larger packets may be a bargain but will go to waste if the contents exceed the requirements. Consider splitting a packet of seeds with a friend if you would like to try some different varieties.

### Step-by-Step

1. **Seed.** Those labeled for the current year have the highest viability rate.
  2. **Planting depth.** Follow recommendations on the seed packet when sowing seeds. (Rule of thumb is 1-1/2 to 2 times the width of the seed).
- **Spacing.** If using a tray, trace a line in the potting soil with a pencil or stick and space seeds a thumb's width along the line.
  - **Hygiene.**
  - **Label** seed pots and flats clearly with masking tape or wooden plant labels using an indelible marker with the name and planting date.
  - **Moisture.** Maintain even moisture. Seeds must stay moist to germinate properly. Once a seed dries out, it will not germinate.
  - **Good light.** Seedlings need full sun
  - **Heat.** Most seedlings like to be warm.
  - **Moisture.** Keep the soil moist, but never wet
  - **Feeding.** Wait to fertilize until the seedling's true leaves (the second set) appear. Provide them with compost tea or sprinkled compost, which will help the seedlings develop a strong root system.

- **Air.** Seedlings benefit from air movement This will encourage the seedlings to develop stronger stems.
- **Log or journal.** Keep a log for future reference.
- **Storage.** Leftover seeds may be stored in an airtight container in a cool location.

#### Sowing Seeds

Sow each crop at its appropriate sowing rate, depth, and spacing between rows. Direct seeding exposes the seeds to the elements, and seeding at the recommended rate can ensure there are enough seedlings for a good stand.

As a rule of thumb on seeding depth, most small-seeded crops can be sown  $\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$ " deep and larger seeded crops  $\frac{1}{2}$ –1" deep.

#### Watering

Once sown, water in the seeds so that there is adequate and even moisture and seed-to-soil contact. Mist or lightly water small seeds to avoid displacing them. Ensure even and consistently moist, but not overly wet conditions until germination. The germinating embryos and small seedlings are delicate and need consistent moisture to fully germinate and complete the earliest life stages; a dry period can kill them. Note that pelleted seeds require more water initially to split or dissolve the pellet and allow for germination.