



FEATURED QUOTE :

"To forget how to dig the earth and to tend the soil is to forget ourselves."
~Mohandas K. Gandhi

Product Spotlight

Dr. Earth Root Zone®: Seed Starter Potting Mix

Root Zone® ProBiotic® Seed Starter Mix promotes germination of seeds; helps plants become established as quickly as possible.

100% Organic & Natural Hand Crafted Blend

NO GMOs, Chicken Manure, or Sewage Sludge ("Biosolids") to taint the cleanliness or safety of our handcrafted blend.

People and Pet Safe. 100% Organic & Natural Hand Crafted Blend

NO GMOs – Chicken Manure – Sewage Sludge ("Biosolids") to taint the cleanliness or safety of our handcrafted blend. People and Pet Safe

Features: Probiotic®— the Life and intelligence inside!

ProMoisture Hydrate®—keeping the intelligence alive with our unique patented technology infusing organic ALOE VERA GEL!

MycoApply Certified—the independent seal of approval that guarantees mycorrhizae is in our soil.

It's Time To Start Your Onions, Leeks & Shallots From Seed

If you have the "winter blues," here is some news that will help you feel better, because it's now time to start seeds indoors--and that is a good sign! All types of onions, leeks and shallots should be started from seed 10 to 12 weeks before setting the plants out into the garden when the weather becomes frost-free. So, if you like yellow onions, sweet onions, red onions, shallots, and leeks for the unique flavor they bring out of other foods from your kitchen, let's get planting.

I have found that when you set out onion plants in the spring rather than bulbs in the spring, you end up with a much more productive plant that will grow larger and have more flavor. When you look at

your seed selection, be sure to look at the length of day on the package, as short day onions are for the South and long day onions are for the North.

Onions are one of the vegetable garden crops that are relatively carefree to grow, and every gardener should grow some in their garden this year. Most onions will begin to produce the bulb when the day length and the soil and air temperature reach a certain level in your climate, not a certain number of days after planting out the seedlings. So this year, get a head start and your seedlings will give you a bigger onion at the end of their growing season.

Begin with a deep seed tray and a special seed starter soil like Espoma seed starter soil or Black Gold seed starter soil, which are especially blended for this purpose and sterilized to prevent damping-off disease of young seedlings. Fill your seed tray almost to the top of the tray with soil and level the container. Lay a pencil on the soil and push into the soil 1/4 inch deep to create a sunken row. Plant 3 to 5 seeds per inch of row, cover with soil, firm the soil, then water. Mist the soil to water and keep moist (rather than pouring water). Space rows of seeds in the tray one inch apart. Keep seed flats in a warm area where the temperature is 65 to 70 degrees or warmer, and your seeds will begin to germinate in 7 to 14 days. Use clear plastic dome or plastic wrap over seed tray to help hold humidity and moisture in the trays until you have 50% seed germination in the seed tray--then remove covering.

The seedlings will look like grass at first, but have the wonderful onion fragrance. Allow the plants to grow to 4 inches tall and then cut them back to 2.5 to 3 inches tall with scissors to help stimulate additional side growth of foliage. The more foliage the seedling makes, the more energy it will be able to send down to the bulb to help build a larger bulb in the garden during the summer. Fertilize regularly--every 2 weeks--once you have first cut back the plant, and keep the soil moist at all times. Let the new foliage develop on the plant and when it reaches 4 inches tall again, cut it down to 3 inches tall, and repeat until your plants are ready to set out in late April. By early April, you will notice a white bulb beginning to form on the seedling.

In the garden, choose a site that is well drained, weed-free and fertile, with lots of sun all day long. Mix compost, animal manure, or seaweed in the soil to a depth of 6 inches before planting seedlings. Set out transplants 4 inches apart between plants and plant it shallow--so just the white of the onion goes into the ground, about 1/2 inch deep. Then firm the soil around the seedling. I have had great results planting multiple rows about 6 inches apart, and then I sprinkle a granular fertilizer like Dr. Earth Vegetable Garden Fertilizer or Espoma Garden Tone over the planting bed. I will reapply fertilizer two more times during the year at six week intervals to help promote foliage and bulb growth. Weeds can be a real problem with this plant, so I now spread straw 2 inches thick around the plant and cover the entire planting bed to keep weeds out. This will save you many hours of weeding during the summer months! Then water well; and as the bulb begins to form, water often to encourage steady growth and a larger bulb to form on the plant.

Leeks need the same type of care but they love to be planted deep in the ground. This is what I do: make a hole 6 inches deep with a garden trowel and 3 inches wide. Now drop the seedling in the middle of the hole and cover the bottom one inch of the seedling with soil; do not fill the hole with soil! As the plant matures slowly fill the hole with soil until the soil is level with the rest of the garden. Once the plant is 12 inches tall, slowly add soil around the stem on the leek plant to a height of 6 inches high to help develop a larger bulb on the plant. Like the onion, feed when planting and two more times during the year. Keep the soil moist and water often especially when the weather gets hot and dry. Use the straw mulch to control weeds in the garden once you have filled the planting hole with soil.

If you should notice that the onion family begins to form a flower on the top of the foliage--pull out the plant and eat it, as that plant has stopped growing and is going to seed. Harvest onions when you begin to notice that the foliage is beginning to fall over and the bulb is developing a papery skin. I gently bend the foliage to the ground with my hands but don't break the main stem of the plant. Let it set in the garden for a few days to begin to dry up the foliage. In a week carefully pull up the onions, shake off the soil, and store in your garage out of the sun for a week or two to cure the foliage. Do not cut the foliage for at least two weeks; the energy in the foliage will move down to the bulb so it will keep longer for you in storage. Once the foliage has dried, cut it to 2 inches from top of the bulb and store or braid together and keep in a cool dry place like your garage or basement.

Leeks can stay in the garden until you need them but must be dug from the garden before the soil begins to freeze in early November. Store in garage with foliage on plant after digging and keep cool and dry. Use by Christmas for best bulb and flavor.

Shallots will develop a cluster of bulbs and should be harvested when the foliage has all dried up from the plant. Store like onions and they will keep most of the winter--if you don't eat them before then. Enjoy!

Growing Vegetable Plants Indoor From Seeds

Vegetable	Weeks from seeding to transplant outdoors	Average days for seed germination	Planting depth of the seed in soil	Average days to maturity	Average yield per 25 ft. of row
Broccoli	5-7	5-6	1/4"	60-80	25 lbs.
Brussels sprouts	5-7	5-6	1/4"	90-100	20 lbs.
Cauliflower	5-7	5-6	1/4"	70-90	25lbs.
Cabbage	5-7	5-6	1/4"	60-90	40 lbs.
Celery	10-12	10-14	1/8"	100+	40 lbs.
Cucumbers	2-3	3-5	1"	50-70	25 lbs.
Eggplant	6-8	6-8	1/4"	80-90	25 lbs.
Leeks	8-10	4-6	1/4"	125-125	25 lbs.
Lettuce	3-6	2-3	1/8"	70-80	15 lbs.
Onion	6-8	4-6	1/4"	90-125	30 lbs.
Peppers	6-8	8-10	1/4"	60-90	20 lbs.
Squash-summer	2-3	4-5	1"	50-60	30 lbs.
Squash-winter	2-3	4-5	1"	75-100	30 lbs.
Tomatoes	6-10	6-8	1/4"	70-90	20 lbs.

These plants should be started indoors at the times recommended by this chart, before transplant. You will have to decide when the planting time is safe where you live. Example: on Cape Cod you can plant outside, tender plants like tomatoes on May 1 to 15. In Maine, where I live, it would be May 15 to 30 and in a Northern Vermont town like St. Johnsbury, it would be May 30 to June 15.

Before you plant directly into the garden you must "harden- off" the plants to acclimate them to the outside weather and temperatures. This is done by moving plants outside into a garage or tool shed for the daytime, where they are protected from the wind and rain, for 3 to 4 days. Leave the door open so plants can get sunshine on them, but are sheltered from weather. By suppertime bring them back indoors for the evening for the first 3 to 4 days.

After this period, leave plants outside if the weather permits during the day for an additional week and back in the building at night time with no heat. This two week hardening off period will help thicken the walls of the plant and make it easier for the plant to adjust when moved outside and planted in the garden.

When you start the seeds, be sure to use a sterilized potting mix designed for seed starting like Jiffy-Mix or Espoma Seed -Starter soil. This will eliminate possible fungus problems and prevent the seeds from rotting. When you transplant the seedlings into flats or individual pots, you can use a potting soil, but always use a seeding soil to start seeds in. Starting soils are very light so that seedlings can poke thru the soil easier and are well-drained to prevent damping-off of seedlings.

To help the seed germinate faster you can provide bottom heat with heating cables placed under the seed trays. Your local garden center will have these heating cables in various sizes, depending on how large on an area you are using. If you are just going to germinate a few seeds use a heating pad on LOW setting and wrap it in a bath towel to spread out the heat more evenly. Cover the towel with a plastic bag to prevent water spillage and damage to heating pad.

Your local garden center will also sell a seed germination tray with a clear cover, like a mini greenhouse, for under \$10.00. The cover will help to hold moisture around the seed for better germination and prevent drying out of the soil. Keep the seed tray warm, around 70 degrees, until plants germinate, then cool 5 degrees if possible. Once plants sprout, you can use grow-lights if you do not have a south facing window to help plants grow without stretching for the light. Run the lights for 12 hours during the day and then off at night, so the plant can rest. Plant lights should be 6 to 12 inches from plant. Try it if you have not before--it is fun!

Direct Seeding In The Ground For Vegetables

Vegetable	Average days for seed germination	Average days to maturity and fruit	Inches between seedlings	Inches between rows	Average yield per 25' of row
Bush beans	6-14	45-60	3-4	24-30	30 lbs.
Pole beans	6-14	60-70	4-6	36-48	40 lbs.
Beets	7-10	50-60	2-3	15-24	40 lbs.
Carrots	10-14	70-80	2-3	15-24	25lbs.
Corn	6-10	70-90	12-18	24-36	2 to 3 dozen
Collard greens	4-10	60-70	10-12	18-24	12-15 heads
Leaf lettuce	4-10	40-50	2-3	15-18	15 lbs.
Onion sets	7-14	80-120	80-100	15-24	25 lbs.
Okra	7-14	60-70	12-15	24-30	25 lbs.
Parsnips	14-21	120-150	3-4	18-30	25 lbs.
Peas	7-14	60-90	1-2	18-36	10-20 lbs.
Potatoes	7-14	100-120	12-15	30-36	25-30 lbs.
Radishes	3-10	30-40	1-2	12-18	25 lbs.
Spinach	7-14	40-60	3-4	15-24	10-20 lbs.
Sweet Potatoes	7-14	100-120	12-15	30-36	25 lbs.
Swiss chard	7-14	50-60	3-4	15-24	15-25 lbs.
Turnips	5-10	40-60	2-3	15-24	25 lbs.

Placing seeds in the ground should be done when the ground has warmed up to temperatures of 60 degrees or above. Peas and spinach are the exception; they will germinate at 50 degrees. I place an old outside thermometer in the ground about 3 inches deep into the soil. When it's ready, I plant. If you use weed block over the soil, the soil will warm up much faster and it will keep weeds out all season long. Look for Evo-Organic weed block with a built in watering system for additional benefits. Go to www.evoorganic.com for more information. I use it, and everything grows faster and better!

Your soil should be prepared before planting with compost, animal manure, or peat moss. If your soil is heavy, be sure to add liquid gypsum to break up the clay soil and add lime if your soil is acidic. Powered lime can be applied in the fall, but if you want a better garden and forgot to lime last fall, use Jonathan Green Mag-I-Cal because it will change the acidity in just 7 to 10 days. Most vegetables want a pH between 6 and 7 reading for better growth and to help make the fertilizer you apply work better.

If the weather is wet and air temperatures cold, hold off and plant your seeds a week later. Wet soil will rot the seeds and germination will be erratic with many misses in the row. If the weather pattern persists, plant your seeds closer together and thin the rows later as they develop. Spacing is very important with root crops and thinning the rows will help them produce more vegetables and better quality.

When planting in rows, I always cut a shallow trench with my garden hoe to plant seed into. This helps to keep the rows straight; you can see where they are planted, making it easier to water before and after they germinate and become visible. Use the soil on each side of the row to cover the seed and be sure to mark the front and back of the row so you will know what you planted there.

I always add Soil-Moist and fertilizer to this trench before planting and mix well. Blend the soil to a depth of 2 to 3 inches, as soft soil will encourage quick root development. Potatoes need to be planted in a trench 6 inches deep and just as wide to help young tubers to develop in soft soil. Fill in the trench slowly as the shoots begin to grow until the ground is level.

Water the garden daily, and keep the soil moist during the seed germination period. Side dress plants growing in the trench with a granular fertilizer; apply on both sides of the planting row 3 weeks after foliage forms in the trench. Keep notes and enjoy the season.

Alaska Trip

Paul Parent will be hosting a tour that includes:

Vancouver, BC

- Butchart Gardens--55 acres of floral display!
- Cruising the Inside Passage:
- Ketchikan
- Icy Strait Point
- Juneau
- Skagway
- Hubbard Glacier Cruising

- Seward
- Scenic Drive to Anchorage
- Denali National Park
- Fairbanks City Tour, a tour of the Gold Dredge # 8 and a cruise down the Chena river on the Riverboat Discovery Sternwheeler.

Trivia

This Week's Question

If I were to use a mattock in the garden, what would I most likely be doing with it?

- A. breaking up hard ground
- B. digging up weeds
- C. pruning the rose bushes
- D. sleeping in it
- E. watering the plants

This Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus
All Natural Plant Food Enhanced with Bacteria and Mycorrhizae

- Microbe-enhanced all natural plant food
- Includes both endo and ecto mycorrhizae
- Grows larger root mass to help plants establish fast
- Promotes bigger blooms
- Reduces transplant loss

Last Week's Question:

The oldest known bristlecone pine tree is around...

- A. 2,000 years old
- B. 3,000 years old
- C. 4,000 years old

- D. 5,000 years old
- E. 6,000 years old

Last Week's Winner:

Sandy Penchansky

Last Week's Answer:

D. 5,000 years old

Last Week's Prize:

Bio-tone® Starter Plus

One winner per question - we choose winners from the list of those who answer correctly. Winners must be newsletter subscribers. We'll ship you your prize, so be sure to put your address in the form in case you win!

Garden Journal

Are you looking for a great gift for a gardener (or yourself)? This garden journal helps make planning and organizing easy. This journal, *autographed personally by Paul*, makes a perfect gift for gardeners. The cover holds a 5x7 or 4x6 photo and a heavy-duty D-ring binder.

Also included:

- 8 tabbed sections
- 5 garden details sections with pockets for seeds, tags...
- Weather records page
- 6 three year journal pages
- Insect & diseases page - 3 project pages
- 3 annual checklist pages
- Plant wish list page
- 2 large pocket pages
- Sheet of garden labels
- 5 garden detail sheets
- 5 graph paper pages for layouts
- 5 photo pages, each holding four 4x6 photos in landscape or portrait format

FEATURED RECIPE:

Terrific Turkey Chili



What You'll Need:

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 1 1/2 pounds ground turkey
- 1 (1 ounce) package taco seasoning mix
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon chili pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can beef broth
- 1 (7 ounce) can salsa
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can crushed tomatoes, or coarsely chopped tomatoes packed in purée
- 1 (7 ounce) can chopped green chili peppers
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 3 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise and sliced
- 1 bunch green onions, chopped
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Step by Step:

- Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a large stock pot over medium-high heat.
- Crumble turkey into the pot, stirring with a wooden spoon to break apart as much as possible.
- Season with taco seasoning mix, coriander, oregano, chili flakes, and tomato paste, and mix until meat is evenly coated with seasonings.
- Continue cooking, reducing heat if necessary, until turkey is well browned.
- Pour in beef broth, and simmer to reduce liquid slightly, about 5 minutes.
- Add salsa, tomatoes, and green chilies, and continue cooking at a moderate simmer for ten minutes. Adjust the thickness at any time by adding water.
- While chili is still cooking, heat one tablespoon of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
- Cook onion and green bell pepper, stirring occasionally for 5 minutes, or until onion is translucent and bell pepper is lightly browned.
- Add onion and bell pepper to the chili, and continue cooking at a very low simmer.
- In the same skillet in which you cooked the onion and bell pepper, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat.
- Add the zucchini, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until lightly browned.
- Add the zucchini to the chili, reduce heat, and continue cooking 15 minutes more. Again, adjust the consistency by adding water as needed.
- Ladle chili into serving bowls.
- Top with sour cream, green onion, and cheddar cheese, and serve.

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