

Tips for Success

Are you new to starting seeds or a pro? Whatever your skill level, Outsidepride has tips for your growing success!

There are many seeds that do well when started directly outside. This is a great method for large volumes of flowers. It saves time and lots of effort plus there's no cost in pots, seed starting mix, and grow lights.

Here's a list of flowers that do very well with the direct sow method and there's more:

Baby's Breath	Moss Rose	Balsam	Mexican Sunflower	Moonflower
Violas	Poppy	Cosmos	Morning Glories	Zinnia
Marigold	Chrysanthemum	Gomphrena	Nasturtium	Sunflower
Coreopsis	Nicotiana	Cypress Vine	Ornamental Kale	Cornflower
Amaranthus	Four O'Clock	Sweet Pea	Ornamental Cabbage	Calendula
Tropical Milkweed	Hyacinth Bean	Alyssum	Black-eyed Susan	Yarrow

For a general rule, if the mature flowers self-sow each year, then that particular seed would do well being started directly outside.

However, there are risks involved with outdoor sowing because the seed germination and growth is very vulnerable to whatever nature throws at it. If there's an unexpected frost or a massive spring rain/hail storm, there's possible damage that can destroy the seeds and or seedlings.

Tips for Direct Sowing:

- Know your seed. Some seeds, like poppy, do well when sowed outdoors when the ground is cold. The cold and moisture helps the seed coat break down and the seed germinates better. Other seed needs only warmth for germination. So do some research online and investigate your seeds to know the conditions they prefer.
- Know your soil and prepare it. Most plants grow best in a soil type known as "loamy" which consists of a balanced mixture of sand, clay, and silt. If your soil is very dense it would be called clay, or if it's porous it would be considered sandy. Before putting out seeds, amend your soil so that it's more likely to support seed germination and growth. Adding compost is a great way to amend many soils, and again, there are lots of articles written by agricultural universities about soil and how to amend it. Secondly, prepare it by weeding and removing rocks, sticks, and breaking up large clumps. Loosen the soil, add amendments if needed, and rake the area into an even, level surface.
- Know your weather and frost dates. A flower like sweet pea can be planted in cooler soil, but a flower like zinnia needs warm soil. Night time temperatures, predicted frost end dates, typical seasonal weather patterns are all helpful pieces of information in knowing when to time your planting.
- Prepare the seeds. The seed packet or some research will tell you whether or not your seeds need to be prepared prior to planting. Soaking seeds, nicking, or rubbing the seeds with sandpaper are all methods of preparing the seed to germinate more easily.

- Plant the seeds. Follow the packets instructions for planting depth and spacing. Cover the seed as is needed. A good rule of thumb is to plant the seed as deep as 1 – 2 times the size of the seed. Small seeds, like Moss Rose, can be mixed with clean sand. Add a packet of seed to about ½ - 1 cup of sand, mix it together and then use an old parmesan cheese can or spice jar to evenly sprinkle the sand/seed mix over the soil. These seeds are small enough that they should be pressed into the soil but not buried.
- Mark your planted seed locations so that you can monitor the progress of germination. It's too easy to lose the locations or crowd seeds too close if planting locations are not clear.
- Moisten the soil and keep it moist. Nothing hampers germination more than letting the soil dry out, so consistent, even moisture is essential. A “shower” from a hose wand or other light forms of irrigation are needed as well. Too much force from a hose will disturb the seeds and soil.
- Recognize your seedlings. When they are newly sprouted, it can be difficult to tell the flower seedling from a weed. Look up seedling photos online. Weed out the unwanted weeds and grasses. Thin the seedlings if needed so that the strongest seedlings are not crowded and can thrive. To thin, snip seedlings at the soil line with a small pair of scissors.

Tips for Growing Seedlings:

- For the first few weeks, seedlings are frail and need attention. Daily watering using a gentle shower or mist is needed, but in hot weather, twice-daily watering might be needed.
- Watch for pests like slugs, snails, and cutworms. Put out bait to kill them if needed. Tender seedlings are their preferred food!
- Be diligent in weeding around the seedlings. Weeds compete for water, sunlight, and nutrients, so give the seedlings the best chance to thrive by keeping the weeds out.
- As the seedlings grow, and especially as they begin to form buds, applications of fertilizer will keep them at their best. Diluted fertilizer applications are best until the seedlings are at least a month old.

Nothing is more eye catching than a mass display of cosmos or zinnias growing in a section of the landscape. Seeding directly outside is a great way of creating that mass display with minimal work and maximum rewards!