

How to Grow Seeds in Trays or Pots

Equipment

- A selection of seeds
- Seed trays and small pots, or a paper potter and some paper
- Compost
- Watering can
- Seed labels and pencil
- Hand forks and trowels
- Soil sieve

Making Paper Pots

This is a very enjoyable activity to do with children. All you need is a paper potter and some newspaper. Simply take strips of newspaper and wrap them around the potter. Push the potter into the base and then lift out. Gently remove the pot from the potter and it's ready to use.



What to do

- (1) Choose a suitable container for your seeds. For fine seeds such as lettuce a seed tray is ideal, for larger seeds such as beans or courgettes go for a pot.
- (2) Put some compost into the container, until it is around two thirds full
- (3) Place some seeds on top of the compost. Check the packet instructions to see how far apart is recommended and also if the seeds need to be sown a certain way up
- (4) For larger seeds sow one or two into each pot
- (5) Cover the seeds with a layer of compost. You can use a soil sieve ([link](#)) to get a nice thin and even coverage. Water a little to ensure the compost is moist, and add labels
- (6) Check the packet or a gardening book to find out what conditions the seeds need to germinate. Most will germinate best in warm conditions but some require cold conditions so it's always worth checking.

- (7) The seeds will need some moisture to germinate, but be aware that over watering can cool them down, remove the air from the soil that is needed for root growth and lead to rotting or fungal growth. So aim for the soil to be moist but not waterlogged.
- (8) Check the packet to find out if the seeds require light or dark conditions to germinate. Then find a suitable place to put them.
- (9) Regularly check the seeds to make sure they are not drying out too much, and try to keep the compost moist.
- (10) Once the seeds have germinated they are best at ambient temperature. Also they will begin to grow towards the light so remember to put them somewhere where light is plentiful. Also try to turn the pots or trays every day or so to allow all plants equal light
- (11) Once the plants are around 5cm in height they can be potted on or out into the garden if the weather is warm enough. If it is early in the season it is a good idea to harden plants off in a cold frame ([link](#)) before planting into the ground. This allows them to acclimatise to the outdoor conditions. Alternatively the trays and pots can be placed just outside the door during the day and then brought back in at night and this too will help them to acclimatise.
- (12) Note that not all plants like to be transplanted and so these will need to be sown in the place where they will mature. Check the seed packet or a gardening book to check, and if they require direct planting into the ground see our fact sheet on how to grow plants in a raised bed.

