

Start seeds using bottom heat

One of the methods for starting seeds that will really improve your plants is bottom heat. Your seeds will germinate faster and more of that expensive seed will grow. Besides these advantages you will also have fewer problems with disease. Even after the seeds germinate bottom heat is a good idea. If you are just starting a few plants and have an older refrigerator you can just set them on top. With the older appliances the top is warm. The top of a water heater will also work. Either way the idea is to keep the soil at 22 degrees C. Place a seed flat with moist soil in place and check the soil temperature for a couple of days before you seed to get it right. A low wattage propagation mat to start seed will greatly increase your percentage of germination and they are easier to use because they have a thermostat so you can set the right temperature. Propagation mats are available from most of the seed catalogues, and locally from Lee Valley Tools. Another alternative is a soil heating cable. The temperature is preset and you just bury it in a bed of sand and plug it in. These are also available from most of the seed catalogs.

Keep your seeds and the seedlings from drying out. Not wet but damp all the time. Seedling trays with a clear lid help to keep the moisture in but open them up once a day at least to let some air circulate. Remove the lids when the seedlings reach the top. With some bottom heat your seedlings will grow faster, be healthier and you'll have some great plants to set out in the spring.