

Wild Herb Seed - planting and growing directions

“Beautiful Wild Herb Seed
- grow perennial ‘wild’ patches of Food
and Medicine,
or - cultivate in the Garden.

DIRECTIONS FOR PLANTING INDOORS IN FLATS

Plant the seeds at a depth about three times their length.

TO START you will need to get a planting ‘flat’ (an open flat with drainage and no cells). And some “**sterilized planting medium**”. The flats are easy to get ‘used’ at most nursery. You can also make or find other “trays” that could work. A couple of inches of soil and drainage holes are the key features. You also need a space by a window or under lights to put a flat or two.

Fill the flats with a sterilized planting medium. Water to saturation. Create as many rows as plant species you’re starting in each flat, with the idea of planting

the seeds at a depth about three times their length. Label the rows and spread the seeds at the rate of 3-5 per centimetre. Then, in their early weeks of germination and growth they don't take up much space.

Details about timing for planting. About 4-6 weeks before it warms up outside, before your growing season starts, before spring, plant out the seed in an open flat (If you're planting 20). You can put them all in small rows in one flat if you don't have the space to, which would be more ideal for that many. Which is to say be cautious about getting seeds mixed up, or disturbing one line of slower germinating seeds as you dig up another to transplant outside.

Light

Unlike starting vegetable seeds, most herbs can be started and grown for at least their first few weeks in low light. Which is to say any window sill. Although having said that I should also say the more sun the better, as long as you keep the soil moist. If they get stretched out from lack of direct sun it's fine, just transplant them deep enough to keep them standing when they go outside or into a big pot.

Heat

It is unnecessary to have extra heat to start these seeds. Most are able to thrive anywhere from climate zone 2 to 6, so room temperature should be fine for emulating spring heat. If they can get the direct sun for a couple of hours a day, like in an East or West facing window that will help

shorten the germination time and make them grow stronger and grow faster.

(If you have bought the 20 wild herb packs or herbal course) - Joe Pye, is the only herb seed I've given you that needs stratifying - see details below). It in particular is not tolerant of frost, so not surprisingly it generally won't start growing until June outside, when the ground has fully heated up. Of all the seeds, Joe Pye might need to be set out in the sun and brought back in at night as the spring progresses.

Stratifying Joe Pye - one month before you start the other seeds (Do it right away when you get all the seeds.) take the Joe Pye seed from the packet and put it in a zip-lock bag with a handful of moist sterilized growing medium. Mix them up. Before putting them in the freezer make sure to label it as 'stratifying Joe Pye' with a 'take-out date' one month after putting them in. Make sure to make note of this date elsewhere in case they get buried over the month.

Planting Depth

A general rule of thumb for planting all seeds; Plant to a depth three times the length of the seed being planted. So if Lamb's Quarters are one millimetre in diameter then they should be planted 3 mm deep. This rule also generally applies to bigger pulses, legumes and grain seeds. Wheat is a little less than one centimetre so they should be planted about 3 cm deep. Once you have

planted the seeds **cover them with your soil mix and lightly tamp the soil** so it doesn't dry out too quick. Be careful not to over compress if you're using Top Soil or garden soil as a starting medium.

DIRECTIONS FOR PLANTING DIRECTLY OUTSIDE

If you are planting directly outside make sure to mark the rows well and keep them in very straight lines (use a taught string guideline) so you know which are your herb seed versus the rest of the 'weed' seeds that pop up from the seed bank at the same time. It's helpful if the surface soil (at least) is well tilled and has a fine tilth. You can usually break the hard or chunky surface soil down with a 'hard rake'. Next, make a shallow straight furrow. Now you are ready to plant.

On ground preparation and companion planting. Most of these plants can't be established in a lawn. But if the seeds have time to become established then the grass can grow in and they'll be fine. That is to say the seeds don't take well unless they are sowed in an open patch of soil. Most of these plants naturally grow where the ground has been disturbed. For the plant to naturalize and have a self perpetuating patch they can't be overshadowed by other higher or low lying competing species. A garden is ideal soil for starting but there are two things to consider about this.

Soil

These plants can establish themselves and thrive in medium to poor soil (some in sand and gravel!), so they generally don't need the good soil, they just need open, broken ground. If you remove the grass from a 2 or 3 foot strip and break up the soil a bit that will do well. You likely don't need to add any compost but if the ground is solid clay you might turn a bit of peat or just broken up leaf matter into the top couple of inches. The top soil needs a porous quality so the seeds aren't just sitting on top or smothered under heavy clumps. You can compost the grass or just flip the patches of sod over and place them grass side down around your strip. The first year it will suppress and kill off the surrounding and competing grass from coming back into the open strip. And in the following years the killed-off boundary area will turn into open soil in for your perennials (planted in the strip) to naturally spread out into. Ideally taking over a grass monoculture with productive polyculture.

Planting Ceremony

At this point I hold the seeds in my hand, connect with them - envisioning them as flowering, adult plants shining in the sun, and then made a prayer as you put them in the ground. Remember in your heart that in planting a seed you are killing or sacrificing that 'eternal form' to awaken its temporal form on this plane. So while it is a joyous thing to plant seeds there is a sadness and death there too.

Outdoor spacing for the seeds in their furrow would be every couple of inches. If the seeds come out in clumps, spread them out right where they fell in the bottom of the furrow. You can always transplant or thin them out later.

A trick for seeding super fine or fluffy seeds. Many of the seeds you're going to receive are very small like Goldenrod, Yarrow, St John's Wort, Wild Chamomile. If the seeds are too fine to handle or clumped together with chaff you cannot plant them deliberately one at a time. So my approach with these seeds is to first mix them well with a handful of dryish sand or sandy soil. When the mix is uniform spread the soil-seed mixture in a shallow furrow. Lightly cover, pat and water lightly so as to not float the seeds out of their rows.

Once they have been planted keep them moist, not wet, until you see them start to germinate and then water only after the surface soil starts to dry. And keep the areas beside the row (at least 6 inches) clear of other plants until the ones you've planted are well established and able to compete.

The tricky part about planting out directly in the spring is already present in most soil is a dormant seed bank. So then these plants all start out with the seeds you're planting and it becomes hard to identify the sprouts. So you need to be clear about labeling and your line of planting. And then, vigilant in weeding out everything else

before the herbs you are trying to grow are lost in a thick forest of other seedlings.

When trying to identify sprouts keep in mind that most sprouts consist of just the rounded seed bracts and not the leaves proper for a week or two after they sprout. And even the first set of leaves can look quite different from the mature leaf.

Environmental Conditions for growing

Unlike vegetables and fruit, herbs do not need rich or even good soil. Yes they might grow bigger, quicker with it but it's not necessary for them and the quality of the herbal medicine that is produced will not be as good as it would be if the herb struggles to grow in rougher conditions.

Many common herbs like the ones I've given you have evolved to heal poor soil. That's their habitat, disturbed degraded soil. Others like Nettle and Motherwort need a certain amount of fertility to thrive.

Having said all that, keep in mind that at the start all the herbal sprouts need is moisture. And so if you're growing them in sand the problem won't be lack of nutrients but that the soil will dry out too quickly, at which point you risk losing the germinating seed or sprout.

After a few weeks of growing, when the roots are more developed, mild drought conditions won't harm them. Later

as the plant matures it can even increase the potency of the herbs. But if it happens at the start they'll just dry up and die before they have a chance to become established.

So, consistent moisture is important for the first month or so. This is achieved two ways. First, **soak the flats of soil or the garden to saturation** (when water flows through) **the day before planting**. After planting keep the surface moist by spraying or very light watering daily. **Do not water with a regular watering can once the seed have been planted**, because it's too much. It will float them right out of their buried germination pocket in the soil. The problem with this is when they are on the surface they might not be moist enough to germinate or they might have already started and will just dry out if they are dislodged and float to the surface.