

FREE

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GROWING WITH CONFIDENCE SINCE 1820

A quick guide to



- Set aside an inconspicuous area dedicated to growing cut flowers, they can then be picked without spoiling your ornamental flowerbed displays. Cut them when buds just begin to show colour.

Hints and Tips for Vegetables

- To minimise the risk of pests and diseases keep the vegetable garden clean, don't leave thinned



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Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 7QB
www.johnsons-seeds.com

- out plants and weeds you've removed lying around as their scent can attract pests.
- When thinning out any young salad plants, save the thinnings for use in salads.
- The removal of any developing flower heads will help to ensure the longest possible harvest period for leafy annual herbs.
- Many herbs can be dried for storage but better flavour is retained by freezing them.
- Grow vegetables that dislike full sun in the shade of taller vegetables.
- Plants will benefit from a regular liquid feed especially on light sandy soils.
- Remove leaves shading fruit, allowing sunlight to help ripen them.

Hints and Tips for Flowers

- For many plants the regular removal of dead flower heads will help to ensure the longest possible flowering season, however, leaving some in place will provide seed to feed birds and hardy plants will have the opportunity to drop seed, providing more flowers the following year.
- Sowing seed in curved rows or a number of parallel rows to create larger drifts will give a more natural effect.
- Annuals make an easy filler when sown directly into any gaps in the border.
- To get the best displays, feed flowers when the buds begin to appear with a liquid feed that is high in potassium. The symbol used for potassium is K.

There are also incredible savings to be made, in most cases a great number of plants can be raised for the relatively small cost of a seed packet. Another benefit is that the large number of seeds often found in a packet allows for repeated sowing. Consecutive sowings

of salad leaves, for example, can provide fresh and convenient crops over a long season, providing a huge saving when compared to buying bags of salad leaves from the supermarket. In many cases, the repeated sowing of flowers helps to give the longest possible flowering season for maximum enjoyment. Plants bought in a tray from a garden centre will all have been sown at the same time and are usually ready to harvest or flower all at the same time, giving a very short season.

Raising your own plants from seed also allows them to adapt to the local conditions as they develop and, with the greater care that can be given, will often result in healthier plants that perform better.

One of the other great joys of growing from seed is being able to share or swap any surplus plants with neighbours and fellow gardeners. It's a wonderful way to meet new people, discuss techniques and experiences and discover great new varieties.

Basic Plant Groups

Annuals

Hardy annuals tolerate colder weather and, for ease, are usually sown outside directly into their growing position. They are normally the quickest and easiest plants to grow. Half hardy annuals are more sensitive and often need a good long growing season, so these are usually best sown earlier indoors and then planted out when the weather warms up.

Biennials

Develop in the first year and flower in the second. These can often be sown a little later in the season when the rush to get things done in spring is over. Biennials tend to be hardy as they need to survive the winter outside.



Perennials

Live for more than two years, often many more, coming back to flower again year after year. Hardy perennials often spend the first year developing and flower from the second year onwards, some plants can take a little longer to bloom. There are also hardy perennials available that will flower strongly in their first year from an early sowing. Half hardy perennials generally flower in their first year from an early indoor sowing and, as they will die off at the end of the season when cold weather sets in, are usually treated as annuals. They can however be potted up in early autumn and brought indoors into a frost free greenhouse or conservatory to wait out the cold weather before returning to the garden in spring.



General Hints and Tips

- Check the packet to make sure you sow the seed at the correct depth.
- Young plants that are thinned out carefully needn't be discarded, they can be transplanted to the correct spacing at the end of the row.
- Water well after thinning out to wash dislodged soil back around the roots of the remaining plants.
- When they are stressed plants will flower prematurely in a desperate bid to produce seed before they die, with vegetables this is known as running to seed, or bolting. To avoid plants becoming stressed, it is important to ensure they are grown in the right conditions.
- Do not allow plants to dry out and do not overwater. The soil should be moist but not wet.
- Cover young plants with cloches or fleece if there is any danger of a late frost.

The Benefits of Growing from Seed

The satisfaction of raising your own plants from seed is immense. There is enormous pleasure in simply knowing that the vegetables and flowers you enjoy are all the result of your own handiwork.



Getting Started

The first thing to consider is the type of plants you intend to grow, this will, to a large degree, determine the process required, whether they are to be sown indoors or outside. The seed packet will provide all the necessary details of how to raise your chosen varieties. Most equipment and tools can be used year after year so it is worth buying items that will stand the test of time. You will require;

- A garden fork and rake** - to prepare the soil in beds and borders.
- Seed trays/small pots** - for indoor sowing and transplanting seedlings into.
- Seed compost** - to fill trays and pots for indoor sowing.
- Multipurpose compost** - to transplant developing plants into.
- A propagator or transparent cover for seed trays** - to help keep seedlings warm and moist.
- A trowel** - to transplant young plants to their growing position.
- A hoe** - to keep beds and borders free of weeds.

Outdoors

Preparing the ground is one of the most important jobs to be done in advance, whether for direct sowing or transplanting indoor sown plants into. Heavy soils need to be dug over and broken up to improve drainage and aeration. This is best done in autumn so that winter frost action will help the process, and when there are fewer jobs to be done in the garden. Adding fibrous organic matter and coarse sand to heavy clay soils will help to loosen the soil structure. Light sandy soils benefit from the addition of organic materials such as garden compost or well rotted manure, to help bind the soil particles so it can retain moisture and nutrients more easily.

Indoors

Seed trays and pots need to be made ready for sowing. If re-using trays and pots they should always be scrubbed and sterilised to minimise the risk of any pests, diseases or moulds from previous years affecting the delicate new seedlings. It is also worth investing in good quality compost for indoor sowing as good compost goes a long way to ensuring good quality plants.



grow on until they are large enough to plant out. Before planting out young plants must be acclimatised to outside conditions by being placed in a sheltered location for a few hours during the day, the time spent outside should gradually be increased over the next two weeks (avoid frosts). They can then be planted out to their final growing position at the spacing indicated on the packet.

Flowering/Harvesting

The range of dates within which flowering and harvesting can take place is stated on the seed packet. With repeated sowings, fast growing flowers and vegetables can provide continuous displays or crops throughout the indicated

A Quick Growing Guide

Where

Many seeds are easily sown directly into a well prepared seed bed in their flowering position. The seed packet will indicate where they will thrive, whether it is an open sunny location or dappled shade. Some varieties are best sown indoors, into trays or small pots of seed compost, often these plants are less hardy so this method allows them to be nurtured and protected until the weather has warmed up and they are large enough to be planted out. Varieties with very small or expensive seeds are also best sown in pots or trays,



either outside or indoors. This way they are easier to keep an eye on until they are large enough to plant out into the garden.

How

Before sowing outdoors, the surface of the soil should be raked to a fine consistency. Seeds need to be sown thinly, in rows at the distance indicated on the seed packet. It is best to sow in rows so that it is easier to identify the seedlings as they emerge. The seed should be lightly covered with fine soil and watered gently so they are not disturbed. When sowing indoors into pots or trays, make

certain they are clean and be sure to use fresh seed compost. To aid germination the trays should be kept warm and covered with glass, polythene or a propagator lid to help keep the compost moist. The cover should be removed when seedlings appear. Don't forget to use your free Johnsons seed label to identify the variety sown.

Care

Once seedlings sown outdoors are large enough to handle they need to be thinned out to the spacing indicated on the packet. It is best to remove the weaker seedlings leaving the stronger ones the room they need to grow on. This also improves air circulation around the seedlings, reducing the chance of disease. The soil needs to be kept moist (but not wet) and weed free. Seedlings raised indoors should be carefully transplanted to further pots or trays when they're large enough to handle. Always hold seedlings by a leaf so you don't risk crushing the stem. They can then

flowering or harvest season.

Annual flower varieties will flower vigorously the same year they are sown and then die back once their life-cycle is complete. Half hardy annuals and perennials will often flower until the weather turns cold in the autumn. Hardy perennial varieties tend to spend the first year bulking up in order to flower the following year and then repeatedly for many years to come.

Some vegetables need to mature before they are ready to harvest but there are many that can be sown successionally and harvested as young, tender baby vegetables, greatly extending the harvest season.

