

Starting Seeds Indoors

by Mary Rowsell

Between Christmas and New Year I always go through the seed catalogues and, with great restraint, order my years supply of seeds. Always read both the seed packet and catalogue instructions for information regarding planting, care and transplanting. I get started by moistening a soilless mix with 'No Damp,' a fungicide that prevents the seedlings from rotting at soil level. Use a plant stand with fluorescent bulbs with a mix of cool white bulbs for leaf growth and grow lights for flower production. You need to change the bulbs yearly as they loose intensity rapidly with prolonged use. The seedlings have to be about 10cm from the lights and the lights on for 12 to 14 hours daily. Bottom warmth is nice if you can provide it; a specialized heating pad or the top of the fridge works well. Cover the seedlings until the true leaves have emerged or the seedlings reach the top of the humidity dome. Remove the dome daily for a short while to provide air circulation. Transplant the seedlings and place the flats on a capillary mat for easy watering. Use a 10:52:10 fertilizer at half strength (to prevent root burn and leggy seedlings). Your carefully grown plants need hardening off outside away from direct sun or wind and can be left out over night once the temperature is above 10 °C. Don't be in too much of a hurry to plant them in the garden, wait until after the last full moon in May.