

THE BOTANIC NURSERY ATWORTH WILTSHIRE SN12 8NU



SEED SOWING

These notes are not exhaustive, they cover the seed we offer for sale

The seed we offer can be sown anytime from January to September. Sowing between January – April will require slight warmth 15° to 21°C to maintain germination. Later sowings from April to September will not require artificial heat, so can be started outside in a sheltered site protected from sudden downpours or extremes of



temperature. Seed trays may dry out more easily in too much sun, even for a brief time. A greenhouse is not always necessary for seed sowing so give it a try on a light window ledge, a cold frame or, from April



onwards outside

GENERAL INFORMATION Good seed compost should be used, don't be tempted to mix with old compost or garden soil. 10cm / 4" pots are ideal for small quantities of seed. A more compact method is to use cell trays, something like the size of egg box cells. In fact, egg boxes make good seed sowing containers if put on a tray for stability. Compost should be levelled and gently firmed. Sow the seed and place trays or pots in the propagator / greenhouse until March-April, after then choose a sheltered part of the garden. Water with a fine rose on the watering can, or by sitting the container in a half inch of water until the surface darkens. Do not allow the compost to become sodden. Should the compost subsequently dry out then the seed will germinate erratically or not at all.

If on average seed has not appeared after 3-4 weeks it may have got too hot so, move the container to a cooler spot where germination will then resume. A good time to transplant seedlings is when they are showing their first true leaves about ½ inch in size. Always handle the seedling by the seed leaves not the stem. Use good potting

✓



compost for this, the young plants can then be grown on in cell trays and transplanted into pots, if they need over wintering use a cold frame or sheltered site; pot on into larger pots until

✗



they are large enough to go into the garden.

If germination does not start as hoped do not throw away, leave outside to nature.

FOXGLOVE, VERBASCUM & PAPAVER: The seed should be lightly pressed into the compost **do not cover** as they need light to germinate, this should take around 21 days. **Be aware the seed is very fine and foil packs should be opened over a sheet of white paper to collect all the contents.**

HOLLYHOCKS January to April sowing will, for some sorts flower in late summer, but it is in their second and following years they will flower and reach mature height. Later sowings will grow into plants that will become mature and flower from their second year. This seed can be sown in cell trays or direct into the garden where you want the plants to grow, choose an open site uncrowded by other plants and press the seed gently into the ground around ½” deep. Cell trays are however more efficient than open ground sowing. Natural seed in its hard circular seed coat can be soaked for a couple of hours before sowing, to aid germination. The kidney shaped seed has had the outer seed coat removed and does not require soaking. Germination is usually very quick.

GRASSES The seed should be covered with a little compost just so it can't be seen and firmed lightly. Position pots of seed in a cool corner of the garden out of direct sun, germination may start after 3-4 weeks, but may be more erratic. Many grass seeds have curious stems coming from the seed case and these help the seed to anchor into the ground where it will germinate. The annual grasses are a fabulous addition to any garden, growing quickly and giving a good show. *Setaria italica Red Jewel* is one of the annual sorts we enjoy growing together with *Lagurus ovatus*, *Panicum Explosion*, and *Hordeum jubatum*.

SMYRNIUM & ERYNGIUM Sow the seed where you want the plant to grow and flower virtually at any time, seedlings emerge the following spring and flower that same year. Smyrnium is a hardy biennial and once you have it in your garden it will perpetuate itself without any intervention from the gardener. Don't sow it in the middle of your herbaceous border, it will take over. In a woodland it is perfect. Perennial sorts of Eryngium seed may take longer to grow to flowering size. If you have older stored Eryngium seed it will benefit from soaking in warm water for an hour prior to sowing.

CERINTHE Sow March to June on the surface of compost to flower the same year. Germination takes around 2 weeks; you can also sow the large seed where you want them to flower. It is considered a hardy annual which will remain in the ground most winters, dry soils, gravel beds etc. are the best.

HESPERIS Sow in cell trays or direct into the garden where you want them to flower. Cover seed lightly and water in. Seed sown directly into the border can take up to 2 years to flower. Seed sown direct into cell trays with heat from January to March will flower in the first year.

PERSICARIA orientalis Visitors to the nursery from July onwards always admire this plant, it's really an annual but makes a huge impact in the border, Like the Smyrnium and Eryngium the seed can be sown direct into the border where you want it to grow, do this in late summer for a fabulous display the next year. Alternatively sown into cell trays from January to April will give you plants that will flower the same year. If you are in doubt as to how fresh your seed is, then it will benefit from being placed in the fridge in a sealed bag that contains a small amount of very slightly damp compost, the seed will initiate germination after a period of cold, this mimics what nature will do if you plant the seed directly into the ground. Once germination starts 3-4 weeks, pot them up carefully into little pots and watch them grow

SCATTERING SEED Some seeds can be scattered in the garden, best done in April / May or August / September. For best results prepare a small area of ground around 2' x 1' where the seed can be scattered on the surface, or covered as your seed requires. Then with small sticks or twigs cover the area to deter cats and other inquisitive creatures, gently water, the rest is up to nature. When young plants are seen they can be transplanted or potted on, or left to grow. Scattering is not as efficient as sowing in trays.

**More detailed seed sowing tips can be found in our booklet
SOW £3.50**

