

Diggin' in the Dirt: Starting Your Seeds

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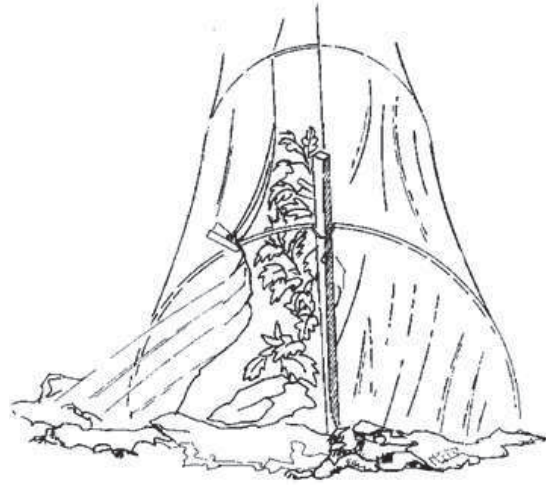
Seed Starting

Seeds are not difficult to start. If you can create an environment that provides plenty of high intensity light, you can grow excellent transplants and have them available at the time you need them. You also have access to a lot more varieties if you grow your own.

If you have a greenhouse or cold frame, you won't have to worry about added light. But if you are starting seeds inside, you will need a waterproof seed-starting table with fluorescent shop lights with reflectors that can be lowered and raised as the plants grow. You don't need expensive grow lights. The lights need to be set as close to the growing seedlings as possible. Two inches is not too close. This will create a strong, stocky plant.

after they develop their first set of true leaves. This process takes a little more time but will generally produce a stronger transplant.

Seeds are often sown too early. Then they are held in pots past the point that they should be. You can plan your seeding dates by counting back-



the first method or 6-8 weeks by the second. Peppers are slightly longer. Squash, pumpkins, cucumbers and melons should only be sown directly in individual pots and they need 10-21 days to transplanting.

Using that information, don't plan on planting your tomatoes outside until mid-May at the earliest. If you protect your tomatoes with either a mini-greenhouse structure or some other device like a "Wall of Water," you can move this up a couple of weeks. Peppers are very sensitive to cold soils so a late May to early June is usually better. Again, if you can protect them after setting them out, they will do better. Warming the soil by covering it with clear plastic for about five days before transplanting also helps quite a bit.

Seedlings need good air circulation and attention to watering – neither too much nor too little.

This is very important! Vegetable transplants need to be hardened off by exposing them to outside temperatures, sun and wind gradually. Put them outdoors for short periods of time in indirect light and then for a few more days (for short periods) in more direct light.

When transplanting, continue to protect them from low or high temperature extremes. Bait for slugs and consider drenching the transplants with a good water-soluble fertilizer. Most of our transplants in April and May need additional heat. Floating row covers or plastic mini-greenhouses can help to keep the vegetables growing rapidly. If you are using plastic hoop structures, be sure to open them up in the morning to avoid excessive heat buildup. It is easy to cook your tender seedlings if you are

not paying attention.

Despite all the rain, I am optimistic that we will have a good gardening year. Last year, the wet weather of May and June really had an impact on gardening, especially the warm season crops like squash, tomatoes and peppers. The odds are against a repeat.

The OSU Extension office is starting to re-open for face-to-face public contact Monday through Thursday. I will generally be there Monday and Tuesday but check as individual days can change. There should be someone answering the phone all those days.

Free newsletter (what a deal!)

The Oregon State University Extension office in Columbia County publishes a monthly newsletter on gardening and farming topics (called *Country Living*) written/edited by yours truly. All you need to do is ask for it and it will be mailed or emailed to you. Call (503) 397-3462 to be put on the list. Alternatively, you can find it on the web at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/columbia/> and click on newsletters.

Take excess produce to the food bank, senior centers, or community meals programs. Cash donations to buy food are also greatly appreciated.

The Extension Service offers its programs and materials equally to all people.

Contact information for the Extension office

Oregon State University
Extension Service – Columbia County
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St. Helens, OR 97051
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I have successfully started tomatoes indoors in modest light and moved them outside in the trays under eaves that get good light and moved them back inside every evening. They warm back up when they don't need the light and seem to do okay outside during the day if temperatures exceed 50 degrees.

There are two common approaches to starting seeds. Some people grow them in flats with enough space between seeds to allow them to be directly transplanted out into the garden. More commonly, seeds are sown more thickly in starting flats and then transplanted into individual pots or "cell" trays. The seedlings are transplanted

wards from when you want to put transplants out. For example, it takes about 2-3 weeks to grow seedlings of lettuce and greens for direct transplant or 3-4 weeks if you move the seedling first into individual pots or cells. For cabbage and broccoli, it is 4-5 weeks by the first method or 5-6 weeks by the second. Lettuce and the cabbage family can be transplanted from now on. Beans can be started and transplanted despite everything you have read. They can be ready to transplant in three weeks or less after seeding in individual containers. Have the ground prepared and protect from cold nights.

Tomatoes need 5-7 weeks by

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SATURDAY April 17, 2021 from 8am-noon



BRING:

- ⇒ Ammunition
- ⇒ Fireworks / Flares
- ⇒ Gas / Diesel / Fuels
- ⇒ Lawn/Garden Chemicals
- ⇒ Herbicides / Pesticides
- ⇒ Pool / Spa Chemicals
- ⇒ Light ballasts—remove from light fixture
- ⇒ Fluorescent tubes
- ⇒ Art/Hobby Chemicals
- ⇒ Solvents/ Thinners
- ⇒ Items containing mercury
- ⇒ Propane Cylinders
- ⇒ Compressed gas cylinders
- ⇒ Batteries (only car, rechargeable, button) —no alkaline batteries
- ⇒ Cleaners/detergents
- ⇒ Poisons
- ⇒ Used motor oil and antifreeze
- ⇒ **Medical Sharps** - must be in sealed, OSHA approved puncture-proof containers (available at local pharmacies)

Bring product in original container

DO NOT BRING

- Unwanted/unused medicine/ pharmaceuticals (Vernonia City Hall has a MedReturn box for unwanted/unused Prescriptions 8-5 M-F)
- Asbestos
- Garbage or trash
- Liquid in containers larger than 5 gallons

Vernonia Hardware and Supply (1026 Bridge St) accepts USED Paint during their regular hours

The following are accepted at the Columbia County Transfer Station
1601 Railroad Ave, St Helens
anytime Mon-Sat 8am-5pm

- Latex and Acrylic Paint, Oil-based Paint, enamel, stains, lacquers, shellacs, varnishes, primers
- Used motor oil and antifreeze
- Medical Sharps - must be in sealed, OSHA approved, puncture-proof containers (available at local pharmacies)

Rainier's HHW event
May 15, 2021 from 8am-noon at the RV
Parking lot near Rainier Sewer Treatment

Call Kathy at 503.397.7259 for information

For all other materials and liquids in containers larger than 5 gallons: Call Keo Chen of ACT Enviro at least 2 weeks prior to event at (971-279-6780) for appointment.
Commercial Generators (CEG) CONTACT Keo Chen 971-279-6780 for appt.