





# Seed Start Mix

For standard 72 cell seed start tray kit



OBJECTIVE	CATEGORY	DIFFICULTY	RECOMMENDED GROUP SIZE	TIME
Create a well balanced seed starting medium that provides nutrients, drainage, aeration, and moisture retention	Propagation	Easy - all ages	2 people	45 min.

MATERIAL LIST for 1 seed start tray	TOOLS & EQUIPMENT
12 cups compost	2 Trowels
8 cups coconut coir (recommended) or peat moss	Large measuring cup
1 cup sand	Wide medium sized (5 gallons) mixing bowl/bucket
5 cups water	Watering can with a fine spout/spritzer bottle
Seeds, painter's tape, waterproof marker	$\frac{3}{8}$ " mesh fine sifter or strainer 
Optional - dash of green sand, or blood meal	Seed start tray with 72 cells or larger cells and a corresponding bottom tray (no holes) 
	Optional - clamp light or fluorescent fixture, "warm" place, sunny spot next to window / small fan

HOW TO
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sift compost, peat, and sand with a <math>\frac{3}{8}</math>" sifter into 3 different containers. Put the large left "over" pieces that remain in the sifter back into your compost pile. Combine the three sifted ingredients in a large mixing container.</li> <li>Add 2 cups of water to the mixture to moisten thoroughly. The mixture should reach the moisture level of a wrung out sponge.</li> <li>Add 2 cups of water to the outer bottom tray.</li> <li>Place the 72 cell seed start tray inside the outer tray and fill the tray with the mix - fill to the top. Lift the tray off table 2" and let drop to allow for the seed start mix to settle into the cells. Add more seed start mix to the cells as needed to fill to the top.</li> <li>Create a dimple in each cell with your finger to place your seed. Follow instructions on the seed packet for seed requirements (i.e. depth, spacing).</li> <li>Water lightly or spritz with a spray bottle.</li> <li>Water when the seed start mix is dry, anywhere between 1 to 3 days - based on ambient conditions.</li> <li>Monitor your seed starts for moisture. Once seeds germinate, give them as much light and moving air as possible. Harden them off by putting them outside for short, and then longer time frames - follow seed packet instructions for transplanting.</li> </ol>



FUN FACTS/FAQ	
<b>Why make your own seed start mix?</b>	Starting seeds successfully can often be difficult, with this tried and true recipe, most seeds will flourish. This blend not only has the right make-up for germination and sprouting, it even has use for crops that need to be transplanted into larger containers before being potted into large pots or outdoors in the ground. It provides a nice mix of nutrients, space for air, and holds enough water without drying out quickly or becoming soggy.
<b>Can I alter the proportions of each ingredient?</b>	Yes, but keep in mind the effects of all components. More compost means more water retention and increased risk of mold, less means less nutrients for plants to grow. More peat moss means less nutrients. More sand means less water being retained.
<b>Can I use this blend in my garden/pots for larger plants?</b>	You can but it isn't recommended as the blend may dry out very quickly in the summer/heat, mature plants prefer more compost and soil.
<b>Placement of seed start tray and amount of light and air needed</b>	Seeds do not need light to germinate but once they do germinate, the more light the better. Supplementing sunlight with a grow light for up to 20 hours of light helps with this first stage of growth. Ensuring the trays are turned around and have a breeze (simulating wind) will help strengthen the seed starts before you bring them outdoors.
INGREDIENTS	
<b>Compost</b>	Compost is organic matter, a material made from the breakdown of plants, leaves, fruits and vegetables. It contains healthy organisms that help plants grow and feeds them slowly, eliminating the need for fossil fuel based fertilizer.
<b>Peat Moss</b>	Peat moss is an ancient dried moss that collects in bogs, water filled areas left behind by glaciers. It is often called "soiless media" and is used for seedlings as it is sterile, harbors no harmful bacteria that can kill your seedlings, is slightly acidic (which most plants in temperate regions prefer) and it retains water well. Keep in mind that peat moss takes hundreds of years to form and is not considered a renewable resource. If you are going to purchase peat moss, make sure it is harvested from Canada ecologically. Overharvesting of peat bogs in tropical regions can dry out the landscape and start forest fires that can contribute to destruction of rainforests.
<b>Coco coir (alternative to peat)</b>	For something more similar to soil/peat moss, shredded coconut coir (shell) is a great alternative. While it does not have the same conditioning quality or water holding capacity, it is a renewable ingredient even though it does not grow locally and needs to travel to get to NYC. Vermiculite is another example of a sterile soiless media that can be used to hold water and start seedlings in. It is a spongy mineral. Perlite is another mineral that is hard and looks like chalk (you often see little white pieces of it in premade soil blends).
<b>Mason Sand</b>	This is processed and finely crushed quartz minerals that have been uniformly washed and crushed. By adding it to the soil, you lighten it and improve drainage, avoiding mold and drowning seedlings. Ensure that it is sifted to remove larger particles. Do not use beach sand because of the salt from the sea water or sand that has been used before that could have been mixed with cement; both are harmful. Do not use coarse particle sand that could block tender shoots from emerging from the small cell.
<b>Green sand (1 tsp) optional</b>	Green sand is a fossil rich sand that can be useful for holding water and also naturally contains nutrients to feed plants.
<b>Blood Meal (1 tsp) optional</b>	An organic fertilizer made from animals typically in the meat-industry. Provides phosphorus, calcium and protein to feed plants. There is concern it may cause mad cow disease.