



Growing annuals from seed is not difficult, particularly with products available today for this purpose. Satisfying? You bet! Get started in the early spring and watch your little sprouts take root and grow!

Materials Needs:

Seeds

Seed starting tray

Seed starting medium or Jiffy pellets

Plastic cover to fit tray or plastic wrap

Misting bottle

Select a method

Seeds: Be sure to read packages carefully as plants will vary in length of germination time. Flowers such as impatiens need a 6-10 week germination period, while some marigolds may be ready to plant out in 5 weeks. Calculate backwards from date of typical last frost (In the capital district we the average last frost happens in mid-May) and sow seeds accordingly. Also note whether seeds need to be covered with planting medium or sit on top of medium. This will greatly affect your success.

Seed Tray: Any tray with sides will do. You need not worry about drainage at this point as the seeds want to stay moist. Commercial seed starting products include many different seed tray kits including some made to fit your windowsill. Make sure your tray has a clear top or will accommodate plastic wrap to cover.

Medium: Either buy pre-mixed medium in a bag or mix your own. To mix your own you will need equal parts of vermiculite, peat moss, and perlite. If you do mix your own, you will need a general purpose liquid fertilizer to use each time seeds are watered. Pre-mixed medium includes added nutrients. If you choose to use Jiffy pellets, there is no need to buy medium as the pellet expands with water and contains soil.

Misting Bottle: The easiest, best way to provide water for your seeds and seedling. This prevents drowning.

Method 1: For Seeds Needing Soil Cover

Mix your seed starting medium first if not using pre-mixed medium

Fill tray with medium except for the top 1/4" layer and moisten it

Tamp down surface to get it as level as you can

Sow seeds by placing them in rows or sprinkle thinly on top surface. Be careful not to sow too closely or seedlings will be too difficult to handle easily when transplanting.

Cover seeds with top 1/4" layer of soil

Moisten top layer with misting bottle

Cover with plastic

When seedlings almost reach the plastic cover, remove cover.

Method 2: For Seeds Needing No Soil Cover

Mix your seed starting medium first if not using pre-mixed medium

Fill tray with medium and moisten it

Tamp down surface to get it as level as you can

Sow seeds by placing them in rows or sprinkle thinly on top surface. Be careful not to sow too closely or seedlings will be too difficult to handle easily when transplanting.

Cover with plastic

When seedlings almost reach the plastic cover, remove cover.

Method 3: When Using Jiffy pellets

Place pellets on tray

Moisten pellets

Sow seeds by placing 2 or 3 in a pellet, either on top of soil surface or poke a hole with a pencil tip and place seed in and cover with soil, depending on seed requirements

Cover with plastic

When seedlings almost reach the plastic cover, remove cover

After you have sown seeds, place tray in the sunniest location you have. A south facing window is best. Grow lights can be used as well. Mist with water as needed and remove plastic top when seedling begin to approach it. After last frost, move the tray to a shady spot outdoors for a week before transplanting into the garden.