



TheGardenersWorkshop.com

Seed Starting with Soil Blocks

Blocking Mix Recipe

For 20 cups (makes approximately 500 mini ¾" blocks or 36 of the 2" blocks)

16 cups sifted peat moss or coco fiber

4 cups sifted compost

1/2 cup [DIY Blocking Nutrient Mix](#) (or a mix of ¼ C powdered Greensand + ¼ C powdered Rock Phosphate)

Mix these ingredients dry.

Mixing

Mix approx. 3 parts blocking mix to 1 part water. We find a good measure to start with is approx. 20 cups blocking mix and approx. 6-7 cups of water. Wetting and mixing the blocking mix is much like mixing concrete; the consistency desired is that of wet oatmeal. We use an old-fashioned potato masher to mix. Mix leftovers can be left to dry out, then you can re-wet and use later. Do not cover and store wet mix.

Blocking

Push the blocker down into the soil 2-3 times to fill the chambers. Scrape the excess mix off and place the blocker on the tray, engage the plunger to eject the blocks. If you experience trouble, do not despair; it takes a little practice. The problem most often encountered is too little or too much water, experiment a little to find what works best. The quality of your blocks is essential to how well they hold up over the course of the next weeks of growing.

Sowing Seeds

Each block produced has a depression to receive the seed. Sow one seed per block according to the seed instructions. Those that need light to germinate are firmly placed on the surface and those that need darkness are pushed further down into the block.

Add Heat and Light to Maximize Seed Germination and Growth

You will experience a quicker and higher rate of germination when bottom heat is used during the germination stage. Our propagation electric heat mat keeps the soil evenly warm, improves your germination success, and helps to prevent soil-borne diseases.

Once 50% of the seeds have germinated, add light. To produce healthy, bushy, and stocky seedlings, give them 16 hours of intense light daily. Tall leggy seedlings are a result of low light conditions. Our tabletop grow light takes only 24" of countertop space and can support 200 growing small soil blocks.

Caring for Your Blocks

- Water blocks each morning, do not allow them to sit in water.
- Blocks should dry out between daily waterings.
- Water from the side of the tray; do not water directly on blocks.
- After the seeds germinate, feed with a liquid organic fertilizer according to directions.
- Misting is only necessary for those seedlings that have a hard shell seed that may need moisture to soften for it to be shed. (Zinnias, Sunflowers, etc.)

Planting the Blocks

Plants produced by soil blocking can be planted out sooner than other methods. Young plants adapt more readily and don't suffer from root-bounding or other consequences. We have eliminated the step of "hardening off" the seedlings by covering the seedlings immediately after planting with our floating row cover. This reusable fleece fabric provides protection from the hot sun, drying winds, and pest damage. The fabric lays directly on the plants, no support is necessary and it can be held down with rocks or water jugs and left on until the plants are established (a couple of weeks).