

Timely Turf Tips

March 2014

Hey, after seeing the latest weather forecast, there just may be hope for spring. Get your hands dirty now and start some flower and vegetable seeds indoors. Never started seeds indoors before, check out the tips below to get started or check with the crew at the mill for advice. They are ready and willing to help. Growing your own plants from seed is a great way to stretch your gardening budget. Not to mention, it's fun and rewarding too.

Soil: For very best results, use a sterilized soil or potting medium. Check the seed packet to determine the coverage needed for the type of seed planted. Stop by the mill to pick up a bag of sterilized soil. See the coupon below to save on the purchase.

Light: Young seedlings will need about 14 hours of direct light a day. This may be the biggest challenge in starting seeds indoors. The sun will move past even the brightest window in a home, causing the seedlings to stretch towards the light and become leggy. Fluorescent lights work well because they emit very little heat and will not dry out the plants. Using a light timer set at 14 hours automates the task of controlling hours of light.

Water: Water enough to keep the potting mixture moist. Consider using a spray bottle to mist the soil or use a plastic dome or plastic wrap to keep the moisture in. Once the seeds germinate, loosen the plastic wrap (domes can be kept in place) and move the tray into bright light.

Hardening Off: Once the seedlings have grown, they will be ready to move outdoors when the temperatures warm. It's very important to get the seedlings used to being outside by hardening off. To do this, simply set the plants outside, out of direct sunlight for about an hour on a calm day. Increase this amount of time every day until the plants have stayed out all day. After about 10-14 days, the plants will be ready to go in the ground after the threat of frost has passed.

Seeds to start this month: Coleus, Dusty Miller, Pinks, Snapdragons, and Verbenas can be started now. Seed Alyssum, Impatiens, Moss Rose, Salvia, Pepper, Broccoli, Early Cabbage, Cauliflower, Head Lettuce mid-March. Start tomatoes late March to early April.

This link from the University of Minnesota Extension, www.extension.umn.edu/garden/yard-garden/flowers/starting-seeds-indoors/, will provide more details.



Friendly Reminders

- **Time for spring cleaning of wood duck and bluebird houses.** The mill has cedar shavings for wood duck house nesting material.
- **Lovers of pepper plants.** Now is when Steve is preparing for the upcoming season. Contact him by email (steve@hugofeedmill.com) to order your favorite plants.
- **Repot root-bound house plants now.** Increasing length of day leads to new growth and pot-bound plants benefit with a larger pot. Use a pot 2" larger in diameter than existing pot.

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