



STARNOTE 315
June 2009

GROWING FLOWERS FROM SEED

Brighten your yard on a budget

Growing flowers from seed and starts is quick, easy and economical. Start your seed indoors or plant directly in the garden (but watch for insects). Here are some handy tips to get you started.

- ◇ **Plant seed indoors**
- ◇ **Read the Instructions**
- ◇ **When the seeds sprout**
- ◇ **Harden seedlings**
- ◇ **Sowing seeds in the garden**
- ◇ **Water frequently**
- ◇ **Fertilize**
- ◇ **A Selection of Popular Flowers**

Plant seed indoors about 4 to 6 weeks before you plan to transfer plants to the garden. Starting them inside is the best way to keep insects from foiling your efforts. Use plantable *peat pots* or pellets, multi-celled *Mini Greenhouses* or cardboard egg cartons to start the seeds. A complete planting medium like *Black Gold Seed Starting Mix* has everything you need for healthy seedlings. Be sure the mix is pre-moistened before you plant. Add water at night, squeeze out the excess next morning, and you're ready to go! ([top](#))

Read the Instructions. Plant the seeds according to package instructions, usually a few per each cell or pot, and watch planting depth carefully. Too much mix on top may smother the seeds and prevent germination. Water the cells again. Put the clear top on the greenhouse or cover tops of pots or egg cartons with a layer of clear plastic wrap. This will keep your soil from drying out while seeds are germinating. Add water as necessary through the bottom of the greenhouse or pot. Place your containers in an area with stable temperatures and bright, indirect light. (Save the instructions for when you plant them outside). ([top](#))

When the seeds sprout and show 2 complete sets of leaves, remove the covering and place the containers near a south-facing window or on the patio where they will get some sunlight. Rotate the containers every 2-3 days to prevent seedlings from bending to reach the light.

As the seedlings begin to crowd each other, snip off the weaker ones with scissors. Don't pull them out or you may disturb the roots and cause them all to die. You should eventually have one strong plant per pot or cell. About 3 weeks after seeds have

sprouted, fertilize them lightly with a liquid plant food like *Fish Emulsion* or *Dr Q's® Liquid Plant Tonic*. [\(top\)](#)

Harden seedlings by exposing them to a few hours of direct sunlight and outdoor temperatures for a few days, before actually planting them outdoors. Keep out of the wind and don't let them dry out. Those small pots don't hold much moisture! When the roots begin to grow through the bottom of the pot or cell, it's time to transplant your flowers into the garden. [\(top\)](#)

Sowing seeds in the garden means good soil preparation first. Add enough organic material to your beds to make a difference in soil texture. Usually 25% or the soil should consist of amendments like *Paydirt™ Planting Mix*. Work these amendments into the top 6-8 inches of soil. Amendments improve the drainage in heavy clay soil and increase water- holding capacity in sandy soil.

Plant seeds according to package directions, paying careful attention to planting depth. Too much soil cover can result in seed germination failure. Sprinkle *Dr. Q's® Gold Dust Starter Fertilizer* over the soil surface. Water thoroughly and keep soil moist. Seed should sprout in 7-10 days. To prevent insects from devouring your new seedlings; try dispersing Cedar Mulch over the surface. [\(top\)](#)

Water frequently for short periods while your plants are small. As they grow and become more established, water longer and less often to encourage deep rooting. Add a 2-inch layer of mulch during hot weather to cool the soil, retain moisture and prevent weeds. An inexpensive soaker line can be placed under the mulch layer. This provides water directly to the roots and prevents fungus problems common with overhead sprinkling. Don't bury the hose in the soil. Plant roots will seek out and clog the soaker line.

Fertilize your plants regularly. Use a fertilizer like *Dr. Q's® Rose & Flower Food* every month for continuous bloom. [\(top\)](#)

A Selection of Popular Flowers commonly grown from seed:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Height</u>	<u>Spacing</u>	<u>Sun/Shade</u>	<u>Colors</u>
Alyssum	4-6 inches	10-12 inches	Sun	White, Purple, Mix
Begonia	6-18 inches	12-18 inches	Shade	Pink, White, Red
Four O'Clocks	20-24 inches	12-14 inches	Sun	Assorted
Gomphrena	18-24 inches	10-12 inches	Sun	Purple, Pink, White
Impatiens	10-18 inches	10-12 inches	Shade	White, Pink, Red
Lobelia	8-10 inches	6-8 inches	Shade	Blue, White, Mix
Marigold	6-24 inches	10-18 inches	Sun	Yellow, orange, red
Morning Glory	24-36 inches	12 inches	Sun	Assorted

Moss Rose	3-4 inches	8-12 inches	Sun	Mixed
Pansy	4-6 inches	8-12 inches	Sun	Assorted
Petunia	8-18 inches	8-12 inches	PM Shade	Assorted
Snapdragon	10-36 inches	6-12 inches	Sun	Assorted
Verbena	9-12 inches	8-12 inches	Sun	Red, Pink, Purple
Vinca	10-12 inches	8-12 inches	Sun	Many
Zinnia	12-48 inches	8-12 inches	Sun	Assorted

[\(top\)](#)