

# **Birdsfoot Farm Seedling & Transplanting Workshop**

Created April 2011 by Dulli Tengeler

## **How to make potting soil:**

Make a compost pile about 3' wide and as long as you have material for it. Add food scraps, lawn clippings, leaves to it. At the end of the year cover with plastic or carpet (old only - new carpet has chemicals) to avoid leaching out, to keep it moist and to avoid plants from growing on it. Start a new pile. It takes at least a year to compost unless you turn the pile occasionally.

- After composting take cover off. It should look like nice dark soil, all items are composted, with no moldy patches of leaves (indicates compost is not finished yet)
- Screen the finished compost through a frame made with hardware cloth.
- Add ½ pint of rock phosphate (Fertell from Martins in Southville is organic accepted) for two 5 gallon buckets of compost and mix in thoroughly ( wear a mask, do not breathe in rock phosphate.)
- Store potting soil in buckets or bags (vented to prevent fungus) to avoid drying out.

I do this in the fall, so I have my potting soil ready when there is still snow on the ground. NOTE: Martins also sell organic soil for \$10 a bag (approximately a 5 gallon bucket worth).

## **How to fill containers:**

-Choose appropriate container, seeding into flats, transplanting into pots or 6-packs.

tomato or peppers 4" pot

lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, basil, parsley, celery, celeriac, kale, flowers into 6-pks

onions and leeks into flats, they will be directly transplanted into the gardens

-Fill containers completely but loosely with soil, do not press soil in. That would be harder for roots to push through and if container is filled hard to the top, there would be no room for water to sink in slowly.

-Get plant cluster of transplants (from open flats or channels flats) very wet so they separate easily. Use a shallow soup bowl or pan with water to hold seedlings in while transplanting.

- Make a deep hole with your finger. Take transplant carefully between your thumb and index finger by the stem and set it into the hole as deep as possible, but do not cover the growing point or the plant.

- Fill in around the plant with soil from the pot and press it in. Pressing in is important, so the roots have soil contact and can take in water and nutrients.

- Water thoroughly until water comes out the bottom of the pot. This should last for several days. Place plants in shade for a day to recover.

Transplants will be in transplanting shock for 4-7 days and not grow. As the pots dry out after a few days, water them again. It's good to let them get a little dry before watering and not have them wet all the time. As they grow and fill out the pot, they will need watering every day or twice a day.

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## Seeding:

Make a furrow into your flat or shallow hole into pot or cell of 6-pack. Place seeds (one or two per hole) and cover over with soil, twice the size of the seed (so, not a lot!), and press it down. It is important that seeds are pressed in to have good soil contact, so they can absorb moisture quickly, swell and sprout. Water thoroughly and keep moist. When plants are coming up, water less -every few days, letting the top of the soil dry out (but not the whole container). This encourages root growth and gives less chance to "damping off" -- a disease where plants rot at the base of the stem and fall over and die.

## Seeding times:

-Peppers 3/1 - 3/20 seed, then transplant into 3" pots, transplant outside after chance of frost or cover on cold nights if they were seeded early in March.

-Onions: 3/1 - 3/20 seed into flats, transplant to outside in late April - somewhat frost hardy

-Celeriac, celery: 3/5 - 3/15 seed into a flat, cover slightly with soil, (small seeds) later transplant into six-pack

-Tomatoes: 3/10 - 3-20 seed into flat, than transplant into 4"pots. (If seeded 3/10 plants will need to get planted out into the gardens by 5/20 and need frost covers).

-Lettuce: seed 3/15 and every two weeks after that. They need frost protection when planted into the garden until 4/15 seeding set goes outdoors

-Broccoli, cauliflower, kale: 4/5 - 4/3 seed into flats or 6-packs. If you do more than one seed per cell, make sure you thin them to one.

-Cabbage 4/30 - 5/15 seed into 6-packs as above

-Flowers: 4/15 - 5/15 if you want extra early flowers. Seed into flats, transplant into 6-packs



**A workshop in collaboration with the  
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