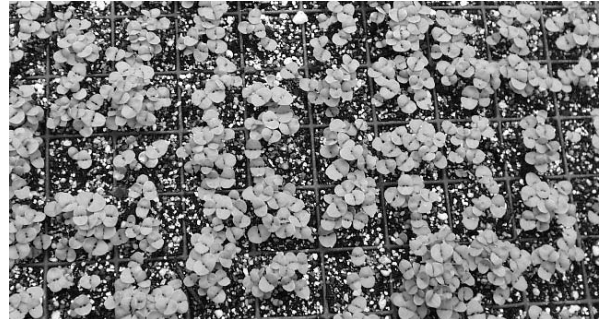


## Starting Seeds Indoors

There are many reasons why it's smart to start seeds indoors:

- Many plants have a long growing season and they won't flower or fruit unless they get a head start indoors.
- Even if plants don't need to be started indoors, they'll grow larger and bloom longer if started early.
- Plants with fine seeds are protected from harsh weather.
- It is economical, satisfying and fun!



Before you start, read the back of each seed packet to find out the proper planting time. Keep in mind that the average last frost date in Wichita is about April 15th, then work backward from that date to mark the sowing dates on your calendar.

**Soil:** Use a quality planting or starting mix (ferti•lome **Seed & Cutting** starter mix or peat pellets). Fill the container with potting mix to within 1/2" from the top. Lightly wet the soil before planting seeds. Place 2 to 3 seeds in each container, then cover with potting mix twice as deep as the diameter of the seed. Label each container with plant variety and date.

**Watering:** After the seeds have been sown, water from the bottom with lukewarm water or mist the soil so you don't dislodge the seeds. Cover the container with a clear plastic bag or dome and keep the seeds continually moist, not soggy. Later, when the seedlings emerge and the cover is removed, water whenever the soil surface is dry.

**Temperature:** A consistent temperature, between 65°-75°, will help the seeds germinate. We recommend heating cables or a seedling heat mat to provide bottom warmth and encourage better root growth.

**Light:** It will take about a week (depending on germination time) for the seedlings to emerge from their shells and poke through the surface. You should then remove the cover and expose the plants to more sunlight and cooler temperatures. When the plants have germinated they will need about 10-12 hours of light a day or they will become spindly and leggy. You may want to invest in fluorescent lights that have red and blue wave lengths and place them 3-4" above the plants. Gradually raise the light as the plants start to grow. If you use a fluorescent light fixture, install "S" hooks so that you can easily raise and lower the light. If the plants are in a window, be sure to turn the container periodically so the plants do not grow lopsided toward the light. Also keep in mind that the seedlings will need good air circulation.

**Transplanting:** After the first set of true leaves develop, a mild dose of fertilizer is helpful. We recommend a low nitrogen, high phosphorus plant food such as ferti•lome **Blooming and Rooting**. Do not transplant until the second set of true leaves develop. Leave one healthy plant in each container. Snip off weak plants with scissors so you don't disturb the roots. Before planting them outside, harden the plants by gradually putting them outdoors in filtered sun, a few hours at a time over a one week period.

**\*\* Remember to read the back of each seed packet for special care instructions. \*\***