

Soft seedlings harden for outdoor exposure

Seedlings started indoors have been grown under ideal conditions, protected from the wind and fluctuating weather outdoors. Before transplanting them outdoors they must be "hardened" so they will survive in the hot sun, strong winds, cold temperatures or heavy rains.

Begin to harden your plants about 10 days prior to transplanting. Set them outdoors for a few hours a day and increase the amount of exposure each day. Water less frequently. A

cold frame may also be used for hardening.

About one week before transplanting, cut through the soil with a sharp knife to separate the roots of seedlings grown in flats. This will allow you to lift the plants out easily. Leave the ball of soil around the roots for protection when transplanting.

Transplant your seedlings on a cloudy, cool day, or in the evening. Strong sun and heat, along with the

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Plants get early start

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of coarse sand for good drainage. The soil on top of this should be a good garden soil with plenty of humus. Many gardeners prefer planting in a flat or other containers, and placing the flat in the cold frame.

A cold frame can very easily be converted to a hotbed by using 8-12 inches of fresh horse manure in the pit covered with three inches of sand. Flats can be placed in the hotbed directly on the sand. The horse manure generates the necessary heat for early growth.

As mentioned previously, plants grown in the house can be placed in

the cold frame several weeks prior to planting to harden them.

Whether plants are moved into either a cold or hot frame or started there, they must be given protection against too much heat on sunny days and too little heat on cold nights. Propping open the sash during the day will allow excess heat to escape. Protecting plants against cold nights is accomplished by closing the sash late in the afternoon.

You can be a good gardener without a cold frame or hotbed, but you will get more pleasure from your hobby if you take the time to build one.

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