

GREEN TIPS

Department of Horticulture - Michigan State University

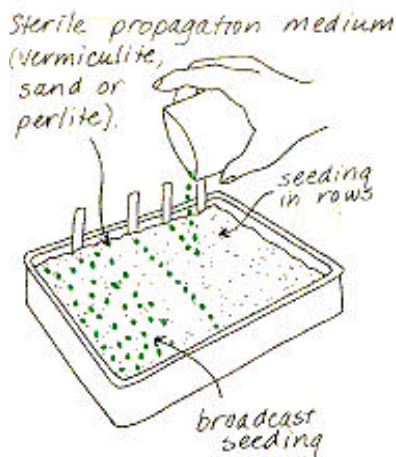
Growing Perennials from Seed

Many perennials can easily be grown from seeds, such as columbine, delphinium and rudbeckia.

Use small pots or trays containing cell packs to start seeds. A standard, well drained growing medium works well for most perennials. Seed packets should include essential information, such as when to sow, how deeply, germination temperature and other information. Sow seeds at the recommended rate and time (spring, summer or fall) in a sterile medium, either scattered (broadcast) or in rows, and cover them in with the recommended amount of growing medium (usually about two to three times the diameter of the seed).

Label the containers and water very carefully to avoid washing away the seeds. Use a fog-type

SOWING SEEDS:



COVER & WATER:



nozzle or let the containers stand in a shallow tub of water to avoid disturbing the seeds.

Place the containers in a warm location where the soil temperature is at least 70°F. Cover with plastic to keep the medium moist. As soon as most of the seeds have germinated remove the plastic and move the containers to a cooler location (60° to 65° F) in bright light to harden the seedlings.

You can also start seeds in outdoor seedbeds either in an

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open or a protected area, such as a coldframe. The seedbed should have porous, well drained soil that you have prepared thoroughly, leveled tamped with the back of a rake and leveled again before seeding. After preparing the bed, sow the seeds and cover, following directions on the seed packet. Moisten the seedbed with a fogtype hose nozzle and be careful not to wash away the seeds.

Fertilizing Seedlings

Fertilize the plants as soon as the leaves expand, using a complete fertilizer such as 20-10-20 at the recommended rate and frequency listed on the product label. If the frequency is listed as once a month, you should probably fertilize more frequently at reduced rates, e.g., once a week at one-fourth the monthly rate. Watch for pests, such as diseases, insects and mice (when overwintering in coldframes). You may want to use a fungicide to help control damping off in addition to using sterile growing medium.

Transplant seedlings to larger containers (4 to 5 inches) as soon as root systems have developed throughout the growing medium. Overwinter seedlings of most species in a protected location, such as a coldframe, until final transplanting the following spring. Be sure to watch for mice and rabbits.

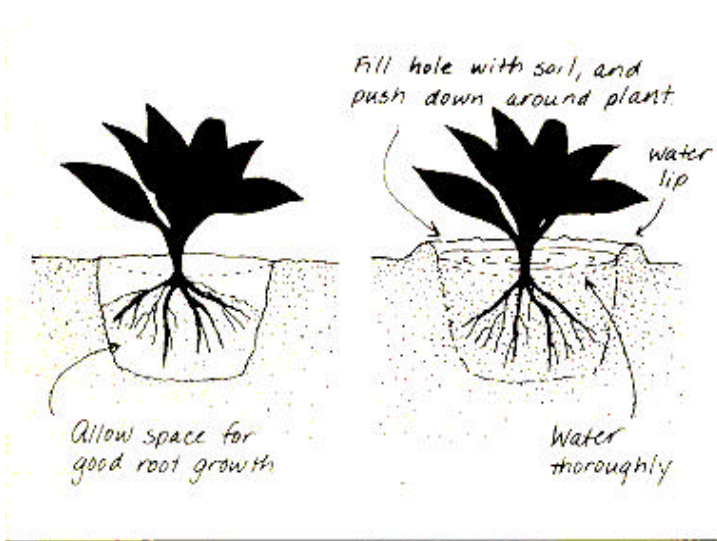
Transplanting to the garden

The best time to transplant young plants, whether grown from seeds or cuttings, is in early spring after the soil has thawed but the plants are still dormant. This is usually 4 to 6 weeks before the average date of the last freezing temperature in the spring (see the Green Tips sheet entitled Spring Freeze Map).

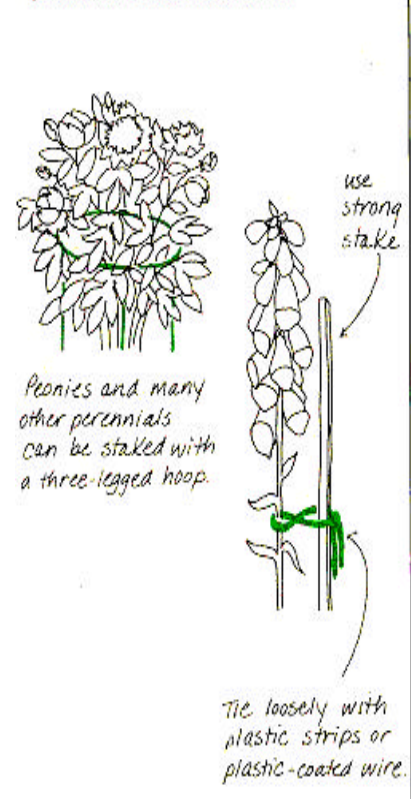
Use stakes to mark where the plants will go before you set them out. Be sure to allow enough space. Dig holes in prepared beds using a trowel or spading fork.

Make the holes large enough so that roots have plenty of room and plant at a depth to accommodate each root system. Firm the soil around the roots so there are no empty spaces between roots and soil. Water thoroughly.

TRANSPLANTING YOUNG PLANTS:



STAKING TALL PLANTS:



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