Tomatoes, Peppers, and Eggplant

It is best to start these inside and transplant outside later. Planting times vary, so pay careful attention to the schedule.

Containers (All should be 2-3in. in diameter)
- Milk Cartons: Cut off top, poke holes in bottom or cut two bottom corners for good drainage. At planting time, plants can either be gently tapped out of the carton or the carton can be carefully torn open and the plant removed.
- Peat Pots: If you want to plant the whole pot when transplanting, the bottom should be removed as the pots don’t decompose quickly enough to outpace the growth of the plant.
- Plastic Packs: These are great as long as the cells are at least 2 inches.

Planting
- Fill containers with potting mix to 3/4 in. from the top.
- Poke a finger hole in the soil of each cell no more than 1/4 in. deep.
- Drop 2-3 seeds in each hole and gently cover with potting soil.

Watering
- Gently apply water to soak through container, while being careful to avoid digging up seeds. Spray bottles are useful for this step, provided enough water is given. If watering transplants in a greenhouse, a Fogg-It nozzle works well.
- Water as needed to keep moist until germination. Seedlings will require more water as they grow larger and should be checked for water needs each day.

Light
- Providing ample light for seedlings can be a challenge in school classrooms. Seedlings must have maximum light in the sunniest windows possible. This often means they cannot be kept in certain classrooms –those that lack adequately sunny windows, and may need to be kept in hallways, cafeterias, or classrooms with southern exposure instead. If necessary, seedlings may be kept under grow lights.

Thinning
- When seedlings begin their second set of leaves, use scissors to cut off all but the one strongest seedling in each container.

Trellising
- Tomatoes should be guided up a trellis as detailed in the “Infrastructure” section of this guide.

When to Plant
- Eggplant and peppers should be planted inside in mid-March, tomatoes in mid-April.
- All should be transplanted out into the garden in late May or early June.
Kale, Broccoli, Cabbage, Kohlrabi, and Chard
Like tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant, these crops are best started inside and transplanted out later.

Planting
- Follow instructions for tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant.

When to Plant
- Start these crops inside in early March.
- Transplant out to the garden in mid-May.

Lettuce, Mixed Greens, and Spinach

- **Transplanted**
  - Plant like tomatoes (previous page) except that smaller containers can be used.
  - When transplanted, seedlings should be spaced a foot apart for harvesting as full heads.
  - Thin so there is one plant per cell.

- **Direct-Seeded**
  - Directly seed in rows 1 ft. apart and \(\frac{1}{4}\) in. deep, or in beds by scattering seed on the surface and lightly raking into soil.
  - In a greenhouse, direct-seeded flats can be sequentially grown for cutting greens.
  - In general, direct-seeded lettuce is best cut repeatedly as young cutting greens.

When to Plant
- Spinach and lettuce are not good summer crops and are much better suited for spring and fall production when the weather is cooler. Seasons can be extended in the fall and spring through the use of quick hoops (see “Extending the Season” for more detailed information).
- Lettuce can be started inside in early March and transplanted in early April (or a bit later if heavy frosts are still predicted).
- Both spinach and mixed greens can be direct-seeded in the garden in early April.
- A second crop of lettuce can be planted in early July for a fall harvest.
- Spinach can be planted September 1st and overwintered for an early spring harvest.
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Helpful Information on Planting and Plant Care.

Winter Squash, Melons, Watermelons, Pumpkins and Gourds

Early indoor planting is not recommended for these crops. Poor lighting in most school settings results in spindly plants that do not transplant well.

**Planting**

- Direct-seed in locations spacious enough for the vines. Suggested spacing is about 4 feet in all directions, with the exception of trailing winter squash, which requires 6 feet.
- Plant 4-6 seeds in a one-foot circle. Be sure seeds are pointed end down (that's where the root comes out) and are planted 3/4-1 in. deep.

**Watering**

- Water thoroughly, taking care not to dig up the seeds.

**Thinning**

- Once seedlings have sprouted, thin to four plants per circle.

**When to Plant**

- Directly seed in the garden in late May or early June.

Potatoes

A few weeks prior to planting day, procure actual “seed potatoes” from a supermarket, nursery, or Seed Savers Exchange. Don’t use potatoes used for eating, as they have likely been treated with a sprout-retardant spray and will not grow.

A few days before planting, cut potatoes into chunks with one or two sprouted eyes, allowing cuts to dry and heal before planting. Small seed potatoes can be planted whole.

**Planting**

- In rows about 2 1/2 ft. apart, dig shovel scoops 4 in. deep and one foot apart. Drop a potato (or piece) in each hole, then cover and water. If soil is already moist and rains are expected soon, no need to water potatoes as they will start to grow in moist ground.

**Hilling**

- Later in summer, check to see if swelling tubers are pushing up and becoming exposed. If so, mound dirt around the base of the plants. Potatoes exposed to light turn green and become, to some extent, toxic.

**Storage**

- Harvested potatoes should always be stored in the dark.

**When to Plant**

- Potatoes can be seeded outside in mid-May.
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Beets, Radishes, and Carrots

Planting
- Direct-seed in rows 1 ft. apart and ½ in. deep.
- Planting radishes and carrots together can be a good technique because radishes will germinate faster, helping mark the carrot rows. In addition, when radishes are pulled, it helps thin the carrots.

Watering
- Water gently and keep moist daily until germination.
- Beets sprout quickly, but carrots take a couple of weeks. This is one reason why carrots are perhaps best left for gardening programs that have been established for a few years as opposed to newly started school gardens.

Thinning
- When seedlings have a couple of sets of true leaves, thin about 1 in. apart for carrots and 2 in. apart for beets.

Weeding
- Constant weeding is necessary for these crops, which can make them rather difficult to work with. The best success has been achieved in well-managed raised beds.

When to Plant
- Direct-seed in early April.

Peas

Planting
- Direct-seed 1 in. deep and 2 in. apart along a trellis or teepee.
- Peas climb, so be sure to guide them up the trellis or teepee as detailed in the Infrastructure section.

When to Plant
- Peas can be planted as early as April 1st but likely won’t produce peas until school is out.
- Some people are beginning to experiment with planting peas in the fall, as peas like it chilly. Perhaps this would be a fun option to explore in your school’s garden!
Onions

Green Onions
- If you would like scallions (green onions) for your school's summer program, they are grown from small onion sets available in supermarkets and nurseries during the spring only. These sets are not designed for growing bulb onions.

Storage Onions
- If you would like to grow big onions for fall harvest, these should be ordered from nursery catalogues during the winter for delivery as bundles of transplants in the spring.

When to Plant
- Both onion sets and transplants of big onions can be planted directly in the garden as early as ground can be worked in April.

Flowers

Zinnias
- Scatter a small packet of seeds down a row about 1/2 in. deep and cover.
- For larger quantities of seed (especially of saved seed with its flower chaff), pull dirt to both sides of a bed with a rake, scatter seed thinly, and pull dirt back over seed to cover about 1/2 in. deep.

Nasturtiums and Sunflowers
- These can either be planted early indoors or direct-seeded.
- Plant seeds singly 1/2 in. deep, 6 in. apart for nasturtiums and 1-2 ft. apart for sunflowers.

Morning Glories
- Morning Glories are climbers, so they need some structure to support their growth. This makes them perfect for entry arches and arbors!
- Scatter seeds 1/2 in. deep in a row directly at the base of whatever structure they are to climb on.
- It's important to note that Morning Glories re-seed rampantly the following year and thus may be a weeding problem.

Watering
- All flower seeds should be watered gently right away and kept moist until germination.

When to Plant
- Flowers can be direct-seeded mid-May.
Zucchini, Other Summer Squash, and Cucumbers

**Planting**
- Direct-seed in a cluster of up to 4 plants, each cluster spaced about 4ft. apart.
- Plant seeds with pointed end down and about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. deep.

**Watering**
- Keep seeds watered until they germinate. After that, watering can be tapered off in frequency but increased in depth.
- Mature plants have deep roots and should be flood-irrigated between rains.

**When to Plant**
- For a fall harvest of zucchini, summer squash, and cucumbers, direct-seed in July.

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**Beans**

**Planting**
- Direct-seed with about 4in. between plants and 3ft. between rows.
- Pole varieties (such as Scarlet Runner Beans, etc.) should be planted along a bean teepee or trellis 1in. deep and 2in. apart. As the plants grow, guide them up their trellis or teepee as detailed in “Infrastructure”. Some pole varieties can climb over 10ft., so keep this in mind when choosing what they will grow on.

**Watering**
- Keep seeds moist until they germinate.
- As the plants grow, water less often but more deeply; ground-level irrigation is suggested.

**When to Plant**
- Beans can be planted in late May for a summer crop and early July for a fall harvest.