



Anderson's Seed and Garden, Inc.

"Our Seeds Succeed"

# Starting Seeds Indoors

For those of you who would like to start your own seedlings but never dared, and those gardeners already participating in the living-room greenhouse experience, here are a few suggestions that make things just a little easier.

1. Organize your seed packets by the calendar. When starting seedlings, it is easy to start your seeds too early and have transplants that are too large to plant successfully in May. If you decide that May 20 is the safe day to plant for you, then organize your seeds accordingly. Using a box, organize your seed packets and place the seeds that need to be started 12 weeks before transplant (Feb. 18 is 12 weeks before May 20) first in order, 10 weeks before transplant next, then 8 weeks before transplant next, on down to two weeks, until they are all organized by planting time. This method, or a variation of it, will help you to keep track of your seeds and when to start germinating for the best results.

2. Start with a good soil mix. Although gardeners can choose from many different soil mixes, make sure that the one you choose contains peat moss, vermiculite, and possibly a small amount of perlite. A light mix such as this will hold moisture longer without becoming soggy, giving you optimum growing results. It pays to spend a little more and purchase a high quality starting mix.

3. Choose the right container for the plant you're growing and the right container for you. Some prefer to start 15-20 seedlings in one small container, then transplant them into individual peat pots after they reach a certain height. Other gardeners start their seedlings in flats with growdomes, or with peat pellets, or in peat pots, or in hundreds of other ways.

4. If you don't have a good light source, use full-spectrum fluorescent lights. They do cost more, but they are well worth the extra expense. Timers also work well so that your seedlings get the proper amount of light that they need every day (usually 12-16 hours daily). Position the lights, if possible, so that they are 3-4 inches above the tallest seedling.

5. Water from below. If you have ever tried to water hundreds of little containers you will know that it is a time consuming and tiring process. It is much easier to water one big tray and letting the individual pots soak up what they need. After they draw up what they need, discard the excess water so that the seedlings and roots don't rot in soggy soil.

6. Only plant what you can use. This should be your very first rule. If you are only going to plant 3 or 4 tomato plants, why start (and care for) a whole flat of them, unless you have a lot of grateful neighbors? Some prefer to start only what they can't find at any of the local greenhouses such as hybrid peppers, cantaloupes, and watermelons. Most pony-pack plants are fairly reasonable, but if you have the space, why not experiment with varieties that can't be found elsewhere? Then all your neighbors will be asking where you found your incredible vegetable and flower plants.

While searching the seed catalogs over for new and exciting varieties to try, remember that most of those vegetables and flowers are available right here in the valley. We're doing this all for the fun and enjoyment of it, not because it's work—don't forget to have a good time with it.

