

How to Grow Flower Seedlings

Shrubs and trees are the foundation of your garden but seedlings provide that 'good to be alive' look with masses of colour for many months. Seedlings also provide variety and year long interest.

BRIEFLY:

Planting Times: Anytime, with different varieties but Spring & Autumn are most popular.

Position: Garden Centres have varieties for sun, shade, pots, baskets etc.

Seedlings have come a long way over recent years and the quality of newer varieties is excellent. The latest releases are bred for performance and are really worth the little extra you might pay. Seedlings really do typify the saying, 'you only get what you pay for'.

When planning your garden, do give thought to arranging it with a happy balance of shrubs to seedlings. Seedlings look best if massed so leave broad wedges for planting between groups of shrubs and leave room for borders between shrubs and lawns to link them together.

Preparing Your Soil

Seedlings perform best in an open, well drained soil. It is essential that poor soils are improved prior to planting. If your drainage is suspect you may be able to build up your garden bed to overcome drainage problems.

Dig over the selected bed to at least the depth of your spade and remove any weeds. Light, sandy soils can be improved by the addition of **Planting Compost**. Heavy, clay soils need similar treatment i.e. Organic Planting Compost and Claybreaker. Dig cow manure or All Purpose Plant Food at the recommended rates through your soil prior to planting ensuring that it is well mixed with the soil. Rake your soil roughly level and prepare for planting. Soil for most seedlings should ideally be slightly acidic to neutral and Garden Centres can test your soil at no charge if you desire.

Water the Punnets

Water the seedlings in your punnet an hour or two prior to planting, they must be moist when you remove them. The soil you are planting into is best if it is just damp when you plant into it.

Planting Your Seedlings

Check the seedling label for height, planting distance and any special instructions. Carefully remove your seedlings from the punnets by placing fingers between the plants then turning the container on its side and gently squeezing, easing the plants out. Divide the seedlings keeping as much soil around the roots as you can. A sharp knife could be handy here.

Dig a hole slightly larger than the root ball, plant the seedling and firm soil back in around the roots. Ensure that the soil level of the seedling in the punnet is the same level as in the garden bed.

Water straight after planting. The addition of **Plant Starter** will help your plants to a better start in life by gently stimulating the root system.

How Often Do You Water?

Your first watering needs to be long and gentle. Do use a sprinkler nozzle or watering can that will water fully. From there on one or two good soakings a week is generally needed but weather conditions can of course vary this. The rule of thumb is - keep slightly moist but not wet. Watering in the morning is best but if evening is your only time available then that's O.K. too.

Do I Feed Them Again?

For best results yes. A light application of **liquid fertiliser** is needed about four to six weeks after planting. Any dry food added should always be watered in and washed off the foliage. We also recommend watering with **Liquid Food** every three weeks or so to improve growth and flowering.

Pinching Out

Many seedlings such as Petunias, Pansies etc. do benefit from a light 'pinching' as they grow. This means that you lightly trim the growing tips hence creating a bushier plant and more flowers.

Growing in Containers

The previous information applies equally for containers. You certainly need to use a quality Potting Mix and we recommend the best quality available. Garden Centres have a terrific range of containers in all shapes and sizes that will allow your creativity to run wild. Some people prefer a permanent focal point in their container, such as a small shrub, and that's fine but others just like a mass of colour. Ask staff for their advice. Do remember, any plant growing in a container needs more water and food than one growing in the ground so be prepared for a little more time but maximum results.

Maintenance and Care

Some seedlings can ultimately become leggy but often can be rejuvenated by a hard cut back. Feed them and in a few weeks you will find more growth and flowers will appear.

Young seedlings can be attractive to slugs and snails so remember the snail bait. If baits worry you then ask your Garden Centre for alternative recommendations. Competition from weeds can stifle your seedlings so do be sure to control any weed growth.

Garden Centres will have a range of seedlings all year long that is second to none and their staff are very willing to assist you with your selection.

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