



Starting Your Garden From Seeds

Margaret MacLeod and Suzi O'Byrne
March 15, 2023



Master Gardeners are all volunteers, and while we have acquired basic Zoom skills, sometimes unforeseen technical issues arise.

Please bear with us, be patient and understanding if any technical glitches pop-up during tonight's presentation.



The information contained in Growing Groceries presentations is based on Washington State University home gardening publications and other science and research-based materials. Resource lists are provided at the end of the presentations.

To enliven the learning experience, speakers may use examples from their own garden experience and draw from their personal gardening successes and failures.



Tonight's Agenda

In this class, we will talk about:

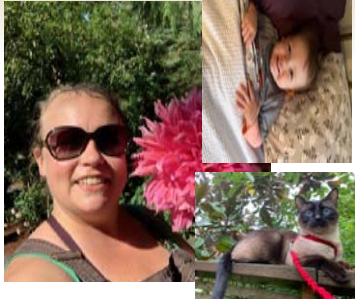
- Starting seeds indoors and outdoors, including direct sow
- Raising and hardening off plants
- Planting transplants

We have some time built in at the end for questions and can respond to questions in the chat as we go along.

We are very glad to be with you this evening and would like to thank Connie Kelley, Joan Baldwin, and Sharon O'Grady for inviting us to be a part of the GG program and collaboratively and intentionally supporting our class this year.

Margaret MacLeod

- Lifelong gardener
- MG since 2018
- Volunteer for Vashon and SODO Home Depot clinics
- Volunteer for Bellevue Demonstration Garden
- Faculty experience



Suzi O'Byrne

- Retired 911 Police/Fire/EMS Dispatch Supervisor (30+ years)
- Learned love of gardening from Nana (paternal grandmother)
- I'm Nana now passing it along to granddaughters Tenley & Quinnlyn
- KC Master Gardener since 2009
- Clinic at Renton McLendon's and The Bellevue Demonstration Garden (Edible Flower Garden)
- KCMGF Board Member June 2020



Where to Start?

Equipment and Seeds



Why to Start

What are the benefits of starting plants from seeds?

- Greater selection and variety
- You know your own microclimate, and can fit seeds into your growing and/or harvesting timeline
- Starts make great gifts to share!

Equipment That Will Help

- Trays, flats, pots
- Diggers, snips, dibblers
- Tweezers, baby spoons, bait boards
- Labels, pencils, notepads
- Meters, mats, and spray bottles

Preparing Your Equipment

- Wash and remove last year's dirt and debris
- Soak for 30 minutes 9 parts water : 1 part bleach
- Rinse thoroughly and air dry completely before storing

Clean all trays, heating mats and surface areas used for seed starting!



Seed Selection

- Catalogs
 - Hardware Stores
 - Nurseries
 - Online
- Get started early for sales, deals, and selection



Early Seeds to Plant

To Start Right Now!!

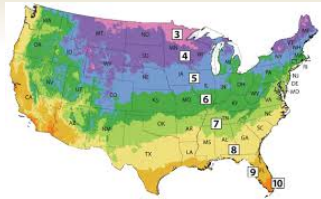


When to Grow

- WSU publications
- Planting too early sets seeds up for rot and other failures
- Planting to late sets plants up for less-than-optimal harvest
- Better to plant too late than too early

We are Zone 8b

Hardy plants survive 15-20 degree weather. Check with seed company where you purchase your seeds (or the map on the back of seed packets) to confirm zone. Remember isolated coastal pockets.



Planting Chart



How to Grow

- Germination considerations
- Media/soil temperatures are ideally 70-75 degrees (listed on seed packet sometimes), which can be regulated using a heated mat with a thermostat
- Air temp. above 55-60 and soil temp. at 70 for majority of successful germinations
- Cotyledons are first mini leaves to appear, true leaves are next

The Back of a Seed Packet

What to read
What is important to note and to know
Germination times
Days until harvest



Viability of Seeds

- 3-5 years if kept dry
- Keep seeds in cool dry place
- Wet paper towel trick

The Growing Process

How and where to grow seeds that turn into viable plants



How to Grow

Sowing and Covering

Read seed packets for any special instructions
General rule of thumb: cover seeds 4x width of the seed
Cover and gently firm down
Some seeds need little to no covering of soil



How to Grow

Lighting

Seedlings need 12-18 hours of light per day
South light will work, north light will not
Fluorescent light should be no more than 2-4 inches above plants
Light with a timer than can be set is helpful



Starts in Flats vs. Pots

Starting in a Flat

Flats with cells
Flats with pellets

Starting in a Pot

Not necessary to transplant
Can move easily to different areas to promote growth

Direct Sow

Check back of seed packet for instructions
Soil temperature is very important
Thin seedlings according to packet instructions
(Beet greens and others can be eaten after thinning)

Transplanting

- Prepare surface and vessels
- When seedlings have 4 true leaves, they need to be transplanted into 4" containers
- Snip weak or spindly seedlings at the soil level and discard
- Baby spoons are a great tool for scooping the seedlings out to move!

Transplanting

- Air is the enemy (roots dry out easily)
- Moisten soil prior to moving seedlings
- Water seedlings by spray bottle immediately once they've moved



Hardening Off

- Once plants have 2 or 3 sets of true leaves, they need to get used to our weather conditions
- On a mild day, start with 2-3 hours of sun in a sheltered location outside
- Over 7-10 day period, help seedlings become accustomed to strong sunlight, cool nights, and less frequent watering



Hardening Off

- Seedlings need nighttime temps to be above 50 degrees all night long
- Bring indoors nightly if temps are below that or if you aren't sure



Planting Outdoors

- Pots, 6" +
- Containers
- Pre-prepared Garden Area



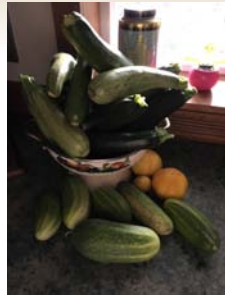
“Failures”

- There is no such thing as a failure, only opportunity to learn
- The most common learning curves are over/under watering, too low or too high soil temps, putting the wrong plant in the wrong place
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!!



Harvest

- Stagger seed sowing to have a sustaining crop
- Veggies are at their peak flavor and nutrition at harvest
- Between growth and overgrowth is a fine line



Questions?



Resources

<http://gardening.wsu.edu/home/>
<https://pubs.extension.wsu.edu/general-gardening>
<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>
<https://territorialseed.com/>
<https://kingcoseed.org/>

"Ask a Master Gardener"

Send a messages with questions and photos to ask-a-mastergardener@live.com

Or, use the form you'll find online at <https://extension.wsu.edu/king/ask-a-master-gardener/>

Become a Master Gardener

For information on King County Master Gardener training, visit <https://extension.wsu.edu/king/gardening/become-a-master-gardener/>

Applications for the 2024 class will open in September 2023.

The training course is generally held on 10 weekends beginning in March using

- A blended learning model of Zoom lectures,
- in-person sessions, and
- a self-paced online horticulture course.

Get Involved with Growing Groceries

Interested Master Gardeners are invited to join the Growing Groceries leadership team or to volunteer as a presenter in 2024.

Please contact Growinggroceries.king@gmail.com
