

Hardening Off Seedlings

Toughen indoor-raised seedlings before they go outside

DIFFICULTY Easy

TYPE One-off technique, repeated each season

TIME 7–10 days total



DIFFICULTY
Easy



TIME
7–10 days



COST
Free



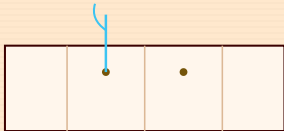
BEST SEASON
Before transplanting out



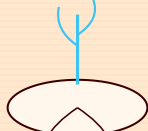
FREQUENCY
Seasonal

01 A gradual transition

Seedlings raised indoors or under cover haven't experienced wind, direct sun, or temperature swings — hardening off toughens their tissue gradually so the move outside doesn't stall or kill them.



seed tray, correct depth



growing on, or a rooted cutting

02 What you'll need

- A sheltered outdoor spot (porch, cold frame, or similar)
- Seedlings ready to transplant
- A watering can for more frequent checks during the process

03 Method

1. Start 7–10 days before planting out.
2. Day 1–2: place outside in a sheltered, shaded spot for 2–3 hours, then bring in.
3. Day 3–5: increase to half a day, introducing a little direct sun.
4. Day 6–8: leave out most of the day, including some direct sun and light wind.
5. Day 9–10: leave out overnight if temperatures allow, then transplant.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Wilting or scorched leaves** — moved too fast into full sun; slow the process down.
- **Seedlings blown over** — introduce wind exposure more gradually.
- **Forgot and left out overnight too early** — a late frost can undo weeks of work; check forecasts carefully.
- **Seedlings dry out faster outside** — check moisture daily during the process.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	The 7–10 days immediately before your planned transplant date.
DURATION	7–10 days for most vegetable seedlings.
MAINTENANCE	Daily moving in and out, and moisture checks — the main effort of this technique.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Seedlings hold their form in wind and sun without wilting, and are ready to transplant without a growth check.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Starting Seeds Indoors

COMMON MISTAKES

Skipping hardening off entirely

Rushing the process in 2–3 days instead of a full week

PRO TIP

A cold frame or unheated greenhouse makes hardening off far less labour — no carrying trays in and out twice a day.