

Pricking Out Seedlings

In this activity you will learn about pricking out seedlings and potting on.

What do we need to start?

Seedling plants

Pots and seed trays

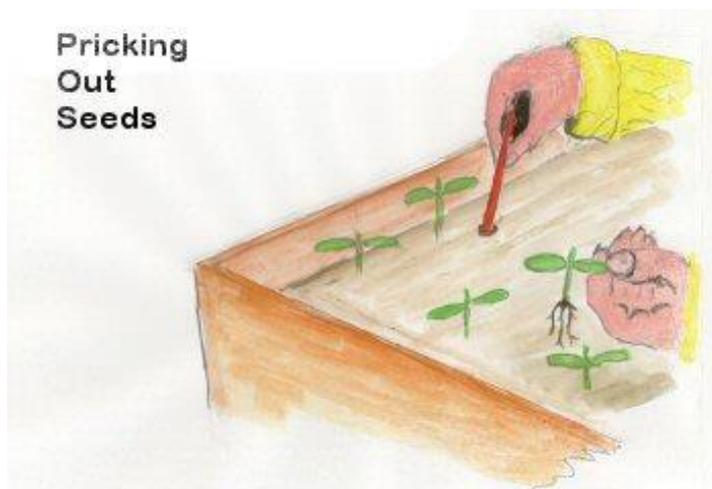
Compost

Dibber/pencil to make planting holes

Work area and newspaper to prevent a mess

Prepared open ground - ready for outdoor planting

Time - 30 to 60 minutes depending on number of plants



Instructions:

1. When the seeds that you planted have germinated and before the seedlings have grown too big and become overcrowded, they should be transplanted into pots and trays. This will allow them to continue to grow naturally without competing with each other. If you intend to plant new seedlings directly into open ground, they need to be put outside for a few days to harden-off and then only planted if conditions are favourable. Make sure that it is not too cold and that there is no frost forecast. If seedlings are left for too long in their original seed pot/tray they will become weak and floppy and can die from fungal diseases.
2. Fill the pots or trays into which the seedlings are to be transplanted with moist, but not wet compost. Firm and level the compost.

3. Seedlings are delicate and must be treated gently. They should be teased away from each other using a dibber or pencil. When picking up the seedling, hold it by its seed leaf so that the stem or roots are not damaged.

4. Make a small hole with your dibber and put one plant in each. The plants should be 3cm to 5cm apart making sure that only the roots are covered with compost. Seedling plants are tender and may need some protection from the weather, frost, insects, slugs and snails.

5. After 5 to 10 days the plants should be growing well and will need some water. This is best done by standing the pot or tray in a small amount of water for a few minutes. You can do this in a saucer or an old plastic basin. Never over water plants and don't let them dry out completely.



6. Decorative plants can outgrow their original pots and should be transplanted when roots are visible at the drainage holes in the bottom of the pot. Only transplant into pots that are approximately 1cm to 2cm larger than the original pot, anything larger and the plant will feel uncomfortable and 'homesick' and may not flourish.

7. Once bedding plants and vegetable seedlings are growing well in pots and trays, they soon become overcrowded; you can think about potting-on or transplanting them into open ground. A period of acclimatisation or "hardening-off" is needed if planting seedlings outside. When bedding plants are purchased from a nursery or garden centre the same procedure should be followed. Young plants still need protection from frosty weather and pests, particularly slugs, who find young plants very tasty.