



# How-To: SEEDING SPRING CROPS OUTDOORS

*Timing is everything in gardening. Find out which crops can be seeded early, to get your spring crops growing and producing as soon as possible while protecting them from potentially damaging weather conditions.*



SPINACH SURVIVES A DUSTING OF SNOW



FABRIC ROW COVER PROTECTS HEAD LETTUCE, WHICH IS SLIGHTLY MORE SENSITIVE TO COLD

## WHAT IS DIRECT SEEDING?

In the food-growing world, planting seeds directly in the ground is called direct seeding. This term differentiates seeding in the ground from planting seeds in the greenhouse – or in your home, in order to grow seedlings for transplanting.

Direct seeding in the garden exposes seeds to much more variable soil temperature and moisture than they would experience in the greenhouse. But, direct seeding is also less labor intensive than seeding inside, then transplanting in the garden. For the best direct seeding results, seed only cool-season crops in the spring, and follow the germination and planting chart on the second page.

## HOW TO DIRECT SEED

1. Before seeding, prepare the soil. That could mean removing mulch, adding compost or other amendments, or using a hoe or rake to create a smooth seedbed. We do not recommend tilling this early in the season, as the soil is still fairly wet. Using a tiller now can create clumpy soil that persists through the season.
2. Once the seedbed is prepared, place seeds at the correct depth and spacing (please see the chart on the second page), cover them with soil, and lightly “tamp” the soil down, to keep the seeds in place. If rain is not forecast in the next day or two, give the seeds a gentle watering, to start the germination process. It’s helpful to mark the planted area, so you remember exactly where the seeds were planted.
3. When your seeds germinate and seedlings push up through the soil, thin the plants to the recommended spacing (see the chart on the second page). The remaining plants will grow healthy and strong with the amount of space that they need to thrive.

The crops listed in the chart are hardy. They can withstand frost and even snow! We’ve seen head lettuce dusted with snow, onion seedlings poking up through frozen ground, and peas that sit in wait under the soil for a few weeks before finally unfurling their tiny leaves above the earth. Seed in the spring when you are inspired and when the weather allows. It may take a little time, but before long, your seeds will germinate and flourish. With a spring planting, you’ll have tasty vegetables to harvest long before the heat of summer!



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<i>Crop</i>	<i>Optimum Soil Temp.</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Spacing Between Seeds</i>	<i>Spacing Between Rows</i>	<i>Thin To</i>
CARROTS	40 - 75°F	1/4 - 1/2"	1"	16 - 24"	3/4 - 2" APART
CHARD	40 - 85°F	1/2"	2"	18 - 24"	4 - 6" APART
COLLARDS	55 - 85°F	1/4 - 1/2"	3 SEEDS EVERY 8"	18 - 30"	1 PLANT/GROUP
KALE	55 - 85°F	1/4 - 1/2"	3 SEEDS EVERY 8"	18 - 30"	1 PLANT/GROUP
LEEKS	45 - 75°F	1/4 - 1/2"	2"	24"	6" APART
LETTUCE, BABY	40 - 68°F	1/8"	60 SEEDS/FT IN A 2" BAND	12 - 18"	NOT NEEDED
LETTUCE, HEADS	40 - 68°F	1/8"	1"	12 - 18"	8 - 12" APART
ONIONS	45 - 85°F	1/4 - 1/2"	2 SEEDS/INCH IN A 2" BAND	12 - 18"	3 - 4" APART
PEAS	45 - 80°F	1/2" - 1"	25 SEEDS/FT IN A 3" BAND	12 - 18"	NOT NEEDED
RADISHES	50 - 85°F	1/2"	35 SEEDS/FT IN A 3" BAND	12"	NOT NEEDED
SCALLIONS	45 - 85°F	1/2"	1/4 - 1/2" APART IN 2" BAND	12 - 18"	NOT NEEDED
SPINACH	50 - 75°F	1/2"	10 SEED/FT	12 - 18"	NOT NEEDED
TURNIPS	40 - 85°F	1/4 - 1/2"	35 SEEDS/FT IN A 2" BAND	12 - 18"	NOT NEEDED