



**LAWN CARE** — Once you've treated those brown patches in your lawn with an effective insecticide, remove the areas of grass killed by lawn pests and then reseed, says Horticulturist Ruth Friendship-Keller of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food's rural organizations and services branch. (photo by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food).

## Start your garden indoors

Get a head start on this year's garden by starting it from seed, indoors.

Vegetables and almost any annual flower may be started indoors; try celery, peppers, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, squash, and tomatoes, petunias, phlox, verbena, asters, marigolds and snapdragons.

"Of course, many seeds may be planted directly into the garden, too. But by starting your plants indoors, you will get early blooms and your vegetables will be ready for harvest, much sooner than usual," says Ontario Horticultural Association Past President, Marjorie Durnford of Guelph, Ont.

Start most seeds indoors in mid-March; but check instructions on packages because seeding time varies from plant to plant.

To start seeds indoors, you will need a clean shallow pot, coffee cup or box with a hole in the bottom for drainage. Cover the hole with a piece of broken pot or a small flat stone, then a piece of fly screen or a layer of four thicknesses of wet newspaper.

Then add planting medium. Jiffy peat pellets — a mixture of peat and fertilizer in a net holder — expand quickly when soaked with water.

"These are convenient to use and allow you to transplant the seedling directly into the garden," Durnford said.

But you may also create your own planting medium by mixing equal parts by volume of peat moss, sterilized soil and either vermiculite or perlite.

Or buy a good potting soil from a garden centre.

Then, to guard against a fungus disease called damp-off, treat the planting mixture with a fungicide.

"Damp-off is common with seeds planted indoors, and it causes the seeds to rot or the seedlings to wilt and die because of decay at or below the soil line. It is most common in cold, wet or poorly-drained conditions," she said.

Sprinkle seeds on top of the soil or sow them evenly in short rows.

Press fine seeds into the soil; barely cover coarse seeds with the potting soil mixture.

Plant only one kind in a container and label.

"Once planted, set the container in

water until moisture appears on the surface, or water with a fine mist.

Set the containers in a warm, sunny window.

If you are using fluorescent light, place containers about 15 centimetres under the light and give them 12 to 14 hours of light a day.

Window sill greenhouses are also available at garden centres, usually for less than \$5, Durnford said.

Watch carefully and when the seeds begin to sprout, remove the cover.

For more even growth, turn the plants that are growing in the window sill a little each day; for plants growing under a light, increase the distance between the light and the plants.

Begin transplanting the seedlings into larger containers once the seedlings have produced two pairs of leaves.

Use a kitchen fork or a spoon to remove seedlings from their small containers; place them five cm apart in flats containing similar planting medium.

"I prefer flats because they take up less space than individual pots," Durnford said.

Firm the soil around the seedlings and keep plants well-watered.

Once all danger of frost has passed, get ready to transplant seedlings outdoors into a well-prepared garden with plenty of humus and good drainage.

Begin by hardening the seedlings.

"This is done by putting the plants outside during the day and bringing them in at night," Durnford said.

Transplant into the garden in the evening, after the sun has lost its strength, or on a cloudy day.

Set the plants at about the same depth as they were before — except for tomatoes which should be placed a little deeper and laid on an angle to encourage strong root development.

Firm the soil around the plants and leave a slight depression to hold moisture.

Water well after transplanting.

"Plants that are to be staked, such as tomatoes, should have the stakes put in place now to prevent damaging the roots later," Durnford said.

Flowering plants to be used as a supply of cut flowers should be planted in rows in the vegetable garden, rather than in beds or borders, where cutting the blooms would destroy the beauty of your landscape.

## Let this year's garden — take wing!

The concept of butterfly gardening is not new; it is a very popular pastime in England and the United States.

Winston Churchill was probably the most famous butterfly gardener of this century.

Even the gardens of Buckingham Palace have become famous because they provide sanctuary for many rare British butterflies.

You can attract as many as 50 dif-

ferent types of butterflies to your yard, simply by adding a few new plants to your garden, says Landscape Designer Katherine Dunster of the University of Guelph's department of landscape architecture.

The secret lies in providing a wide variety of flowers and shrubs.

Shade-tolerant plants are as important as those that thrive in the sun.

Annuals, perennials, shrubs and trees

will all provide food for butterflies.

Seeding part of a lawn with a wild-flower meadow mix — now available through seed catalogues and garden centres — is a good way to start.

Flower color is important too; some butterflies prefer oranges, reds and yellows; others are attracted to whites, purples and blues.

"If you aim for a wide variety of color you will probably have greater success," she said.

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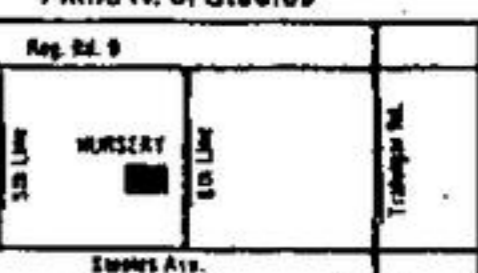
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