How To Plant Seeds At Home
From the New Jersey Agricultural Society
Learning Through Gardening program

Introduce your children to the wonder of seeds by planting some and watching them grow. It’s easy, and you can start any time!

Seeds are sold at many grocery stores, and if you don’t find them at yours, they are available at home improvement stores.

In the spring and fall, you can plant cool-season vegetables outside in containers or in the ground. See the list of these vegetables below. You can start summer vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers, and zucchini, as well as annual flowers, in containers indoors and then take plant outside in early May.

If you are starting seeds inside, you do not need fancy seed-starting kits. You can plant seeds in any recycled container such as yogurt containers, plastic bottles or milk cartons cut in half, or egg cartons. Just be sure to cut holes in the bottom of your containers so that excess water can drain out. Place your containers on a saucer or tray so the draining water does not make a mess.

Plant your seeds in potting soil or garden soil. Follow the planting directions on the back of the seed packets carefully. Many seeds are only planted 1/4-1/2 inch deep. Plant three or four seeds in each container. Although the germination rate of packaged seeds is high, there are always some “duds” that don’t grow. For tiny seeds like lettuce and radish, lightly sprinkle some seeds on top of the soil, and cover them by sprinkling soil on top. Place your planted containers on a windowsill or under a light.

If you don’t have any seed packets, you can still plant seeds at home by saving some from the fruits and vegetables you eat. Here are the easiest seeds to plant from the produce you eat:

**Beans, peas, and lentils:** You can plant dried beans, peas, and lentils sold in packages at the grocery store. Take them out of the package and soak them in water overnight. Plant them 1-inch deep in soil. These vegetables all are part of a group called legumes. All legume seeds must be dried before planted. If you want to plant bean seeds from inside the pod of a fresh green bean, you will have to dry them first.

**Orange, lemon, and lime seeds:** These are easy! Remove the seeds from the fruit and place them in water overnight to remove any pulp. Plant the seeds 1/2-inch deep in soil and place the container in a sunny spot.
Cucumber seeds: Cut the cucumber in half and scoop out the seeds. Place the seeds and pulp in an open container of water and soak them for about three days. Then stir the water. The good, viable seeds will sink to the bottom, and the pulp and bad seeds will float to the top. Collect the seeds on the bottom and spread them out on a paper towel to dry. Then plant the seeds 1-inch deep in soil.

Zucchini and squash seeds: Rinse the seeds to remove the pulp. Lay them on a paper towel to dry. When dry, plant them 1-inch deep in soil.

What about apple seeds? Apple seeds are tricky. If you want to plant apple seeds, you should wash them and dry them on a paper towel. Then you must place them in the refrigerator for at least three months before they can be planted.

What about tomato seeds? Tomato seeds grow best if they are fermented before they are planted. This is a week-long smelly process that involves growing mold on the wet tomato seeds. You can find instructions to do this online, but it is easier just to buy a packet of ready-to-plant tomato seeds.

New Jersey Cool-season Vegetables

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If you have questions about planting seeds, please email us at learningthroughgardening@gmail.com.