



Sowing Seeds – the basics

What	When	What in + where?	What compost?	How?
Teeny tiny seeds	Generally sown in Spring once the day lengths are long enough and in Autumn when it's still quite warm but some seed can be sown throughout the year.	Seed trays work well for teeny seeds these gives you a bit more control or you can direct sow 'in situ' in well-prepared seedbeds outside. As it's hard to control the amount you are sowing you can mix it with sand to see where you have sown and to prevent 'over sowing' – too many seeds in one place.	These need friable (crumbly, soft and gently soil) that does not have 'weed' seeds in it or big lumps. This could be bought, sterilised compost, well prepared and raked outdoor seedbed or you can make your own seed compost with composted leaf mould and horticultural sand. It does not need to be very high in nutrients as the seed contains all the energy it needs within it to germinate.	Take a small pinch of seeds and try to scatter evenly and not too thickly over a moist and gently flattened seed tray of seed compost. Or you can sow in lines that help to identify what is your intended seedling and what may be a self-seeded visitor. For the precise depth check the packet (or Google it) but generally teeny seeds are barely covered with soil, they may even need direct light on them to germinate and not need covering at all.
Small seeds	Same as above	You could use module trays with individual compartments or seed trays or DIY plastic pummetts so long as there are drainage holes at the bottom	Same as above but the consistency is less critical.	Make individual holes with a 'dibber' for the seed and cover over. This could be your finger, a pencil, bit of bamboo cane or anything else to hand. Do not sow too deep though as the seed may run out of energy to get to the soil surface. Water regularly but don't over soak.
Medium + Large seeds	Same as above	9cm pots or straight into the ground if the soil is warm enough. Or anything else to hand, like yoghurt pots or toilet rolls. Just check there is drainage of make some holes in the bottom.	The larger the seed the less crucial the soil type, as they are generally more robust but all the above notes are preferable. Even large strong seed will struggle to tackle a compacted hard soil to germinate in.	The larger the seed the more energy it will contain to get up to the soil surface so the deeper is can be sown. Precise depths will be on the seed packet. If sown too shallow the adult plant may not have enough anchorage and be subject to wind rock.



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What is self-seeding?

When you are not part of the process and the plant has done it all by itself as it would do in nature.

What is Scarification?

When seeds with hard seed coats need to have their seed coats scraped, cut or softened to allow in moisture before sowing. For example you can nick the seed with a knife or soak overnight in water.

What is Stratification?

When heat or cold is needed to awaken seed (break dormancy) or speed up when a seed starts to grow (germination) by copying conditions that would trigger this in nature. For example putting seeds in a fridge for a bit to be like a cold winter.

What is Pricking Out?

When you very carefully take a seedling from it's mother bed to give it more space somewhere else. (Small teaspoons, or baby spoons or the end of a plastic label are good for using for this task.) The stem is most delicate part of the seedling so it's best to handle it from one of it's leaves and try to get it from the soil with very little disruption to it's root system. You prick out only when there are some "true leaves" (not the first baby leaves) and an adequate rooting system has developed.