

Growing own seedlings can save money

This article is provided by local Realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

With the arrival of spring, many Ontario homeowners are gearing up for the gardening season, busily planning their flower gardens.

While many of today's gardening enthusiasts prefer to buy their annual or perennial flowers at a nursery or gardening store and transplant them directly into the ground once the last spring frost has passed, (usually towards the end of May), some prefer to grow their own plants from seed.

Growing your own seedlings can save you money and is also an excellent project to beat the end-of-winter blahs. It's something the whole family can take part in and is an excellent opportunity for youngsters to learn how things grow.

It takes roughly eight weeks of growth before seedlings are ready to be planted outside. So if you're thinking of starting your own flowers this year - you should start soon.

BUYING SEED AND GROWING MEDIUM

The first step of course, is to purchase seed from a nursery or gardening store. When choosing, you may want to consult with nursery staff to see which varieties would be most likely to flourish in your particular soil type.

You'll also want to purchase a sterilized growing medium for your seeds to germinate in. Many of these are available for purchase, including vermiculite, peat, perlite and some prepared mixtures. It's important that the medium be

bacteria-and-weed-free; most prepackaged mediums are.

No matter what you choose, try to purchase a substance that will readily maintain moisture. If you're unsure of what to buy, talk to the staff at your garden centre or local nursery.

Virtually any type of clean container can be used for starting your seedlings, as long as it's approximately three inches deep and provides adequate drainage. You may even want to purchase special trays or mini-greenhouses from your gardening store.

Fill your containers approximately one-half to three-quarters full with the substance you've chosen as your medium. Tamp the mixture down firmly to make sure there are no large air spaces. Then sow the seeds, keeping different varieties in separate containers. Sow the seeds about a half-inch apart. Generally, good-sized seeds should be covered with a very thin layer of the medium. Most small seeds don't need to be covered. However, check the instructions on your seed packages to be sure.

COVER TO GERMINATE

Once you've finished planting, sprinkle or mist the containers with water and cover them with pieces of plastic, glass or event cardboard (unless the package specifies that they require light). This will help them maintain humidity.

You can also cover them with plastic bags, as long as you insert a stick or plastic straw to hold the bag upright and away from the seeds - creating a miniature tent.

The containers should then be placed in a bright area, but not near

any direct sunlight, and be kept at, or above, room-level temperature during the day.

Experts suggest leaving them for anywhere from three to five days; after that, start making periodic checks. Once germination has taken place, tiny leaves should appear. Once these leaves are visible, the covers should be removed so the seedlings can get oxygen. You should also move them into sunlight to encourage steady growth. Be sure to turn them regularly and water as required.

Once they've developed a second set or their "true" leaves or are about one inch tall, they're ready to be transplanted into a regular potting mixture.

HANDLE GENTLY

When doing this, be sure to handle them very gently. Transplant the seedlings into pots or space them approximately one-and-a-half inches apart in a flat. Keep them in these pots for a few weeks, until they're ready to be planted outdoors.

During this time, you may want to fertilize them with a mild fertilizer either once a week or every two weeks to encourage healthy growth. Check with your gardening centre to see which type of fertilizer you should use.

Before planting your seedlings in the ground, make sure you prepare the soil. Also be certain to exercise great care when removing the plants from the pots. Dig a hole deep enough for each plant and space them so they have room to grow. Give them a thorough watering once planting is complete.

Once you've completed all these steps, it's time to sit back and watch your flowers grow!

Survey Completed April 19/91

SIX MONTH	ONE YEAR	TWO YEAR	THREE YEAR	FOUR YEAR	FIVE YEAR
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TRUST COMPANIES

Canada Trust	N/A	10.75	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25
Municipal Trust	N/A	11.00	11.00	11.00	11.25	11.25
NRS/Royal Trust	10.75	10.75	11.00	11.25	11.25	11.25

CHARTERED BANKS

Bank of Commerce	N/A	10.75	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25
Bank of Montreal	10.75	11.20	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25
Bank of Nova Scotia	10.75	10.75	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25
Royal Bank	10.75	10.75	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25
Toronto Dominion	10.75	10.75	11.25	11.25	11.25	11.25

This survey is prepared to help the Herald Homestyle readers track weekly Bank and Trust Company mortgage rates



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DRAW TO BE HELD MONDAY, APRIL 29, 1991

How To Win: Find the mystery word or symbol in the ads in today's Homestyle Section. This week's mystery word is **FIRST TIME BUYER**. Fill out the ballot below and drop it off at any of these participating locations:

- Knechtel's - Moore Park Plaza
- Re/Max - 360 Guelph St.
- NRS - 45 Mountainview Rd. N.
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Mystery Word: _____
 Number of times Mystery Word appeared: _____
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