GROWING FRUIT, VEG, & HERBS

Sewing Seed

Dirty Seeds

A possible source of problems is dirty seeds. Seeds come from a parent plant, and if that plant has an infection then the seed that grows from it may also carry the disease. Think of tomato seeds, they are inside a tomato that may be infected with blight or other problems. If the seed saver is not careful and does not wash the seeds, it may transmit it to the seedling. You can wash seed in a dilute peroxide solution for sterility.

Give Seeds The Best Start

To give seedlings the best start, a soft, nutrient-containing (but not nutrient-rich), and weed-free soil or other medium is best. Seedling or potting compost is one of the better options.

- Small seeds, like leeks, can go into trays or seed beds. For the smallest seeds, a fine dust like compost is best. Bigger seeds, like beans, can go into small pots and can cope with potting compost.
- Fill pots and trays, but don't press the compost into the post, this compacts the compost and can make it hard for the seedling's roots.
- A rough guide for planting seeds is that the depth of planting should be no more than twice the depth of the seed itself.
- It is best to water thoroughly as soon as they are planted. However, too much watering can cause damping off and other mould problems.

Click below for Video:

⇨ **“**Organic Growing - Seed Sowing and Potting On**”** ⇦

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Planting

When plants are young, they are weak. As they grow their immune systems strengthen and they will develop their defences: chemicals they produce like tannin or physical growth such as spines.

⇨ Predators like slugs, earwigs, and woodlice will try to eat the seedlings in their early stage.
⇨ Diseases, such as damping off, are a problem.

Click below for Video:
⇨ **"**5 of the Best Organic Vegetable Growing Tips**"** ⇦

Feeding

People understand that humans and animals need food to grow and to do work. Sometimes, people are surprised by the idea that plants need food too.

There are three main nutrients that plants must have (apart from air and water):

1. Nitrogen (N)
2. Phosphorus (P)
3. Potassium (K)

Other nutrients include Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg), and a load of other micronutrients.

Nitrogen

Nitrogen can be obtained from many sources. It is possible to make Nettle Tea (click here to see the Compost Page). Other common sources are compost, manure, and readily available urine.

⇨ Liquid feeds should be diluted before use (urine at about 1:10.)
⇨ High Nitrogen Feed is most required during the early growth of a plant & for leaf production.

Above: Comfrey feed.

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Phosphorus
Phosphorus can be obtained from rock phosphate, granite rock dust, or washing up liquids. Any washing up liquid can be used: just a tiny squirt into a watering can is generally enough.

⇨ It is best to use organic washing up liquids as the non-organic is made without regard for the ecology of the planet, human or any other sort of rights.

Potassium
Potassium is found in greensand, wood ash (young hardwoods are best), and comfrey. Comfrey is a plant with deep roots; it can collect Potassium from deep in the soil and groundwater. The leaves are made into a fermented liquid feed (click here to see the Compost Page) or can be added to composts.

Magnesium
Magnesium is found in dolomite limestone and this can be added to soils or composts, where bacteria and worms will release the nutrients. Liquid Magnesium Feed is great for tomatoes, and this is made by adding a couple of spoons of Epsom Salts to water or any other feed.

Nutrient Deficiencies
Nutrient deficiencies are best avoided, but can be seen and diagnosed from the colours and shapes of leaves. There are many sites that have good photos of each symptom:

- "Identifying Plant Nutrient Deficiencies"
- "What Does a Leaf Say About Nutrient Deficiency?"
- General images to look at

Pest Control

The best form of pest control is a balanced ecosystem, but even in a stable system disease and predation will exist.

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Harvesting

The end result of horticulture is plant food. Care should be taken when harvesting to:

- Not damage the plant.
- Not damage the crop.
- Not crush the soil around the plant while picking.
- Be careful around buds and undeveloped fruit.

If a plant has any disease, leave it until last so you don't spread any infection to other plants!

Click below for Video:

⇨ **“**Bountiful Harvest in the Organic Vegetable Garden**”** ⇦

Clearing

Diseases get into your soil by leaving plants to die and decompose where plants will grow in the years after. We don’t want this to happen!

⇨ Clear-away plants once their productive life is over.

⇨ Composting is the best option, using a method that will generate heat or sterilise it.

⇨ If the plant is diseased it is best to burn it, the ash can then be used.

⇨ If ground cover over the winter is needed, green manure crops can be grown and dug in.

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