

Learn 'n Grow Class at SummerWinds Nursery:

Seed Gardening 101

At last: the days are getting longer and warmer... spring is right around the corner! Start collecting those unique seed packets and roll up your sleeves for some truly rewarding gardening. Anticipate a sea of flowers in your garden that you likely won't find elsewhere in your neighborhood. There are two ways to get started: starting your seeds indoors, and direct sowing.



Seed Starting Indoors

Certain seed varieties, like most Icelandic Poppies, are very tiny and delicate and would benefit from getting “started” indoors, but you can choose to start any seed variety indoors if you would like to get gardening while it’s still cold outside. Seed Starting is the process of getting your seeds planted and growing in soil indoors before the weather outside is warm enough. Unless you are using a biodegradable seed tray or pot, make certain the seedling can be transplanted once the weather warms and you’re ready to move it out into the garden.

To start seeds, fill a seed-starting tray with a high-quality seed starting mix like E.B. Stone Seed Starter. Thoroughly moisten the mix, place seeds evenly spaced several inches apart, and then cover with a light dusting of the starter mix. Make sure to label the seeds with variety name and date. Create a warm, humid environment for the seeds by covering with plastic wrap. Never allow your seeds dry out, but don’t keep them soaked with water either. For tiny seeds like Icelandic Poppies, use a bottom-watering tray.

Once all danger of frost has passed, take a week to harden your baby plants off gently by giving them dappled light outside a few hours a day, slowly increasing exposure, before ultimately transplanting them into a garden bed or pot.

Direct Sowing

Other varieties of seed are perfectly fine with being planted directly in a garden bed or container outside, and don’t need any special care beforehand. The easiest flower seeds to direct sow are Cosmos, Zinnias, Bachelor Buttons, and Sunflowers.

Make sure to check the seed packet instructions before planting to assess the right time for putting them in the ground. If you don’t have instructions, most flower seeds generally like to be planted in spring, after all danger of frost has passed. Be sure to maintain slight moisture in the soil as the seeds are germinating.

If birds enjoy your garden, use a sheet of chicken wire to cover your garden space and protect your seeds from becoming food before they sprout. With direct sowing, seedlings can often sprout up pretty close to each other. Thin out the seedlings and keep the space between your plants a couple inches apart to maintain healthy plants.



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