

Starting Seeds Indoors

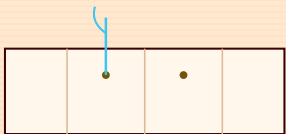
DIFFICULTY Easy
TYPE One-off technique, repeated each season
TIME 15–20 min per tray

Get a head start before the season outside is ready

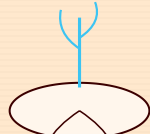
 DIFFICULTY Easy	 TIME 15–20 min/tray	 COST Low	 BEST SEASON 6–8 weeks before last frost	 FREQUENCY Seasonal
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01 Sow at the right depth

A good rule of thumb: sow seed roughly twice as deep as the seed is wide. Too deep and it can't push through; too shallow and it dries out before germinating.



seed tray, correct depth



growing on, or a rooted cutting

02 What you'll need

- Seed-raising mix (not garden soil — too heavy and can carry disease)
- Trays or punnets with drainage holes
- A warm, bright spot or a heat mat
- Plant labels
- A spray bottle or gentle watering can

03 Method

1. Fill trays with moistened seed-raising mix, level but not compacted.
2. Sow seed at the depth given on the packet — as a rule, roughly twice the seed's width.
3. Mist gently to settle the mix without dislodging seed.
4. Keep consistently moist and warm; cover loosely with plastic to hold humidity until germination.
5. Move to bright light the moment shoots appear — leggy seedlings mean insufficient light.

04 Troubleshooting

- **Damping off** — seedlings collapse at the base; improve airflow, avoid overwatering, use fresh mix each time.
- **Leggy, stretched seedlings** — insufficient light; move to a brighter spot or add a grow light.
- **No germination** — check the mix hasn't dried out, or that seed wasn't sown too deep.
- **Mould on the surface** — too damp and still; increase airflow, ease off watering.

05 Timing & maintenance

BEST TIME	6–8 weeks before your last expected frost, or per the seed packet's guidance for your climate.
DURATION	Most vegetables are ready to transplant 4–8 weeks after sowing.
MAINTENANCE	Check moisture daily; seedlings dry out fast in small cells.
SIGNS OF SUCCESS	Sturdy stems, true leaves (the second set) developing, and root tips just visible at drainage holes.

06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

[Hardening Off Seedlings](#)

[Direct Sowing Basics](#)

COMMON MISTAKES

Using garden soil instead of seed-raising mix

Overwatering, leading to damping off

PRO TIP

Label everything the moment you sow — seedlings of many vegetables look identical until true leaves appear.