

Growing Your Own Food at Home in Salisbury Series

Pack D Notes 3 SEEDLING CARE AND PLANTING OUT TIPS



Whether you have seedlings seed in punnets, sowing trays, or single small pots they need to be protected from the weather and animals and adapted to your garden conditions before plating out.

Position and care for seedlings

If you are growing by seed in punnets then store the trays/pots of seedlings in the sunlight with shelter from winds, animals and birds. In hot weather cover the punnets/pot/tray with shade cloth and keep them moist. In cold weather place the punnets/pots/trays in a propagation unit or heated frame. A simple unit can be made with a recycled polystyrene vegetable container from the green grocer with clear plastic on top. When the second set of leaves has developed feed with a weak dilution of compost tea/worm juice/Seasol.

Picture of heated frame

Transplanting out seedlings

Hardening Out

The plants you propagate or buy are usually grown in a sheltered position. To reduce the shock of being planted out in a more exposed environment seedling can be left out in a place with similar conditions to where they will be planted. Leave them out for an increasing numbers of hours over a week before planting e.g. two hours one day, three the next etc.

When to plant out seedlings

When they are about 4 cm tall, and a second set of leaves has developed. These second leaves should be full and strong not 'leggy' Another sign is when a good root system is established, look at bottom of the pot for roots starting to grow. Don't let them become 'pot bound'.

Tip

Individual plants can be potted up from punnets to larger pots to grow larger. We usually buy a punnet of tomatoes early in the season and, pot them up so they are bigger when the soil temperature is right for planting out. We pot up smaller individual plants too for the same reason, stripping off their lower leaves and burying them deep so they develop strong roots.



Potting up for plant to grow larger before planting out



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Planting out seedlings directions

- Prepare the site and soil as necessary
- Dig a small hole big enough to place the plant in- about 1½ times the depth of the pot
- Hold onto the stem of the seedling and gently prise out of the container keeping the root system intact
- If the plant is root bound break the roots up gently
- Place the plant into the hole and cover with soil, gently pat the soil around the plant
- Make sure the soil level is the same as it was in the pot or punnet

Avoid planting out at hot and windy times and if possible plant out in the evening in summer and the morning in winter. After planting water in with a fine spray.



The plant on the right is root bound, and the roots will need to be freed up before planting. Soak the pot in water/ weak seasol or worm juice to loosen soil from roots, and gently tease the roots apart so they run downwards whilst in water. Prune the tips so the top and bottom growth are same size

Make sure the soil level is the same as it was in the pot or punnet

Firm down so the roots are in contact with the soil



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