

Indoor Gardening Summary  
with some Outdoor Tips

A Document of Pan Asian Senior Services  
Philadelphia, Pa.

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## **Objectives**

The principal objective is to give the seniors a sense of delight in growing their own indoor vegetable plants from seedling to transplantation, then to term. The process of involvement contributes to individual ability and self-esteem. The activities of handling soil and transplanting seedlings to larger pots also assists with the maintenance of manual dexterity and focus, as well. Likewise, the idea of anything green and living imparts a sense of joy to all, and may trigger positive memories of the past, a contributory to overall mental health.

## **A Note on Artificial Light**

Their usage is appropriate as seedlings need more 'daylight' than natural daylight can provide, meaning, 12 to 16 hours.

## **General Adviso, (Per Sally McCabe) on Sprouting From Seeds Indoors**

Use Organic Mechanics (brand name) Soil Starting Blend, for planting seeds. The best indoor plants are: herbs and beans. Cucumbers need bees and therefore will not do well indoors. Lettuce plants will be smaller because it is too warm indoors and the plant wants to be outdoors. Tiny Tim, is a popular tomato plant and will do well indoors as will any of the small or cherry varieties. As for carrots, they are 'a toughy' indoors, and their growth is easier said than done. Ginger may be grown indoors.

## **Time Sequence for Vegetable Seeds to Sprout**

Keep the seedlings moist, not soggy. They naturally have food inside the seed and therefore do not need fertilizer at this stage. Water twice a week with 1/4<sup>th</sup> inch in the tray and sprayed water at the top---sufficiently, not tons of water, otherwise some of the seedlings will rot. **Time Sequences** of seedlings before readiness to transplant: Cucumbers and summer squash 3 -4 weeks, lettuce, tomatoes and broccoli 5 – 7 weeks, and lastly peppers take the longest at 6 to 8 weeks.

## **Some Precautions in Transplanting Vegetable Seedlings**

Over watering is an issue. Moist, not soggy. Use potting soil without fertilizer or the seedlings will burn.

### **List of Hardest Indoor Vegetable Plants**

- Garlic Greens
- Micro Greens (radish, kale, Swiss Chard, basil, beets, dill) for salads
- Mesclun Mix (Spinach, arugula, kale, Asian greens) for salads
- Scallions
- Mushrooms
- Cilantro
- Spinach
- Lettuces: red, romaine, arugula
- Garlic
- Ginger

### **To Try**

- Korean Sesame Leaves

### **List of Hardest Indoor Dwarf Fruit Tree Varieties**

- Mandarin
- Calamondin miniature orange
- Kumquat
- Avocado
- Tangerine
- Lemon

### **List of Hardest Indoor Herbs**

- **Marjoram**
- **Parsley**
- **Anise**
- **Basil**
- **Lemon balm**
- **Chives**
- **Tarragon**
- **Basil**
- **Rosemary**
- **Sage**
- **Thyme**
- **Oregano**

## **Best Indoor Floral Plants**

- Marigolds
- Begonia
- Amaryllis

## **Hardest Indoor Non-Floral Plants/Trees**

- Ficus tree
- Peace Lily
- Diffenbachia

### **Advisement of Charles Philips, Founder – East Oak Lane Tree Tenders**

**For indoor gardening:** the plants should not be overwatered. That means water twice a week from the top and add 1/4<sup>th</sup> inch of water in the tray. **Lighting:** Set the plants on a timer with the intention to augment the natural daylight. Therefore, set the timer to go off at night at 8p.m. to come back on at 4a.m. **For outdoor gardening:** A cold frame boxes may be used. This is a slanted box with a lid which also helps to keep pests and bugs out. And of course, it protects the young plants against frost. Cucumbers like warm weather and prefer to be planted outdoors. Plant outdoors after the first week in May to ensure the last frost has passed. Night temperatures need to be above 40 degrees or seeds will rot. **Best tool catalog:** A.M. Leonard Horticultural Tool and Supply Co. 800-543-8955. Amleo.com.

### **Advisement of Sally McCabe – PHS Horticulturist**

From now forward lettuce, rutabaga and all root crops can be grown outdoors that are grown from seeds (Mid-March). Put outdoors the rest of any plants that are not grown from seed in two weeks (First week in April). After April 15<sup>th</sup> tomatoes and peppers can be planted. Add cabbage, spinach, cauliflower. For all, use garden soil. Use a translucent cloth cover with hoops to keep the bugs off or a nylon screening. **The best seed catalog:** Johnny Appleseed in which you may show the clients the actual pictures and allow them to choose which plants they might be interested in growing. 877-564-6697. Johnnyseeds.com.

## **Sally's Cold Season Outdoor Crops**

- Turnips
- New baby turnips

- Spinach
- Arugula
- Swiss Chard
- Cabbage
- Lettuce
- Radishes
- Carrots
- Rutabaga

\*\* These can be planted from late March through Spring and Summer---and still be providing food up until Thanksgiving. Winter sun sets SE to SW.

### **Sally's Secondary Late Autumn Outdoor Crops**

- Lettuce
- Mustard
- Spinach
- Arugula
- Kale
- Peas
- Onions
- Garlic
- Radish
- Cover crops

\*\*These can be planted October 10<sup>th</sup>. Use a cold box to extend the life of these plants.

### **Sally's Spring Season Outdoor Crops**

- Tomato
- Pepper
- Summer Squash
- Winter Squash
- Asian Greens
- Eggplant
- Cucumber
- Melon
- Pumpkins
- Cucumbers
- Beans
- Watermelon

- Water cress

\*\* These can be planted May 1 through July 1

### **Sally's Late Summer Outdoor Crops**

- Radish
- Carrots
- Turnips
- Spring Mix
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli
- Collards

\*\*These can be planted August 1 through October 1

### **\*\* Frost Dates**

32-35 degrees soft frost, 20-30 degrees, hard frost. Last frost 'scare' for this year is the first week in May, also concurred by Charlie Philips

\*\* Seed Storage: coffee cans.

### **Sally's Ideas on the Disadvantages of Indoor Gardening**

The lack of full sunlight and 'natural elements' is what is missing as well as shorter sun periods with weaker rays. Space is an issue and is a premium, and plant overcrowding fosters mold and 'shared' bugs. Besides bug pests, household pets can also be an issue. It is helpful to provide needed space, drying out and proper drainage trays in which to place pebbles. Take advantage of chips and mulch that hold heat, meaning larger containers. Mulch also keeps down dust. Rule: the larger the container, the more heat it will hold.

### **On Outdoor Gardening**

Use mulch to prevent freezing and thawing causing the plants to be pushed up prematurely. One can use raised beds with clean soil. Containers for vegetables can also be used. To keep away cats, use chicken wire or red pepper flakes. Or variously, skewers or coat hangers to keep animals out. **For soil tests**, send six inches of soil and mail it to a Massachusetts laboratory and they will send back results. The standard soil test kit costs \$12-15 and can be ordered online. Mail soil sample to: Soil Testing Lab – West Experiment Station 682 North Pleasant Street –

University of Massachusetts – Amherst, MA 01003. Phone: 413-545-2311. Results will be mailed in 4-6 weeks with results on lead or other harmful soil substances. Any lead is usually in the top 4 to 6 inches of soil. Other labs are far more expensive.

After the soil has been tested, then, “turn over soil according to your cultural or book learning traditions, digging in lots of compost or organic matter. Rake smooth, and put weed clumps into compost bin, soil and all.” **Do Not Plant the following until Mother’s Day:** Beans, corn, squash, eggplant, peppers, sweet potatoes or watermelons. **Soil conditions:** If you make a ball of soil in your hand, it should fall apart when you open your hand. Being hasty and too anxious in planting too soon can lose plants.

### **Transition Periods for Indoor Plants Going Outside**

They should be brought in at night for a few weeks, a process called ‘hardening off.’

### **Frost and the Remedy**

Again, the last ‘guaranteed’ frost for our region is the first week in May. If there is a ‘freak’ frost, plants should be covered with plastic or a blanket.

### **The Issue of Why Seeds Fail to Sprout**

Some are old. Some resist sprouting because they are on their own internal timer (per Sally and Charlie’s textbooks). Other sources (Mother Jones) state that a compound in the seed cover inhibits sprouting and must first be broken down in the soil, again, on its own ‘timer.’ Or that the plant ovaries are not ready to act chemically. This is not the ‘fault’ of the gardener per se.

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## Classic Gardening Bibliography of Charles Philips

- Growing Plants from Seed. Doc & Katy Abraham. New York: Lyons and Burford, 1991.  
**Summary Impressions:** The book features the historical background on various foods, the usage of heaters under propagation boxes and seed pellets. Seed storage tips, a chart of common pests and household chemical pests to rid them is discussed. Also covered is the efficacy of heirloom versus non-heirloom seeds. Overall, the book is highly rudimentary and not as detailed as the Nancy Bubel book (next), which excels on every level imaginable.
- The New Seed-Starters Handbook. Nancy Bubel. Emmaus, Pa. :Rodale Press, 1988.  
**Summary Impressions:** A spectacular small, concise book that literally has everything in it per essential things to know when attempting to grow plants from seeds. The book features simple and elegant line drawings of plants, insects and animal pests, interspersed with nicely appointed photographs. There are a variety of very helpful charts pertaining to last planting dates, what plants to grow in which season and a seed viability chart on how long seeds can be stored. Also, the book feature a complete chapter on herbs and fruits that can be grown from seeds. Excellent.
- Indoor Plants – The Essential Guide to Choosing and Caring for Plants. Jane Courtier and Graham Clarke. New York: Chartwell Books, Inc., 2012. **Summary Impressions:** This is a delightful hardbound coffee table book with lovely photographs of non-edible household plants. House floor plans and many photographs of plant *in-situ* lend great ideas of home ambiance. A rather lengthy chart of common plants, the light they require and watering schedules is nicely done. The ensconcing of plants in relation to direction lighting and propagation techniques are discussed. All plant photographs are in color. Beautifully presentation.
- Growing Plants Under Artificial Light. Peggie Schulz. New York: M. Barrows & Company, 1955. **Summary Impressions:** A true ‘oldie but goodie’ antiquarian book from 1955 when artificial lighting was just getting off the ground. Includes chapters on the usage of lights in greenhouses, and a full explanation on the mechanics of why plants need light. The book does not cover edible plants but lists instead a host of flowering plants such as begonias, African violets. Fuchsias and geraniums that do well with artificial light. The usage of a timer and avoiding root rot is also covered.
- The Complete Indoor Gardener. The World’s Most Popular Book About Gardening without a Garden (sub-title). Michael Wright, ed. New York: Random House, 1974.  
**Summary Impressions:** The book features chapters on miniature gardens, plants that would be attractive for children, and Asian floating plants. The use of a wooden tub to grow water lilies indoors and add a few goldfish was an especially tranquil idea, particularly for those with limited space. Many color photographs with window box

annuals and a sub-chapter on terrariums. Except for small tomatoes to cheer a winter house, no other edible plants are included.

### **L. Santipriya's Favorite Organic Seed Source**

Out of all the many competing companies, I most enjoyed Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds of Mansfield, Missouri. Owned by a very young couple, I appreciated their small town and folksy photographs. It elicited memories of a 'simpler place in time' when America was not quite so complicated. Their catalog is extensive, featuring pumpkins, watermelons, tomatoes and even flowers. The catalog has rare varieties such as pink tomatoes, chocolate bell peppers, and a black flower called Black Boy. Interesting. They feature pumpkins and squashes from Thailand and Japan, as well as an extensive Asian greens list, including: Mizuna spinach, Komatsuma mustard greens, Tatsoi, Kwang Tung Leaf, Wong Bok, Thai Jute, Da Ping Pu mustard greens, Extra Dwarf Bok Choy and Large Leaf Tong Ho (Chrysanthemum). Finally, the young couple have their own magazine, Heirloom Gardener, and sponsor a yearly two day spring festival featuring local folk music and 10,000 gardeners! They do sell seeds wholesale. 417-924-8917  
Rareseeds.com

### **Some Asian Seed Sources**

#### **Kitazawa Seed Company**

They have been in business since 1917 and thankfully do not have GMO seeds. Among other variety of Korean vegetables they have: radishes, Mot Jaeng I Ae summer squash, Doraji Balloon Flower, Korean black beans, Korean Ginkaku melon, Korean Bunching, Korean green Seoul cabbage and Korean Water Dropwort Minari and its Flamingo type. Kitazawaseed.com

#### **Asian Seed Company, Ltd (Korea).**

They have a variety of Korean origin vegetables including melons, watermelon, pak-choi, cucumber, onion, broccoli and cabbage. 7<sup>th</sup> Floor Baekam B/D, 150 J ungdae-ro, Songpa-gu, Seoul 138-160 Korea. Phone: 82-2-4434303

#### **Nongwoo Seed America**

While their concentration is on South America, they also have a mission to sell Korean seeds to Koreans in America. [Trade@Nongwoobio.co.kr](mailto:Trade@Nongwoobio.co.kr). Nongwoobio.com

#### **Sustainable Seed Company (organic).**

They carry non-organic and organic Korean dark green pepper seeds. 872-620-SEED.

#### **Ali Express. Com.**

They specialize in a variety of non-food goods worldwide. However, they have at wholesale prices very rare heirloom Korean black tomatoes, Korean long tomatoes (with the pointed end), Korean red pepper and Korean white eggplant. Online at: [Aliexpress.com/w/wholesale-korean-vegetable-seeds.htm](http://Aliexpress.com/w/wholesale-korean-vegetable-seeds.htm)

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### **Local Outdoor Garden Horticultural Centers to Visit in Philadelphia and Environs**

- Bartram House 729-5281
- Shofuso 878-5097
- Chanticleer 610-687-4163 (Wayne, Pa)
- Camden Children's Garden

**Note:** All are closed for the winter with most reopening in March and some as late as April

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