



Seed to Salad: Planting Tips

Many salad garden vegetable seeds are tiny. They can be hard to handle and plant, and they easily blow out of a cupped hand with even a slight breeze. To deal with this, reuse empty plastic spice containers. If you put the word out early to parents and volunteers, you can often accumulate a good amount.



Step by step

- Label each spice container with the name of the seed and the number code you assigned it during the design phase.
- For seeds that will be used a lot, such as lettuces, consider having two or three shakers available.
- If you're working with younger children, have an extra adult or older youth volunteer on the sidelines to help fill up shakers. This way you can add just enough seed to each shaker for a single plot, avoiding spills or dumping too much seed in one place.



Other tricks of the trade

- If you have the space, consider having a "test plot" to demonstrate planting techniques before youth head off to plant their own plots.
- You can use a design everyone worked on together or make one up on the spot.
- Start by identifying the edges of the plot, and orienting the plan on the ground nearby.
- Along the way, give a demonstration and then have youth take turns outlining and planting different areas of the "test plot."



Three ways to outline your design in the soil prior to planting:

- Use a twig, stick, or small branch to "draw" the design in the soil.
- Draw the design by sprinkling white play sand.
- Use carefully placed pebbles, gravel, or small stones to create the outlines of your shapes.



Demonstrate

- Show the angle to hold the shaker so that seeds come out easily.
- Demonstrate different kinds of shaking and have a conversation about what appears to be too light, too hard, and just right
- Show how to take handfuls of spare soil and sprinkle it over newly planted seeds.
- Some seeds need to be planted rather than sprinkled on top of the soil. Show how to lay seed, such as nasturtiums, spaced on top of the soil, then push them gently into the soil.



Watering tips

- Watering a newly planted salad garden can be tricky. Lots of tiny seeds are sitting on or just below the soil surface. A gush of water will send them cascading far from where they were planted. You may want to do a demo on a spare patch of bare soil.
- Avoid using watering cans until seedlings begin to emerge.
- Use an adjustable water wand on the gentlest setting.
- Demonstrate holding the wand high enough and slowly moving it back and forth to avoid “mudslides” and “puddles.”

Experiment

- Plant a few seeds in each area of two trial areas, water one gently and the other too vigorously. How does it effect growth?