

# Seeds of India

## Gardening tips

### General Sowing tips:

When starting indoors seeds such as chillies and eggplant, always use sterile potting soil and containers. Sow seeds no more than 1/8-1/4th in. deep. Water and keep in a warm area. Once the seedlings are up, make sure that they are kept under direct plant lights or sunlight (like a window sill). If lighting is inadequate at this time you will get long, spindly plants that won't do well in the garden. Any time after the 2<sup>nd</sup> leaf stage, the seedlings may be transplanted to its permanent spot in the garden. Gourds and okra can be planted directly outdoors when warm enough.

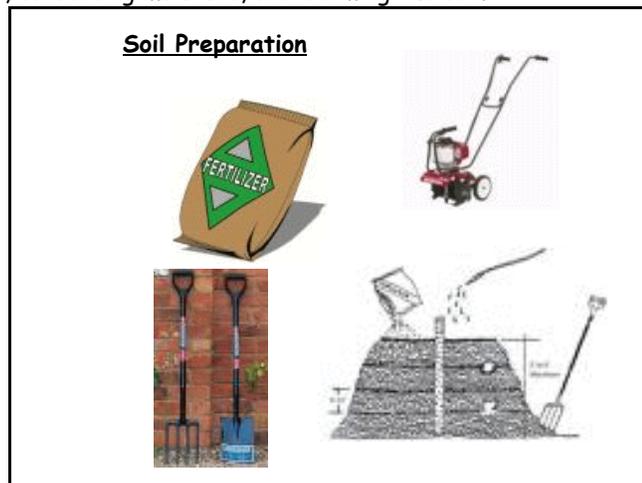
In the garden, the most important thing you can do is proper soil preparation. Always add plenty of organic material every year to your soil, such as peat moss, compost or manure. Mulching is a great way of controlling weeds, conserving moisture, and warming the soil.



Chilli seeds being planted shallow 1/8-1/4th in.



Seedlings two weeks later



### Growing Eggplant, Peppers & Tomatoes

These members of the nightshade family are very tender plants that requires a long, warm season for successful production, therefore they can be started indoors 8-12 weeks before. Plants should not be set out until all danger of frost has passed. The use of plastic mulch can increase the yield, by helping to warm the soil, by conserving moisture, and by controlling weeds. Plants may be planted in staggered double rows, 18 inches between plants in each of the staggered rows. Once fruits have begun to set, an additional side-dressing of fertilizer will help promote greater plant productivity. Use a 12-12-12 analysis fertilizer or other high nitrogen fertilizer at the rate recommended on the package. The fruits of the eggplant are edible from the time they are one-third grown until ripe. Skin should be shiny; seeds inside should not be brown or hard. Harvest will continue over an extended period if the fruit are removed when they are well colored and of adequate size. The fruits of eggplant and peppers should be cut from the plants with sharp clippers.

### Growing gourds, cucumbers and melons

Gourds, cucumbers, squash and melons are very closely related. They have a growing season of anywhere from 120-180 days, so you will want to get them started as early as possible. Sow your seeds outdoors when all frost danger has passed. Plant the seeds in full sun, about 10 to 12 inches apart where you want them to grow (they do not transplant well). The seeds will germinate more quickly if you soak them in warm water for 24 hours prior to planting. Bitter gourd seeds can additionally be nicked with a nail file before soaking to hasten germination. Gourd vines will trail along the ground if no support such as a fence or trellis is supplied, but the fruit will often be misshapen and less perfect. It is strongly recommended therefore that the gourds be grown on a strong arbor, trellis, or fence.

The fruit will then hang down. Gourds are heavy feeders, so add a considerable amount of manure and compost to the soil prior to planting. When your gourds are well established, additional fertilizer is probably not necessary, but you may want to occasionally feed with a water soluble low-nitrogen fertilizer like 5-10-5. Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers because they will encourage leafy growth and actually delay fruit maturity. When the vine has reached about 10 feet long, you might want to snip the end to promote lateral side growth, and consequently, more fruit. The male flowers appear on the main stem, while the fruit producing female flowers will emerge from the side stems.

#### **Growing Okra**

Okra grows best in well-drained soil but otherwise the plant is not particular as to soil type. Plant in late May with the seed 2/3 inch deep and 12 to 15 inches apart in rows 24 to 30 inches apart. Soak the seed in warm water for 12 hours prior to planting to enhance germination. Transplants do not transplant well so greater success is obtained from seeds. If the garden was not fertilized use 1 to 1 1/2 pounds of 12-12-12 per 50 feet of row. Side dress every 2 to 3 weeks starting when the plants have been growing 4 weeks. Do not remove the lower leaves as the harvest progresses. Harvest okra before the pods get old and tough. The pods are ready for harvest 5 to 7 days after bloom. It is necessary to harvest every 2 to 3 days, because the vines die as seed matures. Flower buds drop during periods of hot dry weather, if there is a drop in temperature, or in poorly drained soil.

#### **Growing Carrots and radishes**

When growing carrots and radishes the ideal soil is well drained and rich in organic matter. Carrots are notoriously hard to transplant and therefore should be grown directly from seed in the garden. Sow in April and May when the weather is starting to warm up. Prepare the soil by digging the patch deeply and removing any large stones, weeds and break up the soil as much as possible to avoid the roots becoming misshaped due to hard objects in the soil. Sow the seed approximately 0.5 inches deep and after sprouting thin them out to 3-4 inches apart to avoid overcrowding. Harvest the carrots when the top of the root is approximately an inch in diameter which usually takes 5-6 months after sowing the seed. As a rule of thumb, the smaller the carrot the better the taste.

#### **Growing Beans**

Beans should be planted directly into the garden 1.5 in deep after soil temperatures reach 65° to 75° F during the day. Space to 4 ins. apart. Use a fertilizer, low in Nitrogen such as 5-10-10 since the plants can "fix" nitrogen from the air. Do not harvest beans when plants are wet, since this will spread disease.

#### **Growing Greens**

**Spinach** Plant spinach very early in the spring, making two or three different sowings so that you'll have spinach throughout the spring and summer. Sow again in late summer, 50 to 60 days before the average first frost. Spinach leaves can be harvested at any time they look ready. Pick the large outer leaves, and the inner leaves will continue to grow and produce more delicious spinach!

**Amaranthus:** The ideal soil for amaranthus is light, sandy and fertile. Sow the seeds just under the surface of moist soil in late spring. Thin to 4 in apart. Fertilize with chicken manure or any commercial fertilizer high in nitrogen. Tips of larger plants can be picked while quite young. Alternatively the whole plant may be pulled from the ground, roots and all, when approximately 25 cm tall.

#### **Herbs:**

**Tulsi:** Extremely easy. Simply sprinkle fine seeds on the surface of the soil. Keep moist and seeds will germinate in 1 week. Transplant to 12" apart or in individual pots. Keep well fertilized with liquid fertilizer such as Miracle Gro.