

DIY Indoor and Outdoor Seeding

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After a long, drawn-out Chicago winter, the anticipation of spring is tangible. Thus, there's something to be said about the joy that comes with the first sign spring: sprouting seeds and especially those planted by your own hands. Gardening is not an unconquerable feat. Even the most clueless of beginners, such as a group of high school students from the northern suburbs of Chicago, can adopt the learning curve. Best of all, the signs of success are palpable and appealing. Experience the near instant gratification of seeing your seeds sprout into alluring flowers and edibles with these simple steps.

Begin by developing your potting base. This past week, our team used a combination of slightly wet Miracle grow potting soil, followed by a layer of slightly wet Jiffy Organic and Natural Seed Starting Mix and a Vermiculite layer placed in recycled, plastic tofu containers for our indoor seeding. It's important to insure that whatever container you are using has holes at the bottom for draining water. After planting the seeds according to the respective instructions on their packets, we labeled the containers with masking tape, watered the seeds and placed the containers on a heating mat. Finally, the seeds were transferred onto our DIY Grow Light Stand, complete with hanging shop lights. This is ideal for planting your own seeds anywhere. You are no longer limited to just window spots or indoor greenhouses; in fact, our indoor seeds are currently germinating in the basement of Greenline Coffee.

Outdoor seeding is similar to indoor in its simplicity, although it requires a few alterations in the potting base. For our outdoor batches, we mixed even ratios of organic compost and peat moss followed by a smaller handful of Perculite. Again, it is important to slightly wet the soil before planting as this moistens the soil, making it easier to work with. The soil mixture can now be placed in your container of choice with a layer of Vermiculite on top. This past week our team opted to use aluminum rotisserie pans for containers, remembering to cut holes at the bottom for optimal drainage. These aluminum pans can be found at all grocery stores and often include a plastic, clear top which can be used to create a greenhouse-like effect for your outdoor seeds. With your pot and soil fixed and ready, you can now plant your flower or edible seeds of choice according to the instructions on the seed packet. Finally, we cut recycled plastic blinds to use as markers for our seeds. This material works great as an identifier and because the material is plastic, it will not absorb any of the water used to grow your seeds.

These two DIY activities are a combination of the very best: cheap materials, easy instructions and tangible triumph. Impress your friends, neighbors and most importantly, yourself. All it takes is a little discipline and determination to welcome spring into your own home.

