

Growing Guide

Level 1 Seeds



The seeds in the Hamilton East Public Library Seed Library are divided into two levels based on difficulty and/or additional equipment or space requirements.

Seeds labeled Level 1 are easy to grow.

- These seeds are easy to care for! They are great for beginners and require little to no prior gardening experience. You may already have the equipment you need.
- You can sow them directly in the ground, and many can also be sown into containers (see the notes on the seed packet). Transplanting is optional, and sometimes not recommended, depending on seed variety.

Before you begin, think about:

1. There is a time and a season for your vegetables to be harvested and for your flowers to bloom in our Midwestern climate. Some plants, like arugula and peas, prefer cooler weather and won't grow well in the summer heat, while others, like peppers, need warm temperatures and will die if there is a frost. Annual flowers will bloom a certain number of days after germination, but perennials likely won't bloom the first year. Consider timing in your gardening plan.
2. Before you plant, research! To be successful, you need to research the plant and its needs: amount of sunlight, water, heat tolerance, soil type, etc. Not all plants have the same needs, and not every plant will thrive everywhere in your yard.
3. Think about where you are going to plant the seed. Selecting the right seeds for your chosen growing area can determine its success. Not all seeds work well in all growing conditions. Most plants prefer full sun.
 - What is the soil like? Will you plant in a container, raised bed, or in the ground?
 - How much space is there versus how much space the plant needs?
 - Does the area get full sun or is it partially shaded? Is it a dry area or does water tend to gather there?
4. What equipment do you need before you plant anything?
5. Gardening is an adventure and a learning experience, not a guaranteed success. Even the most experienced and attentive gardeners sometimes have failures due to factors beyond their control. Approach your garden with an open mind and think of it as an opportunity for experimentation and growth.

How long will my plant live?

Annuals: These plants live for only one season before blooming and producing seeds.

Biennials: These plants live for two years. They flower and produce seeds in the second year.

Perennials: These plants may live for multiple years if conditions are right. They may not bloom and produce seeds until the second year.

Planting your seeds

1. Read the seed packet thoroughly before you begin.
2. Most Level 1 seeds will say **Direct sow** on the packet. This means you can plant it right in the ground or container where it will remain for the growing season.
3. Some seeds do have temperature requirements. Unless you see a temperature requirement on the packet, assume the seed variety needs to be planted after the last frost date in Hamilton County. Many gardeners use Mother's Day as an all-clear to plant frost-tender seeds.
4. Moisten the soil before digging the row and planting your seeds. This will help the soil clump together and lighter seeds are more likely to stay in place.
5. Determine how deep and far apart the seeds need to be planted (on seed packet).
6. Mark the row or container! If you don't mark where your seeds are planted and what you planted there, you may forget! It's also a good idea to make notes and keep them in an accessible place.
7. Water your seeds gently and keep the soil moist (not wet)! Too much water can flood the row and scatter the seeds away. Try the mister or gentle shower setting on a hose, a slow-flow watering can, or even a spray bottle.

Examples of HEPL Seed Packet Labels

Greens: Arugula (2024)

Level 1: Easy to grow! Plant in ground or pots.

Surface sow (barely cover seeds) 4-6 weeks before last frost date when soil is 45-75 degrees F, 30-50 seeds per foot. 5-7 days to germination. 21-40 days to maturity.

Seed Library @ Hamilton East Public Library

Calendula: Pacific Beauty (2024) ANNUAL

Level 1: Easy to grow! Plant in ground or pots.

Sow outside in early spring at depth of 1/4". Allow 5" of space. Prefers sun, but tolerant of partial shade. 5-10 days to germination. 60 days to maturity.

Seed Library @ Hamilton East Public Library

Gardening terms

Days to Germination

How long it takes for seedlings to sprout.

Last Frost Date

Many plants cannot tolerate temperatures below freezing. Don't sow these seeds until there is little chance that the temperature will dip to or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius). According to the USDA, the average date is April 30 in Hamilton County. You'll need to make an educated guess or seek advice about the best time to plant frost-tender seeds.

Days to Maturity

Approximately how long it takes for a plant to bloom (flowers) or be ready for harvest.

Thin

If there's too many seedlings in a small area, they compete for space, water, and soil nutrients. The term "thin" means removing extra seedlings so the remaining ones can thrive. Use the "thin to" measurement on the seed packet (if applicable) as a guide to how much space each seedling will need. You can thin seedlings when you see 1-2 sets of leaves. Use a scissors to snip out extra seedlings.

Transplant

Transplanting means moving a plant from one space to another. It might be from a small starter seed cell to a larger container or the ground. Some plants transplant well; others do not.