

Raising Seedlings in the Classroom

If you're in an area with a short growing season and/or you want to harvest certain crops before school is out, you can get a jump on the season by raising your own seedlings.

You may also want to start seedlings indoors if you are:

- planning a community beautification project
- spring plant sale
- plan to take plants to senior centers, or homeless shelter
- send plants home as gifts.

Raising seedlings in the classroom offers a good opportunity to practice reading and language skills (seed packet instructions), math skills (using seed packet information to determine when to plant), and science process skills (predicting germination times or inferring why seedlings are leggy).

The first challenge will be to determine when you want to have the seedlings ready. A planting calendar is a good source for this determination.

To develop a planting calendar, you will need to know:

- the average last spring frost date in your area (check with local gardeners, the Cooperative Extension service, or weather service);
- the time required from sowing each type of seed to transplanting it outdoors (check seed packets);
- the time from transplanting to harvest if you want to harvest at a particular time (check seed catalogs and packets).

Students can also check seed packets or garden catalogs to find out about frost tolerance, then count back to decide when to plant each crop, and develop a planting calendar. While investigating planting dates, students will also need to find last frost dates for different areas of the country, and discuss why the dates vary. Have students research the origins of some garden plants and report to the class, how their temperature preferences may relate to where in the world the plants originated.

Web site to check for further seed planting information:

<http://www.seedsonline.com/ssroll.htm>