

Gear up for gardening season before it's too late

With spring just around the corner, 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.

Buy 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 even 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 1 1/2 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!

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

-30-

Get your house in shape now

Planning to move in the summer?

Now is the time to begin planning a summer or even a fall move. For a successful move, a great deal of preparation is required and people who have moved before know there's never such a thing as too much time.

Whether you decide to buy a new house first or sell your present one, you have to get your existing house ready for sale.

Depending on the condition, that could take two to three weeks. Essentially, what you're doing is ensuring the items seen by the potential buyer such as paint, wallpaper, carpet and drapes are all nice and clean.

Focus on small repairs such as leaky faucets and try to clean out unnecessary items that add clutter to the home. The more spacious the house appears, the more interest it will generate.

Neutral colours are definitely the best choice when painting or wallpapering as these tones will appeal to the widest range of buyers and help make the house look large.

Cosmetic changes make the difference when trying to sell. Major changes to electrical or heating systems will not pay off in terms of recovering these costs through a higher sale price. This includes structural repairs as well.

The wisest move is to invest the extra \$500-\$1,000 on paint and wallpaper. This can work to increase your sales price by a couple of thousand dollars and help to generate quicker sales; two things that any smart vendor wishes to do.

For a free copy of "Moving Checklist", please call or visit a Canada Trust Realty office near you.

Now there's a better way to sell your home.



With all this.



Plus this.

With our exclusive HomeMatchSM system, your Royal LePage Sales Representative has more than the usual resources to sell your home.

HomeMatch matches interested buyers to your property.

As soon as you list with us, your property features are put into our HomeMatch computer system and matching begins immediately.

HomeMatch relentlessly searches for buyers who are looking for a home with features just like yours. Every day. And it doesn't stop until a sale is made!

HomeMatch is much more than a computer system.

With HomeMatch, you'll get other unique services such as our Instant Messaging System, a customized Marketing Action Plan

and our Personal Service Guarantee, signed by your Sales Representative and backed by Royal LePage.

Financing can make your home stand out in the market.

We can show you financing options to make your home more attractive to buyers.

And we'll clear the way for more unconditional offers by pre-approving both

your home and prospective buyers for a Royal LePage Mortgage.

HomeMatch. Another advantage only from Royal LePage. Why would you list your home with anyone else?

ROYAL LEPAGE
Advantage

Royal LePage Real Estate Services Limited, Broker.

Ask your Royal LePage Sales Representative about HomeMatch today!

CALL
878-8101

388 Main St. E.
Milton