**Seed Starting**

 **Old World Garden Farms**

**Seed Starting Garden Mix:**

Make your own using 5 parts compost – and then 1 part each of garden soil, vermiculite, perlite and peat moss.  When making the mix, use an old screen to sift the compost and garden soil – it sorts out all of the larger materials and makes the mix easy to work with.

1. Fill trays with soil – pack lightly - and water down a couple days before the actual planting day, just wet to the touch. Preparing and watering the trays a few days in advance helps the soil settle, and makes planting all of the tiny seeds a bit easier.
2. Plant your seeds at a rate of 2 per space – preferably not on top of each other, but in slightly different areas towards the center. Each seed packet will tell you the depth that the seeds should be planted — most are about 1/8″ to 1/4″ inch deep. Planting two seeds ensures that you can get at least one seed to germinate in every space. After planting your seeds, lightly moisten the soil again and then cover with a clear plastic sheet or lid and keep out of direct sunlight. Make sure soil remains moist, not wet.



By using clear plastic you can see when the plants  actually come up without taking off the cover and disturbing the plants and releasing the moisture.

1. Once you see 1-2 seedlings sprouting out of the soil, remove the lid and place onto a table or flat surface.   You can now set up your shop lights.  You want the lights to hover down about 1 to 2″ from the top of the plants.   You will want to give your plants about 12 to 14 hours of light each day.



You will also need to water more frequently now — most likely once a day – and as the plants grow in the coming weeks – you will continue to adjust those two lights to keep them at 1 to 2″ above the top of the plants. You want the soil to stay moist but not water logged.  This is also the time to start thinning to allow for one seed per container. If you have an empty cell, you can replant extra sprouts into the empty cells.  We just use a flat head screwdriver to lift out the extra seedling and plant into the empty cell.

The shop lights at such close range keep the seeds growing straight up and at a slower, stronger rate. One of the problems with using just direct sunlight is that the plants will get leggy as they reach to the light source. With the shop lights at such a close range. They grow nice and slow and develop strong roots and leaf structure.

After about 6 to 8 weeks – your plants will be ready to go. As the weather begins to warm – take your plants outside to get some regular sun and start adjusting to the temperature and light. One thing to avoid is to take your plants directly from the shop lights and plant them in the yard – you want to give them time to adjust to sunlight and temperature – a process called hardening off. Usually by the end of March – you can start to keep them on the porch longer and longer – and near the end – only bring them in or cover them if there is a threat of frost to get them ready for the great outdoors!