



How-To: **DIRECT SEEDING**

Seeding is a quick and inexpensive method of planting a garden. Follow the guidelines below to increase the chances of good germination.



URBAN FARMERS IN TRAINING USE A BROADFORK AND RAKE TO PREPARE A BED FOR SEEDING

WHY DIRECT SEED?

In the Pittsburgh region, direct seeding can be a successful method of planting short-season crops. While transplanting seedlings offers a longer productive life for some warm-weather crops (like tomatoes and peppers), direct seeding works well for crops that have moderately short days to maturity.

Direct seeding has many benefits. It's an inexpensive way to plant, compared with transplanting, and less risky, as seeds generally cost less to replace than plants. Direct seeding is a much less complicated and time consuming process than starting your own seedlings. It can be a simple way to repeatedly plant a crop throughout the growing season; this is called succession planting, and can help provide a consistent harvest over time. Direct seeding can be a quick way to fill in empty space when it opens up in the garden.

BEST CROPS TO DIRECT SEED

Some crops are better suited to direct seeding than others. Here are our recommendations for direct seeding specific crops:

<i>Direct Seed (warm-season crops)</i>	<i>Direct Seed (cool-season crops)</i>	<i>Can be Direct Seeded</i>	<i>Not Recommended</i>
BEANS, DRY	BEETS	BASIL	BROCCOLI
BEANS, GREEN	CARROTS	CHARD	BRUSSELS SPROUTS
BEANS, LIMA	GARLIC	COLLARDS	CABBAGE
CORN, ALL TYPES	GREENS, BABY	KALE	EGGPLANT
CUCUMBERS	LETTUCE, BABY	MUSTARD GREENS	LETTUCE, HEAD
MELONS	PEAS	SCALLIONS	ONIONS
OKRA	TURNIPS		PEPPERS
SQUASH, SUMMER	RADISHES		TOMATOES
SQUASH, WINTER	SPINACH		
ZUCCHINI			



MAKING A SMOOTH SEEDBED

HOW TO DIRECT SEED

STEP 1 Prepare the seed bed. Seeding requires loose soil. Make sure the soil is dry enough to work (it should crumble slightly after being squeezed in your fist). Loosen the soil with a tiller, broadfork, gardening claw, shovel, or trowel, then hoe or rake to create a fine, smooth seed bed.

STEP 2 Add soil amendments and/or compost. Or, plan to add these to the seedling trench before planting.

STEP 3 Decide which crops you will seed in each section of the garden. Different crops have different seeding requirements, so read the seed packet or seed catalog carefully.



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MEASURING THE SEEDING AREA



DIRECT SEEDING RADISHES

STEP 4 Prepare each section for its particular crop, using a trowel or hoe. Some seeds will need a trench, some are planted in mounds of soil called “hills,” and some are scattered across an area. Be sure to determine how far apart to place the rows or hills for each particular crop.

STEP 5 Place seeds in the soil at the recommended depth and distance apart. Cover with soil (some tiny seeds are lightly raked into the soil) and use your hand or a tool to pat the soil down. This is called “tamping,” and ensures that the seeds are in contact with the soil.

STEP 6 Gently and thoroughly water the seeded areas, using a misting hose nozzle or a watering can. Keep the area well-watered until the seeds germinate.

TIPS

- *Purchase seed from reputable companies*, to ensure good germination. If you are purchasing seed in a store, make sure it is labeled for sale for the current year.
- *Store seed in a cool, dark, dry place*, like a sealed bag in the refrigerator or freezer. Most seed that is stored well should remain viable for multiple years. For more information on seed storage, please see the *Testing Seed Viability* Info Hub sheet.
- *Pelleted seeds may make seeding easier*. Some small seeds are coated with clay, in order to make each seed easier to handle and see in the soil, making good crop spacing easier. Please note that pelleted seed does not store well from season to season, so order what you will use in one year.
- *Paper seed tape makes spacing easier*. Seeds are spaced at the correct distance in biodegradable paper that can be quickly and easily placed in the soil. Purchase seed tape or make your own!
- *For organic gardens, avoid treated seed*. Treated seed is used by some farmers to prevent warm season seeds from rotting in cool soil. These seeds are coated in chemical fungicides that are not approved for organic growing.
- *For large gardens, consider a seeder*. Push-seeders like the Earthway speed the process of planting. Seeders typically dig a narrow trench, drop a seed in the hole, cover up the trench and firm the bed as you walk behind.