

Sowing seeds outdoors

Preparing the soil

Before sowing seeds outdoors you need to prepare the soil, breaking up any lumps and removing larger stones, to make what is called a 'fine tilth'.



The soil also needs to be warm enough for the seeds to germinate, about 7°C, which in this part of Scotland doesn't happen until sometime in March at the earliest! Winter crops can be sown well into September and possibly early October. Covering the soil with cloches or clear plastic sheeting early in the spring can help warm the soil.

Planning the beds

Think about what part of your vegetable bed you will sow which seeds in and where the sunlight comes from. Some plants, like peas and beans, grow tall and may shade out other plants. Some plants will have a longer growing season and be in place for a while, other plants are quick growing and you might want to leave space for multiple successive sowings and continuous harvesting.

Sowing the seeds

Seeds sown *in-situ* where the plant will grow are sown in little trenches or 'drills' usually in a straight line which makes weeding and hoeing between the lines and plants easier. Span a length of string between two pegs as a guide to make your straight drill with a trowel, hoe or fingers.



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Continued ... >>



Bite Size

Sowing the seeds continued

Sow the seeds in the drill spaced out and at a depth indicated on the seed packet. Larger seeds like beans and potatoes will be placed individually, fine seeds will be lightly sprinkled. Pour out a small amount of seed in the palm of your hand and take pinches of fine seed to sprinkle like salt along the drill. Mixing very fine seeds, eg carrot, with fine dry sand can help to sow the seed evenly along the drill.



Other vegetables like cabbages can be sown outdoors in a seed bed for thinning and transplanting to their final position once they are large enough.

Aftercare

When the seeds have been sown, cover with soil, gently firm down the soil and water well with a fine spray. When the seedlings appear you will need to keep the rows free of weeds which will compete with your young vegetable plants.



You may also need to thin out the rows of seedlings eg lots of carrot plants may come up close together, and removing some will give the remainder room to grow (thinnings which have grown large enough can be eaten in salads!)

And remember not every seed will grow ; ‘One for the rook and one for the crow, one to die and one to grow.’



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