

PERENNIALS FROM SEED

Filling a perennial bed with blooming size plants can be very expensive if you make all your purchases at a garden center. A slower but less expensive way is to start plants from seed. The best time to do so is in mid-winter under fluorescent lights or mid-summer in protected areas in the garden.

Some perennial seeds are very difficult to germinate or will not come true to seed. These plants are best bought as started plants which can be divided after they grow larger. Plants that fall into this category are irises, peonies, oriental poppies, daylilies, phlox, asters, and mums.

Perennials that are easy to grow from seed include yarrow, coreopsis, gaillardia, columbine, sweet william, bellflower, balloon flower, painted daisy, shasta daisy, and coral bells.

The key to remember when starting perennial seeds is to meet the exact germination requirements. Temperatures may be critical; some seeds need warmth to germinate but others, such as coral bells, need cool temperatures. Some seeds need light to germinate and others require total darkness. The most difficult seeds require stratification; a process by which the weathering effects of winter is simulated by the gardener. Most often, stratification involves storing the seeds in the refrigerator for a period of time, soaking them in water, or nicking the seed coat to allow water to enter. For specific guidelines, be sure to read the directions on the seed packet.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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