

School Gardens

Seed Sowing and Transplanting



Seed Sowing in Trays

Preparation

- Check that the season is correct for the seed you are sowing.
- Ensure that seeds are fresh (alive!)
- Seed trays, seed sowing media and equipment you will be using such as presser boards (floats) and sieves must be clean.
- Seed sowing media should be moist, of a fine texture, provide good drainage and aeration, and low, balanced levels of nutrients.

Seed Tray Preparation

- Fill the seed tray almost to the top with seed mix media and firm into the corners.
- Smooth and level the surface of the media by hand or using a presser board. Firm the media with the presser board. The surface of the media should end up 10mm below the top edge of the tray.
- A level, firm surface with no humps or hollows is essential for even germination.

Seed Sowing

- The aim is to scatter seeds as evenly as possible over the surface of the media allowing an optimum number of seedlings to develop before pricking out.
- Three methods of seed sowing by hand:
 1. Pour seed into the palm and take pinches of seed to scatter on the media.
 2. Allow seed to dribble from the crease in your palm while tapping your hand.
 3. Allow seed to dribble from the crease in a previously folded piece of paper.
- Sowing thickness will vary according to the size of seed. Larger seed - thinner sowing.
- Cover seed to a depth approx. 2 times the thickness of the seed using a fine sieve or by hand.
- Label the seed tray and water in using a fine rose at low pressure. (Avoid drips)
- Store left over seed in refrigerator if possible.

Aftercare

- Oxygen, moisture and warmth are essential for germination of seeds.
- Sowings are best placed in a warm sheltered environment such as a greenhouse; average temperature for most flowers and vegetables is 21 degrees Celsius.
- Sowings should be monitored regularly, i.e. once a day for moisture, pests and diseases, bird / mice damage, temperature and signs of germination.
- Shading may be necessary during the summer months

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Transplanting Seedlings into Trays (pricking out)

- Seedlings should be transplanted into trays as soon as they are large enough to handle them.
- To minimise transplanting stress, ensure seedlings are well watered at least one hour before transplanting.
- Fill in cell punnets with a mix of compost and raised seed media, or a fine compost media.
- Carefully loosen and separate the seedlings handling them from their seed leaves.
- Using the cells punnet create a hole in the media with the dibber large enough to accommodate the seedling root in each cell, drop the seedling and ease media back around the root and lightly firm.
- Label and water the completed tray.

Aftercare

- Return transplanted punnets to the sheltered environment where they will be grown on for 3 - 5 weeks.
- Monitor seedlings daily for water, temperature, pests and diseases and development. Once the first seedlings roots are showing through the drainage holes they can be placed in a cold frame for 'hardening off' prior to planting out or alternatively, potted on.

For more information see the Energize School Garden Calendar and the School Garden Spring Guide. Also talk to your Energizer about ideas for healthy eating education, cooking and activities.



This resource was developed by Sport Waikato and the Wintec Horticulture Dept 2014