

# How to Plant Seeds for a Cool-Season Crop

*A lesson from the New Jersey Agricultural Society  
Learning Through Gardening Program*

Grades: PreK-5

Objective: The student will be able to:

- \* identify what a seed needs to grow
- \* correctly plant a seed



Materials:

Various lettuce, spinach, scallion, pea, kale, Swiss chard, and radish seeds  
potting soil

small (four- or five-inch) plant pots *If you don't have plant pots, use recycled containers such as milk cartons from the cafeteria, yogurt containers, or egg cartons. Make sure to poke holes in the bottom of these types of containers for drainage.*

small pitcher, spray bottle, or watering can for watering  
large spoons or small pot to scoop out soil

Procedure:

Tell students: a seed is like an instant plant - you just have to add three things. What are they? (water, soil, and sun for warmth)

Tell students that today we are going to plant seeds for a salad garden. Because it is still too cold outside, we are going to first plant the seeds inside, and then transplant the seedlings outside when it is warmer.

Because we want to harvest all of the vegetables in our garden by June before we leave on summer vacation, we can only plant what we call cool-season crops - vegetables that can be planted in the early spring when the weather is still chilly. These vegetables include: lettuce, spinach, radishes, onions, kale, Swiss chard and peas. Ask students why we cannot plant vegetables such as tomatoes, corn, or cucumbers. (They need more time in the heat of the sun.)

*NOTE: In New Jersey, cool-season vegetables should be started indoors at the beginning of March, and planted outside in early April.*

Explain that most of the seeds are very small and need to feel the sun in order to germinate, therefore students must not bury their seeds way down in their pots. The tiny lettuce seeds need to be covered with only about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch of soil, the slightly larger radish and spinach seeds with just  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an inch of soil, and the large pea seeds with only 1 inch. Show students the directions on the back of a seed packet that explain how to plant the seeds.

Ask the students what is the number-one way to kill plants indoors. (Over-water them.) Tell them to check their plants for dryness everyday but remember their seeds are small and not to drown them.

*Teacher's note: Lettuce, radish, and spinach seeds are very small, so do not expect students to plant them one by one. Put a few seeds in the student's non-writing hand, and tell him /her to take a pinch of seeds and sprinkle them on top of the soil. Then the student should sprinkle soil on top of the seeds. If there are too many plants for one container, you can always thin them out later.*

### Evaluation:

Correctly planted seeds.

## New Jersey Cool-season Vegetables

Beets	Onions
Broccoli	Peas
Cabbage	Radishes
Cauliflower	Spinach
Collards	Swiss chard
Lettuces	Turnips

