



“From the Potting Shed”

Riverview Garden Club – February Helpful Hints

2022

By now, you’ve been mapping out this year's garden and have your plans finalized. Finish collecting any seeds you need and gather all your seed-starting equipment. Make sure to clean and sanitize any pots you used last year, so everything starts fresh.

Things to do this month...

GARDEN PREP

- Give your garden tools a good cleaning and sharpening.
- Get your seed orders in if you haven’t already to ensure you get the seeds you want.
- Think about pruning trees and shrubs before they start coming out of dormancy, although you have all next month to get to this if you do not get to it now.
- As snow melts, replace mulch around any plant crowns that have been exposed by frost heaves.
- Continue to inspect trees and shrubs for bark damage. If you find any, you may have a problem with voles, rabbits, or deer. Clear away the debris and surround the tree trunk with a tree guard mesh covering which is available on-line, at garden centers or big box stores.
- Force pussy willows and/or *Forsythia* branches indoors for a touch of early spring!

HOUSEPLANT CARE

- Cut back on feeding houseplants that are dormant
- Begin fertilizing plants as they start to show new growth to give them a boost
- Repot any plants that are becoming root bound.
- Refresh the soil of plants to give them a boost of nutrition, even if they don't need repotting.
- Wipe dust from the plants with a damp cloth or paper towel and consider giving them a lukewarm shower or misting regularly to provide some humidity.

SEED STARTING PREP

- Order seeds so you'll have them in time to start them indoors next month.
- Collect all your seed starting equipment together so you'll be ready to go. You will need lights, heat mats, sterile medium, and your preferred pot type.
- Wash and sterilize seed-starting containers.
- See the attachment below with instructions for building a [Seed Starting Station](#)

Source: Better Homes and Gardens

Get a Head Start on Planting Season with This Easy DIY Seed Station

Assemble a mobile station for nurturing seedlings and stashing garden gear.

By **Kate Carter-Frederick** and **Jessica Bennett**

Updated December 28, 2021

Get ready for outdoor planting season with a DIY seed-starting station. This mobile unit, which starts with a simple set of shelves, provides the light and warmth that [seedlings need to thrive](#) before being relocated to the garden. We placed [seed-starting trays](#) on two of the shelves, leaving the other storage space free for stashing extra potting mix, planters, watering cans, and other gardening tools. Follow the steps below to build your own seed station and get a jump on gardening.

Once you've assembled your DIY seed station and started planting, be sure to keep your seed packets and follow all growing directions. The packet will list the best time to [start each type of seed](#) so the seedling will be ready to be transplanted into the garden when the soil temperatures are warm enough for it to thrive in your region.

- WORKING TIME **4 hrs**
- START TO FINISH **4 hrs**
- DIFFICULTY **Kind of Easy**

What you need

Materials

- 48x72x18-inch five-tier shelving unit Qty: **1**
- 4-inch industrial casters Qty: **4**
- Seed-starting trays and domes Qty: **1**
- Seed-starting soilless mix Qty: **1**
- Seeds Qty: **1**
- King-size heating pad Qty: **1**
- 48-inch shop light fixtures Qty: **2**
- Full-spectrum grow-light bulbs Qty: **4**
- Electrical timer Qty: **1**
- Waterproof trays Qty: **1**

How to do it



STEP 1

Assemble Shelving Unit

Following the manufacturer's directions, assemble the shelving unit where you will use it, such as a basement or other heated room. Add casters so you can easily reposition it to add trays or make watering easier. Optional: To ensure good airflow around seedlings, post an oscillating fan near your shelving unit for broad, continuous coverage that will minimize fungus and promote strong roots.



STEP 2

Plant Seeds

[Fill the seed-starting trays](#) with the soilless seed-starting mix; plant seeds. Plant two or three seeds per cell; not all will germinate. Cover the trays with the clear plastic domes to retain moisture. Place a heating pad, turned to a low setting, under the seed-starting trays to create gentle bottom heat that speeds sprouting. Another option: pick a heating pad designed for seedlings, which will raise the temperature 10°F-20°F beneath the tray to speed germination by several days.

STEP 3

Assemble Light Fixtures

Put together both shop light fixtures. You can use 40-watt fluorescent tube bulbs, combining one cool white and one warm bulb, to provide a full spectrum of light, or go with more expensive [LED grow-light bulbs](#) that best mimic sunlight.



STEP 4

Hang Lights

After inserting the selected bulbs, suspend the fixtures from the bottom side of the two shelves, adjusting the fixture chains. Hang the lights so they will distribute the light as evenly as possible from the center of the flat to the edges. The amount of distance between the lights and the plants will depend on the bulbs' intensity. In general, hang fluorescent bulbs 3-12 inches above the seedlings. LED bulbs vary widely, so follow the manufacturer's directions.

STEP 5

Install A Timer

Install a timer to turn the lights on and off. Seedlings should receive 14-16 hours of light daily. An automatic timer helps you easily stick to a regular schedule.



STEP 6

Water Plants

Line each shelf or seed-starting flat with a watertight tray to prevent moisture from dripping onto the floor or the heating pad. Water plants from the bottom to promote healthy growth and to keep the seed-starting mix damp but not soggy. Fill the tray about a quarter to a third full of water to keep the soil mix moist (avoid overfilling). When two sets of "true" leaves appear, thin out any weak or crowded seedlings so the remaining plants will have enough room to grow. Then start applying a water-soluble fertilizer once a week.

STEP 7

Prepare Seedlings For Outdoors

A week or two before you want to [plant the seedlings outdoors](#), prepare them by hardening them off. Take them outside to a partially shaded location to soak up the sunlight each day (too much sun right away can burn the leaves). Increase the outdoor time about an hour per day for a week or two, until it's time to plant.