

THE EDIBLE GARDEN

February 2014



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DID YOU KNOW?

Are your old seeds still good? Try this test.

Place 10 seeds at one end of large paper towel. Lightly spray the towel with water. Cover the seeds by folding the towel over. Spray again. Place the towel in the plastic bag, seal it and place in a dark location at room temperature. (Label bag with the date and the type of seed.)

Re-moisten every 2-3 days. Check after 7-10 days. If 7 seeds (70%) have sprouted, your seeds are still good.

GARDEN ACTIVITIES

Plan to attend Seeds of Diversity's **Seedy Saturday** (Seed Sale and Exchange)

Saturday March 1st - 10am-3pm

Ron Kolbus Lakeside Centre, Britannia Beach,
102 Greenview Ave., Ottawa

Check local newspapers to find out about local horticultural societies/garden clubs' upcoming presentations. These are great places to meet fellow gardeners and ask questions.

Order seeds that you can't get locally.

BOOK REVIEW

Dale Odorizzi, Lanark County Master Gardeners

From Seed to Table, A Practical Guide to Eating and Growing Green by Janette Haase

Insomniac Press, 2009 ISBN 13: 978-1897178751; Indigo Online list price \$16.95

Eating locally grown and seasonal foods addresses many social and environmental problems raised by today's energy intensive methods of food production. In *From Seed to Table*, organic gardener Janette Haase offers a month-by-month guide to growing a significant amount of food in a small home garden. Haase takes the home gardener through the tasks of the gardening year, providing clear instructions for the work to be done from planning to planting to harvesting and storage. She also includes delicious seasonal recipes and menu ideas. This book provides plenty of advice on

maximizing your food production, especially on how to extend both ends of the gardening season. She provides excellent planting plans for creating a Square Foot Garden. With respect to methods for controlling insects Haase does emphasize that some methods can cause harm to beneficial insects. She then recommends safer alternatives. Haase lives in Sydenham so her gardening advice is extremely appropriate for gardeners in Eastern Ontario. I found the book easy to read and full of information for each month of the year.

INVITING SPRING IN

A GUIDE TO STARTING SEEDS INDOORS

Dale Odorizzi, Lanark County Master Gardeners



Growing your own vegetables is the most rewarding form of gardening—the plants are beautiful and you can eat the results. Starting your vegetable transplants from seeds kicks all of these rewards up a notch. Every time I pick up a tiny tomato seed and imagine the bushel of tomatoes it will produce, I am amazed. Also, starting your own vegetables indoors lets you get your hands dirty sooner!

To grow seeds, you need growing medium, containers, water and light. I typically purchase a soilless mix to start my plants. You can make your own using equal quantities of good garden soil, clean, coarse builders sand and peat moss. The garden soil should be sterilized by spreading in a shallow pan and baking at 275F (135°C) for 30 minutes. Moisten your growing medium before planting. When watering is required, stand each container in a tray of water to dampen, until the medium is moist but not wet.

I like to start my seeds in seed trays or flats. I can start all the tomatoes I want in one tray and they come with a handy clear dome cover. Be sure to label the type of tomatoes. They will all look the same in a few weeks. While the trays are quite flimsy, if handled carefully they will last a

long time. Once the tomatoes have germinated, I transplant into small pots—3" (7.5 cm).

Tomatoes and peppers love to be transplanted. Each time I move them up a pot size, I plant them as deep as I can. Roots will form along the planted stem, making the plants hardier. They also like to be tickled. Every time you walk by your seedlings, wave your fingers through your plants. Your fingers will smell like tomatoes—bliss!



Seedlings can be grown in a sunny window. If you decide to grow more seedlings than your window will hold, you may have to resort to using fluorescent lights. You can purchase tiers of grow lights or create temporary shelving from planks stacked on bricks with your lights propped on top. Special "GroLight" tubes are available but are very expensive. They add little to the health of your plants. We have found that using one "warm" tube and one "cool" tube ordinary fluorescent provides the full light spectrum at a much reduced cost.

The back of your seed package will tell you how deep to plant your seeds, when to plant and anything special you must do to get the seeds to germinate. They often refer to "the average last frost date for your area". In Eastern

Ontario, that is May 5th. A rule of thumb is seeds should be covered to three times their diameter.

Damping off is one problem with starting seeds indoors. To avoid, sterilize all seed containers. Use only sterile growing medium and sow seeds thinly. Do not allow your containers to be overcrowded. Water the seed trays from below. Damping off can be stimulated by nitrogen so make sure your seedlings develop 3 true leaves before fertilizing. You will recognize damping off if your seedling flops over. If this happens, remove it and its neighbours immediately. If the soil appears too moist, move the container away from other seedlings. Although not scientifically proven, many gardeners have had success watering their plants with chamomile tea or sprinkling cinnamon on the soil.

For years, I have started my own peppers and tomatoes from seeds indoors. For all other vegetables I have simply planted seeds in the ground where they are to grow. This past autumn, our Master Gardener group visited a local greenhouse that grows greens for local restaurants and one of the presenters at our Technical Update indicated that they start all of their plants indoors to transplant out. Their rationale is that they have better plants, they can germinate cool weather crops (such as lettuce) all year long and they can plant what they need each month.

WHEN TO START TRANSPLANTS

Dale Odorizzi, Lanark County Master Gardeners

Vegetable	Start Transplant	Direct Seeding
Basil	Start May & June. Transplant out June & July	Plant June & July
Bush Beans	No need to start indoors	Plant late May to Mid-July, every 2 weeks. Plant for Thanksgiving late August
Dried Beans		Plant Late May
Pole Beans		Plant Late May
Beets	April to June. Transplant out April-July	May & June
Broccoli	April to June. Transplant out May to early June	May & June
Cabbage	May. Transplant early June	May
Carrots		Direct Seed in May
Cauliflower	April to June. Transplant out May to early June	May & June
Coriander		April to August
Corn		Mid May to June
Cucumber	Early May, transplant in June	Late May
Eggplant	March, transplant in June	
Garlic		October
Green Onions	March to July	April to July
Kale	June and July	June and July
Lettuce	March to July. Transplant April to August.	April and May and then Late July
Melons	Early May, transplant early June	
Onions	February to early March. Transplant Mid April	Onion sets in April
Peas		April and May
Peppers	Start early March, transplant June	
Potatoes		May and June
Radish		April and May and then August
Rutabaga	Mid May, transplant early June	Plant in May
Salad Greens		April to September
Spinach	Start March, April and July. Plant in April, May and August	Plant April, May and August
Swiss Chard	April, transplant May	Plant in May
Tomatoes	Late March, transplant in June	
Turnip		April, May and August
Winter Squash	Early May, transplant in June	Plant Late May or early June.
Zucchini	Start May, transplant in June	Late May

Watch for **Trowel Talk** the Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton electronic monthly gardening newsletter available on the 15th at <http://mgottawa.mgoi.ca/>

The Edible Garden logo was created by [Jon Last](mailto:jonlast13@rogers.com) (jonlast13@rogers.com)

Master Gardeners of Ottawa-Carleton is a member group of Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc., a registered charity with the mission of providing gardening advice to homeowners