

How To Grow Plants Under Light

YORK (York Co.) — Seed starting for the vegetable or flower garden often requires supplemental lighting. Most homes are simply too dark for good growth. Additional light that supplements natural sunlight is often needed.

For bedding plants grown solely under artificial light, fluorescent lights are required. To supplement a small amount of natural light, incandescent lamps are

adequate but often produce too much heat. They produce light in the red range and, if used as the only light, will result in elongated growth and possible distortion of plants after several months.

Excellent plant growth is possible with fluorescent lamps, with one cool white and warm white lamp together. "Grow" lamps are more expensive. However, they may enhance the beauty of some

plants such as the African violet.


The minimum size fixture to begin with is one that contains 2 tubes of 20 watts or 2 tubes of 40 watts. Lamps should be suspended 15 to 20 inches above the surface on which the plants will be grown. Plants may be as close as 6 to 9 inches prior to seedlings emergence.

For most bedding plants, light should be left on for 16 to 18


hours a day. An automatic timer is helpful but not necessary. If plants do not appear to be getting adequate light, move them closer to the tubes, add more tubes or increase the lighting time. Continuous light

is satisfactory for some plants that may be far from the light source. Plant spacing also must be considered. Crowding results in weak stems and lack of sufficient air movement that can favor diseases.

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