

Kids' KOrner

Time For Kids To Plant Seeds

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WILLIAMS GROVE (Cumberland Co.) — Now that spring finally is here, it is time to plant the seeds that will give us the flowers and vegetables we can enjoy this summer.

Linda Green is an expert at that. She is the person who plants all the seeds at Ashcombe's Greenhouses.

Green has some tips for you to use when you plant seeds at home.

First, she said, you should go to your garden store or local greenhouse and buy a seed planting germination mixture made up of peat-moss, perlite, and vermiculite.

Green said you can plant your seeds in almost any container that is at least 2 inches deep. The container also must have holes in it to give drainage when you water your seeds.

To start, you should fill most of the container with the planting mix and then moisten that mix. Then you should place the seeds on the surface of the mix and cover them with a layer of dry planting mixture.

The dry mix can then be moistened with a spray bottle. The next step is to cover the containers with clear plastic wrap to keep the seeds warm while they start to sprout.

The plastic wrap also keeps the moisture in to help the seeds grow.

Once the seeds are planted, they should be placed at a light source, like a sunny window. The plastic wrap should be removed as soon as the plants pop up through the soil.

The soil has to be kept moist so the seeds should be checked at least once a day to make sure they have enough moisture.

Label each pot so you know what type of seeds you planted in the container.

Some plants are easier to grow than others, she said. Your local nursery will be able to tell you what kinds of seeds will be the easiest for your children to grow.

Although almost any container

can be used to plant seeds. Peat pots are good to use if you are growing plants that do not like to have their roots disturbed when the time comes to plant them outside. The plants can be transplanted right in the peat pots because the pots will decompose and become part of the soil.

Green said you can get more sophisticated with your seed planting by using heat trays and fluorescent lights. Garden stores sell all kinds of seed planting kits you might like to try.

Green gets mighty fancy when she plants thousands of seeds each year at Ashcombe's where she has worked for 20 years.

She showed her process at a special display at the front of the store. The display is called "It's Spring, Let's Sow Some Seeds."

She said she plants most of the seeds for Ashcombe's with a machine that is called an EZ Seeder. Most commercial greenhouses use those machines, she said.

Green uses the EZ Seeder to plant the seeds in small plug trays. When the plants are big enough, they are transplanted to larger cellpacks. The cellpacks are the containers that people buy the plants in.

But there is a lot of work to be done to make the plants grow so they can be sold. Right after the seeds are planted, they are placed in a temperature-controlled chamber where the temperature always is kept at 70 degrees.

As the seeds sprout they are gradually moved to the greenhouses.

Green cautions that people should not be too eager to plant the plants they grow themselves or the ones they buy at their local greenhouses.

Even if the temperature in the daytime is warm, the cold nights in early spring still can hurt or kill plants that are planted outdoors too soon in the year, she said.

Green said that in this area she does not recommend that any plants be planted outdoors before May 10 when all the danger of frost is past.



Ashcombe's seed planter, Linda Green, shows how she plants thousands of seeds for the nursery.



After a day at the greenhouse, Madison Miller and Amanda Myers are ready to try their hands at planting some seeds.

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