How To Start Your Survival Garden Indoors

Even though you may be planning to have your survival garden mature outdoors, it will be necessary to start some plants indoors. This is especially important to consider if you are going to make use of plants that have longer growing seasons, or ones that require special care.

Depending on where you live, some plants may need to be started indoors if you are going to get enough nutrients to live on from your garden.

Best Container Types

Perhaps it can best be said that seeds will sprout in just about any kind of container. On the other side of the equation, advancing from seedling to second leaves can be a difficult process.

For example, if you use seed starter mix in containers with poor drainage, the plants will develop large, weak stems, and then die. In a similar way, containers that are too small can lead to root-bound plans as well as ones with stunted growth. Today, most gardeners prefer 1.5 inch peat pots or pellets with one seed sown per pot or pellet.

When to Plant

As with regular gardens, each plant type requires different temperatures. Depending on where you live, most crops can be started in early spring. That said, if you live in the south, some plants may need to be started as early as February. Here are 6 plants commonly used by survival gardeners and information on how and when to start them for optimal success.

Bell Pepper

Water Needs: Moist with good drainage.

Lighting: Full sunlight.

Optimal Temperature: Bell peppers require at least 70 degree temperatures to germinate. If they have flowers, the temperature should not go above 75 degrees or the flowers will fall off without making fruit.

Best Soil: Neutral pH with good organic content.

When to Transplant Outdoors: It is best to transplant bell peppers when soil temperatures will not go below 65 degrees. It is also important to harden peppers off before transplanting, as the roots get disturbed easily.

Special Notes: To help lower temperatures during the flowering stage, use removable shade canopies, straw mulch, and chilled water. Placing two pepper plants close to each other can also enable both plants to receive shade from each other.

Bush Beans

Water Needs: Moist soil, water near roots so that leaves do not remain wet for extended periods of time.

Lighting: Full sunlight.

Optimal Temperature: Bush beans prefer slightly cooler temperatures, but can also do well in mid to late summer. They should not be sown after soil temperature rises above 60 degrees.

Best Soil: Limited organic content, but soil should not be sandy. Excessive use of nitrogen in ground fertilizer will lead to reduced bean development. Since bush beans are legumes, they take in nitrogen through the leaves as opposed to the roots.

When to Transplant Outdoors: It is usually best to plant bush beans directly outdoors since their roots are easily disturbed. If you must start bush beans indoors, be sure to use peat pellets or peat pots that prevent loss of nitrogen fixing bacteria attached to the root systems.

Cabbage

Water Needs: Moist with good drainage.

Lighting: At least 6 hours of full sunlight.

Optimal Temperature: Prefers cooler temperatures. You should start cabbage plants either six weeks before the last frost in your area, or about 8 weeks before the first frost in the fall.

Best Soil: Cabbage requires soil with high organic content and a slightly acidic pH (below 7.0).

When to Transplant Outdoors: It is best to transplant cabbage outdoors within two weeks of the appearance of second leaves. If it is still too cold out, you can use black plastic or cold frames to protect the plants. Unfortunately, if cabbage plants become stunted at this stage, they will never pick up the growth tempo later on.

Carrots

Water Needs: Moist with good drainage.

Lighting: Carrots require full sunlight, but can tolerate some shade.

Optimal Temperature: Tend to be cool weather crops. You can start planting carrots about 2 weeks before the last frost and continue through spring.

Best Soil: Requires soft soil with a slightly acidic pH. It is best to avoid nitrogen-based fertilizers.

When to Transplant Outdoors: You can transplant outdoors as soon as first true leaves appear. If temperatures are still on the cold side, you can use cold frames or black plastic to keep plants warm.

*Video first seen on **Shakti Goddess 1**.*

Fennel

Water Needs: Moisture but not water logged. Needs good drainage.

Lighting: Requires full sunlight.

Optimal Temperature: In most areas, fennel is a perennial that can withstand freezing temperatures as well as summer highs.

Best Soil: Slightly sandy with good organic content.

When to Transplant Outdoors: Fennel usually doesn’t do well indoors, nor does it transplant well. That being said, if you start fennel indoors, you should transplant once the second or third set of full leaves appear. You can use peat pots or pellets to minimize transplant shock. It will also help to bring the plants outdoors for an increasing number of hours each day.

Garlic

Water Needs: Moist, but may require more water during bulb production.

Lighting: Full sunlight.

Optimal Temperature: Garlic can be started 2 – 4 weeks before the last frost in your area. Since it is a perennial, you can also plant in the late fall and look for shoots in the spring. Just be sure to cover garlic with straw or mulch in cold areas.

Best Soil: Loamy and well drained.

When to Transplant Outdoors: Since garlic is not usually started from seed, the bulbs are best planted outdoors. That said, garlic lends itself well to vertical container planting as long as the soil is loose and well-drained.

Onions

Water Needs: Moist, with well drained soil.

Lighting: Requires 14+ hours of full sunlight each day regardless of whether you are starting with seeds or sets.

Optimal Temperature: Start onion seeds at least 6 weeks before last frost date. Sets can be started 2 weeks before last frost, or planted directly in cold frames at this time.

Best Soil: Onions require soil rich in nitrogen. It should also be loose and drain well.

When to Transplant Outdoors: Overall, onions do not transplant well from indoor to outdoor settings. You can decrease transplant shock by exposing plants to outdoor conditions for an increasing number of hours each day. Similar to garlic, onions do very well in vertical containers and can be kept indoors for the full growth cycle.

Additional Notes: Since bulb growth is dependent upon the number of light hours, select “long day” onions if you live in the north, and “short day” for southern gardens.

Radishes

Water Needs: Moist, well drained soil.

Lighting: Requires full lighting. It is also important to keep radishes from being shaded by other plants. If radishes are planted too close to other crops, they will produce more leaves in order to compete instead of form roots.

Optimal Temperature: Radishes should be planted as soon as possible after the last frost. You can start new seeds until 6 weeks after the last frost in order to extend the harvest. Radishes can also be planted in the fall about 4 weeks before the first frost.

Best Soil: Prefers soft soil with good organic content.

When to Transplant Outdoors: It is usually best to start radishes outdoors, although they can be grown in large pots. If you need to start radishes indoors, use peat pots or pellets in order to reduce root shock.

Sweet Peas

Water Needs: Damp with good drainage.

Lighting: Full sun.

Optimal Temperature: Prefers cooler temperatures associated with early spring and fall.

Best Soil: Sweet peas prefer soil with low organic content. You can use straw and other organic mulch to keep shallow root systems moist and cool.

When to Transplant Outdoors: As with other legumes, Sweet Peas do best when planted directly into the garden. You can try

using peat pots or pellets, and then harden them off gradually if needed.

Tomatoes

Water Needs: Moist with good drainage.

Lighting: At least 8 hours of full sun each day.

Optimal Temperature: Start seeds about 4 weeks before last frost. They can be set outside once three or four sets have grown.

Best Soil: Slightly acidic with high organic content. Starting compounds with slow release fertilizers tend to work better for advancing from seedling to plant stages.

When to Transplant Outdoors: You can transplant tomatoes as soon as all danger of frost is past. In order to spur growth, bury stem up to first set of leaves so roots can develop on it.

Many people interested in survival gardening realize that

indoor gardening may be required to start crops that are usually planted outdoors. As long as you choose a container and soil that allows for easy transplant, it should be possible to achieve this goal, as well as keep plants indoors for the entire season if needed.

Needless to say, you can take advantage of both growth environments; it will maximize survival potential in any situation.

Zucchini

Water Needs: Moist soil with increased water once flowers and fruit begins to develop.

Lighting: Full lighting.

Optimal Temperature: Zucchini plants prefer temperatures in the 65 to 80 degree range. You can keep soil cool with straw mulch and removable shading tents.

Best Soil: Well drained soil with good organic content. Zucchini also usually requires additional fertilization later in the season for optimal production.

When to Transplant Outdoors: It is best to transplant zucchini outdoors when soil temperatures do not go below 65 degrees.