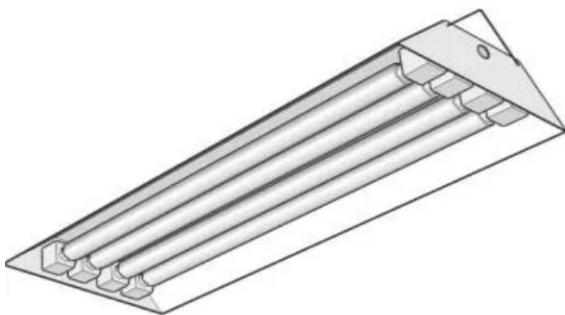


6 SECRETS OF SEED STARTING SUCCESS

1. Use a 4-Bulb Shop Light

An inexpensive shop light is all you need for indoor seed starting. But get the kind with four fluorescent tubes. This spreads the light wider than a two-tube light and your plants are less likely to get leggy.



2. Put the Lights on a Timer

Seedlings need 16 hours a day of light to grow well. If you are distracted or forgetful (like me!) it's easy to skip a day. A timer never forgets, so your seedlings get the consistent light they need. Tip: Put your seed-starting set up near a window for a blast of natural light, too.

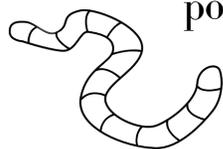
3. Don't Rush It

Check seed packets to see how early to start the seeds indoors. Remember: in the North, many transplants won't go into the garden until nearly June. Small, younger plants catch up quickly to those held indoors a long time.

6 SECRETS OF SEED STARTING SUCCESS

4. Add a Fan

When setting up your light and timer, add a fan that will gently blow on the seedlings. This mimics the wind they will experience outside. A fan is one of the best ways to prevent damping off, which will suddenly kill seedlings.



5. Water from Below

If possible, use a seed-starting set up that allows you to add water to a tray, which the plants then absorb. Watering from below strengthens the roots of the seedlings, making them hardier when they get in the garden. Whether you water from above or below, don't over do it. More plants die from too much water than from too little.

6. Add Worm Castings to Your Seed-Starting Mix

Once they get growing, your seedlings will need some fertilizer. Start them out right by adding 1 cup of worm castings (yes, it's worm poop) to every 4 cups of seed-starting mix. Your garden store should have it in bags. If you use regular potting soil, it will have fertilizer already in it.