



## Benefits of starting your own seeds

- Far greater selection. Example: Seed Savers Exchange online store offers over 70 tomato heirloom varieties.
- Quality control: avoid importing diseases, insects.
- You get plants when you want.

# Seed starting setup

## Seedling flats

- Wampler sells 1\*4 rough cut, 4" paneling slips together to make bottoms.
- Cedar is soft, so drill holes for nails and screws.

## Other options

Plastic spinach containers, paper pots

# Homemade plant stand



- Locally-harvested bamboo.
- Tied with wire, twine.
- Lights hung with chain.
- Two shelves: starting and growing transplants.

# Chains allow flexible light placement



# Grow lights on the cheap

- Professional grow lights cost hundreds of dollars.
- Not necessary for home gardeners.



- 12 4-foot natural light fluorescent bulbs cost about \$31 at Lowe's.
- Four-foot, 2 bulb fixtures cost about \$10.

# Seedling mix

- Needs to be light weight to avoid smothering, root rot, damping off.
- Kimas Tejas has good mix, Fertlome Ultimate Potting Mix.
- Cornell Mix: equal parts peat and vermiculite. Add small amounts of balanced fertilizer, plus limestone for pH balance. Peat and perlite have little nutrient value themselves.
- Texas Ag-Extension recommends soilless mix.

# Keep your babies warm

- Bottom heat necessary for starting warm-season vegetables (tomato, pepper) in winter.
- Important to know when to take seedlings off heat. Once peppers show first true leaves, heated roots will stunt growth, yellow plants.
- Clear plastic shower curtain to tent, create warm mini-greenhouse. Heat generated by fixtures sufficient for most seedlings.
- Tomatoes like more heat during development, otherwise they get purple stems, undersides of leaves.
- For starting fall/winter crops in summer, no heat necessary unless you run AC real cold (under 75°).

# Raising healthy starts

- After 1<sup>st</sup> set of true leaves develop, spray with light solution of liquid seaweed when watering.
- Use planting mix containing fertilizer for convenience.

# Heating Mat



# Seedling flat with soil



# Add Seeds



# Seedling flat after planting



# Seedling flat at home



Plastic cover raises humidity, keeps soil warmer for better germination.

# When to transplant

- When 2 sets of leaves show.
- Most commercial potting mixes too heavy, cause root rot.
- Kimas Tejas has Pro-Mix, very good.
- Home-made mix: 1 part each compost, potting mix, peat, perlite.
- Cornell mix (peat/vermiculite mix).
- First transplant to 4-inch or quart pots.
- To jump-start season, start earlier, second transplant to gallon nursery pot.

# Enjoy your garden



# Eat fresh produce



A photograph of a garden bed. The bed is filled with green leafy plants and a large pile of brown, fibrous material, possibly mulch or compost. Several white PVC pipes are stuck into the ground around the perimeter of the bed. The background shows a grassy area and some trees. The text "The End" is overlaid in the center in a bold, yellow, italicized font.

***The End***