



RBG SEED LIBRARY

SEED GERMINATION CODES

The seed germination codes noted on your seed packet and outlined below were derived from the germination codes of Prairie Moon Nurseries and the Ontario Rock Garden Society. Both organizations have additional germination tips available online. For codes A - F the seeds should be placed in a pot of moist seeding mix or a baggie. Note: seeds needing stratification have already been chilled (dry) at 4°C for at least 30 days.

A	Simple warm treatment: Maintain at 20°C until germination occurs.
B	Cold moist stratification. Store in fridge (4°C) for the length of time indicated. e.g. B(30) means 30 days in fridge. Then place at room temperature. B with no number means store at 4°C until germination occurs. For B(60),repeat , store at cold, then warm, and then cold for 60 days each, ending up at room temperature.
C	Warm moist then cold moist stratification: Store in a warm area (26°C or 80°F) for 2 – 3 months and then move to the fridge for 2-3 months. Return to room temperature until germination occurs.
D	Warm/cold cycle or cold/warm cycle: Use 6-week cycles alternating between warm (20° – 26°C) and cold (4°C). D(cold) - use a cold/warm cycle..
E	Cool soil: Can be sown indoors if temperature is kept at approximately 10°C. Otherwise sow directly in the garden when the soil is cool in early spring.
F	Fluctuating stratification: Maintain at 20°C for 30 days. Move to fridge, then freezer, then room temperature, storing for one week in each location.
G	Winter sowing: These seeds should go through a winter outdoors. View a video showing the procedures involved. Sponsored by: Society for Organic Urban Landcare . (SOUL)
1	Soaking seeds in water: Pour warm tap water over the seeds and allow to cool. Normally seeds are allowed to soak for 24 hours. For example, 1 means soak 24 hours. More soaking time may be needed – e.g. 1(21) means soak 21 days.
2	Hot water treatment (scarification): Allow boiled water to cool to approximately 83°C (180°F) and pour over the seeds. Soak for 24 hours at room temperature.
3	Light: Light is needed for germination; do not cover seeds with soil or apply just a light dusting. If sowing directly in garden, cover with burlap or cotton.
4	Scarification with sandpaper: Gently rub the seed between two pieces of sandpaper.
5	Scarification by nicking: Use a knife to nick the seed coat, then soak overnight before sowing.
6	Darkness: Seed requires darkness
7	Start in a deep pot. The plant resents transplanting due to a long tap root.



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SOWING AND GROWING

Different seeds require certain conditions of warmth and/or cold to germinate and these are outlined on the reverse side. If the germination code is not A, then you may have to start treating the seeds in early January. The other annual and perennial seeds you are taking home can be started indoors any time after mid-February. Vegetable and herb seeds each have their own recommended starting dates. Choose one of the following germination methods:

1. The Baggie Method

- Label a clear, resealable snack size plastic bag with seed name and date.
- Insert single layer of paper towel and spread seeds on to paper towel.
- Moisten towel being sure there is no excess water and seal the bag.
- Turn bag upside down so roots don't grow up through towel.
- Store at required temp and duration.
- Check periodically for germination and moisture level. Moisten towel when needed.
- Pot up rooted seedlings in small pot with moistened seed starting mix.
- Use tweezers to pick up larger seedlings and place in a shallow hole in the soil surface. For smaller seedlings, wash them off the towel into starting mix with a spray of water.

2. The Seed Starting Mix Method

- Use a sterile, fine particle mix formulated for germination.
- Moisten mix before placing into small pot or cell pack.
- Bury seeds to a depth equal to seed size.
- Add a layer of chick grit or fine gravel to the surface to reduce moisture loss.
- If seed requires light for germination, then cover with a fine dusting of mix or simply lightly press the seed into the surface of the mix.
- Use a clear plastic lid to prevent moisture loss.
- This method may be preferred with very fine seeds.

GROWING SEEDLINGS

Watering

Seedlings do best in a warm, humid environment. Misting with a spray bottle is helpful. They should be bottom-watered by placing the pot in a tray of water and allowing the water to soak up to the top surface. Do not leave them in standing water but do allow the soil to become fairly dry between watering.

Light

Seedlings require 12 – 16 hours of light as they grow. They will stretch to reach the light if it is not provided for them, making them quite gangly and fragile. There are various types of lighting systems and bulbs at all price points. It is best to research to see what you can use to fit your needs, budget and space.

Hardening off

Seedlings must be introduced gradually to the outdoors in order to reduce stress to the plant. They should not be put directly into sunlight, wind or very cold temperatures. It is best to start with one hour of subdued morning light in a sheltered location, increasing the time, wind exposure and amount of light gradually over several days.