

## Get Ready, Get Set.... Plant!

- In moist soil, plant two or three seeds per compartment at the depth recommended on the seed packet. After planting the seeds, water lightly.
- Check seed packet to see if the seeds need light to germinate. If they do, press them lightly into the surface. If they require darkness, cover with 1/4 to 1/2 inch of mix or vermiculite and tamp it down.
- Cover pots with plastic wrap or place in plastic bags w/twist tie to keep mix moist/humidity high – until seeds germinate and sprout. Then remove plastic to avoid damping off seedling. (see below)
- Water the plants as they grow but avoid over-watering. Water from the bottom and remove from water when the growing mix is moist on top.
- Germination! Eggplants, peppers, muskmelons and watermelons should be kept in 80 to 90 degree temperatures for germination. Other vegetable seeds will germinate at 60 to 80 degrees. Seedlings should be grown at 60 degrees at night and 70 to 75 degrees in the day.
- Note! The first leaves on a seedling are cotyledons, not true leaves. Their shapes usually do not look like the plant’s familiar leaves.
- Water the plants as they grow but avoid over-watering.  
(Avoid damping off with seedlings. Damping off is a major threat to young seedlings being grown indoors. Damping off thrives in cold, humid, wet, conditions with poor air circulation. Symptoms of damping off include curling, wilting and collapse of emerged seedlings. Some preventative measures that will reduce the likelihood of damping off include: Use high-quality, treated seed; use sanitized soil and containers; keep soil on the dry side; and provide plenty of light and air circulation to the seedlings.)

## Planting Dates for Chicago

Vegetable	Plant Seeds Indoors	Transplant Into Garden
Broccoli*	March 10 - March 25	April 15 - May 10
Cabbage*	March 25 - April 5	May 1 - May 25
Cauliflower*	March 25 - April 5	May 1 - May 25
Eggplant	April 5 - April 20	May 20 - June 10
Herbs	April 1 - April 15	May 1 - June 10
Lettuce	March 25 - April 5	May 1 - May 25
Muskmelon	April 25 - May 5	May 20 - June 15
<b>Pepper</b>	April 5 - April 20	May 20 - June 10
<b>Tomato</b>	April 20 - May 1	May 20 - June 15
Watermelon	April 25 - May 5	May 20 - June 15

## Thinning Transplants

When seedlings emerge, thin to one per pot by pinching off or carefully pulling out excess plants. Thinning is not necessary when growing and transplanting muskmelons and watermelons.

## Shedding Light on Transplants

Seedlings should be placed in a **south or southwest window**. A cool white fluorescent light or grow-light can be placed 6 inches above plants for a total of 14 to 16 hours of light a day. Soil or growing medium should be fertile enough to sustain the plants for the first 3 or 4 weeks. If the nutrients are not adequate, plant color becomes a light or yellowish green. Use a solution made with fertilizer (10-50-10, 20-20-20, 18-12-6, etc.) at rates of one tablespoon per gallon of water. Apply once a week.

## Hardening Off the Seedlings

- If you grow your own transplants, about a week before planting, begin setting transplants outside each day for a few hours. This will get plants adjusted to the outdoors.

## Planting Transplants

- Plants should be set in the garden on a cloudy day or in the evening.
- Water the plants about an hour before transplanting.
- Carefully remove plants from the pot without disturbing the roots. Keep a ball of soil around the roots. **Some transplants are grown in peat pots. These pots can be planted directly into the garden.**
- Dig a hole large enough for the transplant to set slightly deeper than it grew in the container. Plant roots should be covered with soil. Firm the soil around the plant.
- Water directly after planting using a starter fertilizer solution. This is a fertilizer with a high phosphorous (middle number) content.
- Plants may be protected from heat, wind or cold when necessary. Cups, jars, cartons or baskets can be placed over plants for protection on a short term basis. Be sure to remove the protector when the weather improves.

## Sources:

(1)<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/tog/transplants.cfm>

(2)<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/tog/planting.cfm>

(3)<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/basics.cfm>

(4)[http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate\\_archives/2002/may02/art2may.html](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/newsletters/hortupdate/hortupdate_archives/2002/may02/art2may.html)

## Other helpful links!

Great resource to learn more about the vegetables you love and suggestions for the best varieties to plant:

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/directory.cfm>

Not sure what's up with your vegetables? Check out this link that covers common vegetable problems:

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/vegproblems/vegetables.cfm>

A curriculum to explore: "My First Garden":

<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/firstgarden/>