



Ontario Organic Seed Suppliers

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STEP 2. SEEDS & PLANTING

Seeds & Seedlings

Seeing the first green speck of your new plant emerging from a seed is an amazing experience! Sometimes you only have to wait a day or two, sometimes seeds take three weeks to germinate. Here are our top tips to getting your seeds started.

1. **What to start indoors & when?** The information in Step 1. Planning for Plants will help you determine the answer to this question. This is a crucial consideration for your garden as some seeds need more of a head start than others. Starting seeds indoors will help you eat delicious produce earlier.
2. **Quality Seeds:** In order to grow healthy plants, you need to start with good seeds. It is worth your while to invest in seeds from reputable companies. They will be fresher and have better germination rates. Of course, you can always save seeds from non-hybrid plants to have your own supply of quality seeds.
3. **Soil:** Use potting soil that is a sterile, soil-less mix to start your seeds. It is light and prevents issues with fungal growth. Add water to the bag of soil before putting into containers or dump soil into a bin and mix water into then.
4. **Containers:** The most important thing for containers is drainage. You don't want water sitting in the base of a pot as it can rot your seedlings. You can use seeding trays or get creative and check your recycling bin for egg cartons, paper towel rolls or milk cartons.
5. **Seeding!** Read your seed packages first for planting depth. A general rule of thumb is that small seeds are planted at a shallow depth and larger seeds are planted deeper. Fill the containers to the top with moistened soil and gently press on the soil without packing it too tight. Use your finger or a pencil eraser to make the right depth of hole for your seeds. Mist the seeds with water and cover lightly with soil. They're planted!
6. **Label Your Plants:** as soon as you plant more than one type of seed it is easy to mix them up! Write the variety and date on tape for the container, or on a popsicle stick to put in the soil.
7. **Temperature:** Start your seeds in a warm place such as on top of a fridge or near a woodstove.
8. **Light:** As soon as your seedlings appear, place them in the brightest, warmest window you have. If the plants have to stretch for light, they will get long & leggy which could cause problems in their later development. Rotate them in the window daily so they face the light from different angles. Ideally your seedlings will need 10-14 hours of light. You can invest in specialized warming mats and grow lights to create these conditions if you don't have a warm space or sunny window.
9. **Water:** Too much water is as bad for seedlings as too little water. A

STEP 2. SEEDS & PLANTING, CONTINUED

light plastic covering to increase humidity in warm places will help retain moisture until they germinate. Frequency of watering will depend on the conditions of your house, so you will need to check often. Allow the soil to partially dry out between watering. Use a spray bottle of room temperature water to mist the soil surface, and water more thoroughly as the plants grow.

10. **Food:** As the seedlings grow and reach their 2nd or 3rd set of leaves, start giving them a natural, water soluble fertilizer mixed at ½ strength. Look for one high in phosphorous on the label. Do not over do the fertilizer! You will mix in compost when you transplant.
11. **Airflow:** Putting a fan on low near your seedlings is a good idea. It will help air flow to prevent dampening-off

disease or mold from forming. It will also make your plants stronger and more resistant to wind once they are living outside.

12. **Thinning:** It is a good idea to start more than one seed in a pot as not every seed will germinate. When multiple seedlings grow too close together, either in a pot or in your garden bed, you will need to thin some of them to have proper spacing (check the seed packages for recommended spacing). It is this space that allows a plant to flourish without competition. Simply snip your excess seedlings right at the soil line taking care not to damage the roots of the seedling you're keeping. Consider adding the thinned seedlings to salads.

Potting Up

If your plants start to outgrow their pots before it is warm enough to go outside, you can transplant them into larger pots. This is an important practice for some crops, such as tomatoes.

Choose a good quality transplant mix or make your own from compost, coconut coir, perlite, and potting soil. Fill the new container half-way with moist soil mix. Water the seedlings first so the soil better sticks to the roots. Carefully remove seedlings from original containers by placing your hand over the top with the seedling between your fingers, then turn upside-down. Place the seedlings in the new pots and top up with soil no further than the first set of leaves.

Continued Learning

There are countless resources online to help you learn about this process and tricks for individual plants. When you order seeds from reputable sources, they will have helpful information on the seed packages and online. You can also check out The Old Farmer's Almanac Growing Guides at www.almanac.com/gardening/growing-guides. Each guide identifies sun exposure, soil type and pH, pests and problems, harvesting tips, recommended varieties, common questions, and more.



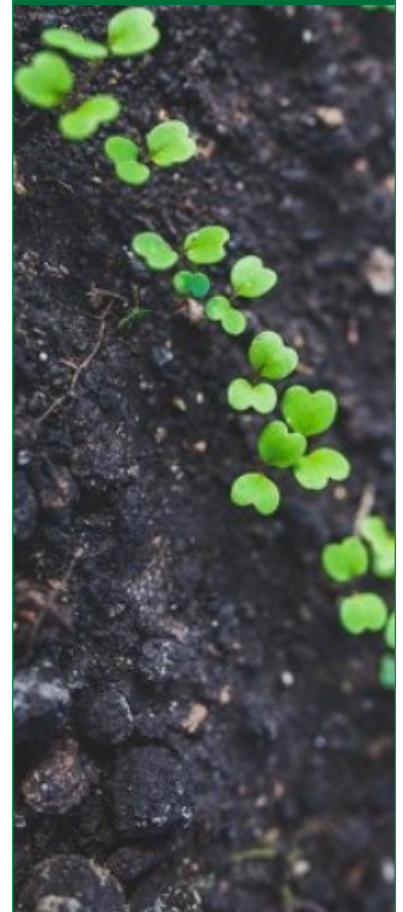
Tomatoes being transplanted.

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Preserving the Harvest

Freezing, canning, cold storage (e.g. root cellar or similar), and dehydrating are tried and true ways to keep your harvest in your kitchen throughout winter. Here are some guides help you preserve the harvest:

1. Bernardin Guide to Home Preserving by Bernardin
2. The Ultimate Guide to Preserving Vegetables by Angi Schneider
3. The Farm Girl's Guide to Preserving the Harvest by Ann Accetta-Scott
4. Homegrown Pantry by Barbara Pleasant

ABOUT US

Georgian Bay is part of Lake Huron and the Great Lakes Basin. It is known as Spirit Lake (*Mnidoo-gamii*) by the Anishinabek peoples and was named a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization in 2004.

The Georgian Bay Biosphere is a non-profit charity that works to protect the environment, create vibrant communities, and support a healthy economy. Working with many partners across the region, GBBR relies on grants, contracts, memberships, and donations to do our work.

Join us today! gbr.ca

Sustainable food systems are an important part of being a UNESCO biosphere reserve. A key factor in sustainable food systems is knowledge sharing and building capacity for people to grow their own food. Since 2008, GBBR has led and partnered on food and garden programs with dozens of partners.

Gardening is a rewarding experience with many benefits. It is a powerful way for people of all ages to connect with nature, it can have significant environmental benefits, and can even be an economical option for fresh produce.

ONLINE RESOURCES

1. The Georgian Bay Biosphere
www.gbr.ca/gardens
2. The Old Farmer's Almanac
www.almanac.com
3. Ontario Seed Company
www.oscseeds.com
4. Family, Food & Garden
www.familyfoodgarden.com
5. West Coast Seeds
www.westcoastseeds.com
6. Planet Natural Guide
www.planetnatural.com

HAPPY GARDENING

Gardening on any scale is healthy for our bodies and minds. We wish you lots of luck, fun, and success with your garden!

Please take a minute to share a picture of your garden with us. We'd love to see your green thumb!



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



GEORGIAN BAY
BIOSPHERE RESERVE