

Sowing seeds for ROGI

Thanks so much for offering to grow seedlings for the sales table at ROGI. Your efforts will have a double benefit for ROGI members: to offer seedlings to members to help encourage them to grow their own food, and to raise money for ROGI so we can offer discounted outings and more for our members. Another benefit is that you are getting more practice at raising seedlings.

Guide to growing your seeds.

You will need:

- ☐ ROGI seed raising mix
- ☐ Plant labels – e.g. a recycled tag cut from a yoghurt or milk container or a length of old venetian blind slat.
- ☐ Pencil for writing on tags – e.g. black 2B to 6B pencil, wax pencil or sharpie. Pencil doesn't wash off or fade, and can be erased so the label can be reused.
- ☐ Organic liquid fertiliser and a spray bottle - Fish and Kelp or Liquid fish are good liquid fertilisers (don't use worm liquid). A 'bottle-top waterer' on an old soft-drink bottle is handy for this (available from the Seed Bank). Note: Seasol alone is not a fertiliser
- ☐ Small containers e.g. strawberry containers etc with holes, to sow seed into
- ☐ 4 cell or 6 cell punnets or single tubes for transplanting into (depends on what the plants are)
- ☐ Tray to use as a drip collector under seedling containers
- ☐ Vermiculite to cover the seeds if they are small e.g. lettuce

For most small seeds we sow them in a larger flat-ish container and transplant them into punnets for sale once they have germinated and have grown two to four leaves. For larger seeds like beans, peas, cucumbers, pumpkins etc sow them directly into the final containers such as 4 or 6 cell punnets or individual pots: see *** over.

If you are not confident in transplanting, please feel free to sow one to two seeds per cell in the 4 or 6 cell punnets and grow them like that.

Sowing your seeds.

Step 1 Dampen the seed raising mix.

Step 2 Almost fill the container for growing your seeds with the seed raising mix.

Step 3 Sprinkle small seeds evenly over the top of the mix.

Step 4 Apply vermiculite to just cover the surface. It's ok to have a little seed raising mix peeking through. Aim for a light cover only.

Step 5 Label the seed container with sowing **date, type of seed** eg 'Tomato Tigerella' and **your initials** or first name.

Step 6 Wet down the container gently so as not to dislodge the seed.

Growing your seedlings.

Step 7 Put the container on a tray to catch the drips and sit it in a bright spot but not in direct sunlight. Water daily. (*****not beans - see below**). Seeds will take 5-28 days to germinate depending on the seed and conditions. They should never dry out but should not be waterlogged either.

Once they have produced leaves, spray with liquid fertiliser (foliar fertilise) weekly to encourage fabulous growth!
Move them to a sunnier spot.

Step 8 Transplanting. When they are a centimetre or two tall, use a teaspoon (lollipop stick, pointy knife blade etc) to pick them out of the germination mix and transfer them into 4 or 6 cell punnets. Label each punnet as before. One to two plants per cell is good. They will tolerate more sun now, so move to a brighter spot with sun for at least part of the day. Keep the regular water up to them. Continue to fertilise using your sprayer with fertiliser once a week. They are now ready to bring to the next ROGI meeting.

*** Growing Beans, Peas and large seeds

These can be sown directly into the final pot for sale. Cover with seed raising mix, not vermiculite. These large seeds (peas, beans, cucumber, pumpkin, etc) need to be sown as deep as twice their diameter, so poke a hole in the mix for them and then cover them.

A 4 cell or 6 cell container is ideal. They will take under three weeks from germination to sale. Avoid soaking the bean seeds too much as they rot in the soil before germination. After germination treat them as per other seeds.



Problem solver:

Seeds don't germinate?

Has the mix been too wet or too dry? Have birds, mice or rats eaten the seed or the tiny seedling? I cover my seedlings with flywire to keep them out.

Long stretchy seedlings?

If your plants are thin and spindly, they probably don't have enough light and will need to be moved to a brighter spot. It's a bit like Goldilocks - not too little and not too much, just right.

Plus, more regular foliar fertilising will help them to grow fuller.

Seedlings droop and die?

This can be caused by two things.

1. *Not enough water.* The seed raising mix should be damp, not sodden, at all times.
2. *Damping off.* This is a fungal disease that causes the stems to brown, and collapse. If reusing punnets etc, make sure they are clean and have been soaked in a 1% bleach solution to kill any fungal spores. Compost the used potting mix as it will be contaminated.

♥ And a big 'thank you' for growing seeds for our ROGI sales table. We value your contribution to our group efforts. Others will love that you have produced seeds that they can grow at home.

If you have questions, please call Linda Brennan 0416157470

Please bring your seedlings along to the ROGI meeting once they are looking healthy and have grown up a little. Pop them onto the table for sale. If there are any left at the end of the evening, you could take them home and pot them on further so they are more mature at the next meeting.

You may also like to volunteer time on the sales table and tell people about your seedlings.