

STARTING PLANTS IN A GREENHOUSE

(Field Exercise)

I. Making the soil mix

A. Ingredients

1. For air porosity, drainage, and texture: sand, perlite, pumice, vermiculite, etc.
2. For fiber, body, organic matter, water holding capacity: peat moss, coconut fiber
3. For introduction of soil micro-organisms; biological aspects of soil: compost or soil
4. For nutrition: addition of NPK and trace minerals

B. Method

1. Mix ingredients starting with the driest (perlite, etc) and ending with the wettest (compost/soil).
 - a. Mix with shovel in contained area
 - b. Mix with cement mixer
2. Add water and continue mixing. Add until water can be squeezed from the soil by hand.

II. Making soil blocks

A. Advantages

1. More soil for root development
2. Roots do not circle
3. Easy to transplant
4. Saves space in greenhouse

B. Make flat of 1" soil blocks with floor blocker – for most seeds

C. Make flat of 2" soil blocks with hand blocker – for large seed

*Size of block also depends on type of plant and length of time in the greenhouse

III. Seeding

- A. Seeding method in soil block - seed three different size seeds into soil blocks. Try different methods of dropping seed – by hand, with moist toothpick, with folded seed packet.
- B. Covering seed for darkness – cover with porous medium that will not crust – sand or vermiculite is best. Also provides a base of support for seedling.

IV. Supplemental care

- A. Watering method – water immediately after covering seed. Must be kept moist for seed to germinate, and obviously for continued growth. Discuss subsequent irrigation options.
- B. Nutrition – best provided with foliar spray of compost tea. Aids in rapid plant growth, disease prevention. Adds live component through compost. Make compost tea: 4 cup compost, 1 cup liquid fish and kelp, 1 tbsp molasses, two gallons water. Mix well and aerate for 24 hours. Apply with backpack sprayer.