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Projects

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Care and Maintenance

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Category >

Starting Seeds Indoors

Published on 01/24/12

6 Ratings

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Items Required

- Seeds
- Seed-Starting Kit
- Potting Mix
- Pea Pots
- Peat Pellets
- Flats
- Liquid Plant Food
- Plastic Sheets

1. Select your seeds.

Decide what you're going to plant. You can select your favorite annuals or herbs; many people even start vegetable seeds indoors. When making your decision, carefully review the seed packet to determine how long it will take your seeds to grow. You want to start the seeds indoors approximately six to eight weeks before the last frost in your area.

2. Select a container.

You can start seeds in potting mix, peat pots, a commercial seed-starting kit, peat pellets or in flats. Make sure your container has drainage holes in the bottom, if not cut or drill holes prior to planting. The traditional method of starting seeds is to start them in a flat. Seed flats can be purchased or homemade, any length and width, as long as they are 3 to 3.5 inches deep to accommodate root development.

3. Plant the seeds.

The best medium for starting seeds is a sterile, soilless mix of sphagnum peat moss with perlite. Starting seeds in garden soil is not recommended, since garden soil usually does not have the proper drainage and aeration for container use.

Fill your container approximately 3/4 full with a quality potting mix. Sow one or two large seeds into individual pots; sow small seeds in rows in flats. Lightly tap the seed packet to sprinkle seeds into the container. Try to leave some space between the seeds so their roots can develop independent of one another.

- For larger seeds, cover with a layer of potting mix, approximately 1 time the thickness of the seed.
- For smaller seeds, gently tap the seeds into the potting mix. Covering with an additional layer of potting mix is not necessary.

4. Seal the container.

To get your seeds started, seal the pots or flats in a plastic bag and set them where the temperature is right for germination. See seed packet for specific germination temperature instructions. While the seeds are germinating, if they begin to look dried out, apply a little bit of water through a mister.

5. Care for seedlings.

When seedlings appear, remove the plastic covering and place them in full sunlight. You can use fluorescent lights if you do 't have an area that gets 12 hours of sunlight a day. Once the first true leaves appear, start feeding the seedlings once a week with a liquid plant food mixed with water per the label directions.

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Category >

Caring for a Flower Garden

Published on 01/24/12

6 Ratings

Like all plants, flowers require some basic care to thrive. At a minimum, they need a steady supply of water and nutrients. To really thrive, they may need some occasional weeding plus special needs such as staking or deadheading.

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Water

All plants require a steady supply of water. Flowers are especially dependent on a steady supply because their blossoms are damaged by even a brief wilt. Whereas leaves may wilt and recover, flower petals seldom recover from wilting.

In regions that get summer rainfall, give flowers about an inch of additional water per week during dry spells. Flowers in the arid West will require about 2 inches a week.

Feel the soil frequently to check its moisture. When it's time to water, the soil just under the surface should feel slightly cool to the touch, but will not wet or muddy your finger. Flowers that are prone to leaf diseases, such as zinnias and snapdragons, will stay healthier if you can keep their leaves dry. Water them with drip irrigation systems that leak water directly onto the soil. Other flowers can be watered with drip irrigation or sprinklers.

Fertilize

There are two basic approaches to fertilizing flower gardens. Both are satisfactory, and the approach you take depends on your needs. The first approach is to have your garden soil analyzed. Your state agricultural college probably offers soil testing for a nominal fee. Along with your analysis, your will receive a recommendation for fertilizing. By following this recommendation, you will supply your flowers with all their needed nutrients.

The second approach is to use a balanced plant food — one that contains a spectrum of plant nutrients. Flowering plants require about the same nutrients as other plants, with one exception: if some flowering plants are given too much nitrogen, they will grow leaves and not flowers. Select a plant food formulated for flowers.

Control Weeds

Make the flower garden unfriendly to weeds to prevent their growth. Use mulches and preventive weed controls, and make a point of removing weeds before they go to seed.

Support and Groom Flowers

Flowers need some special care that other plants don't. Some flowers have blooms that are so heavy they can fall over and break in a wind. These flowers should be supported with stakes, hopes or other methods.

To keep flowers looking their best and bloom their most, remove old flowers — a process called deadheading.

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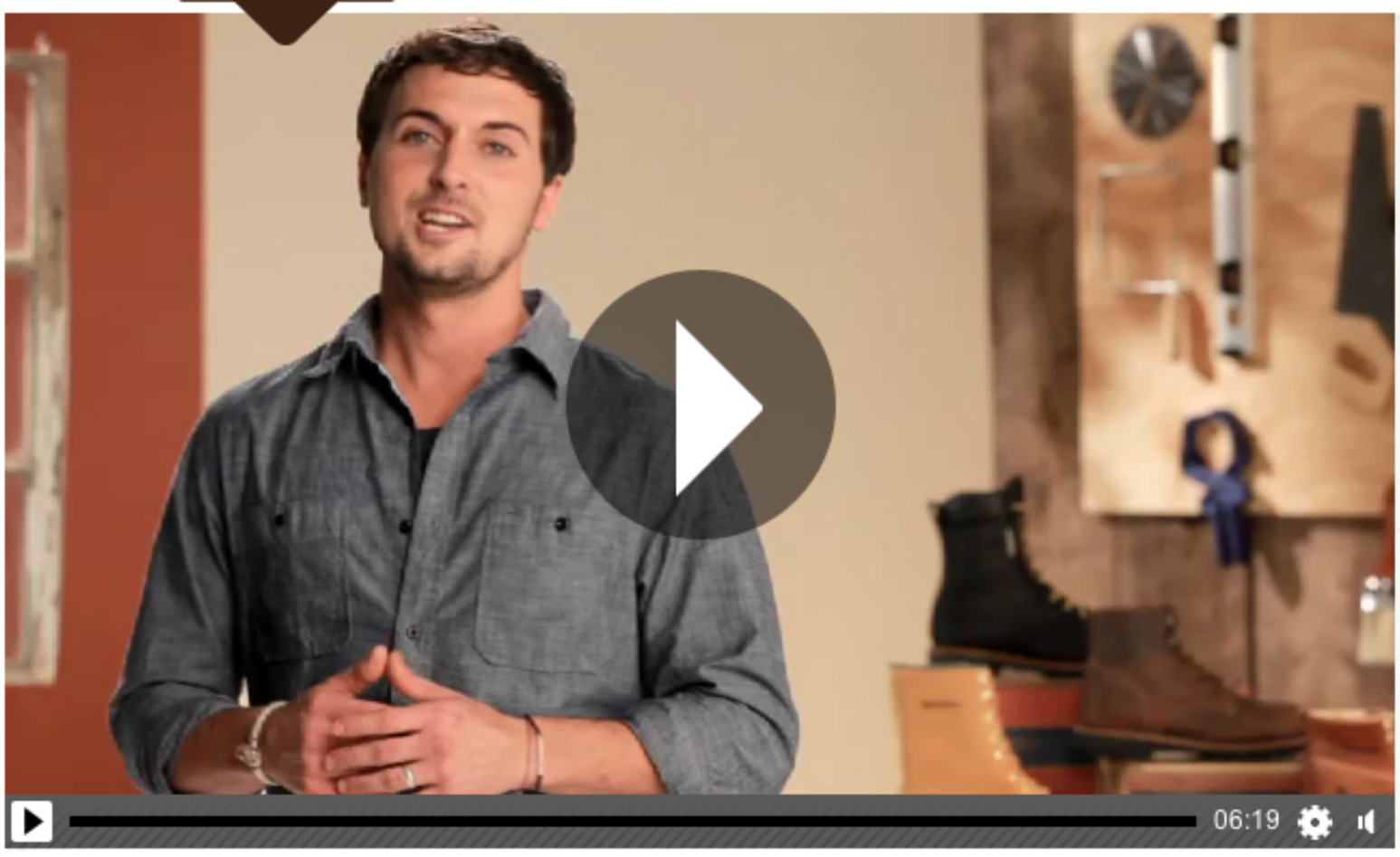

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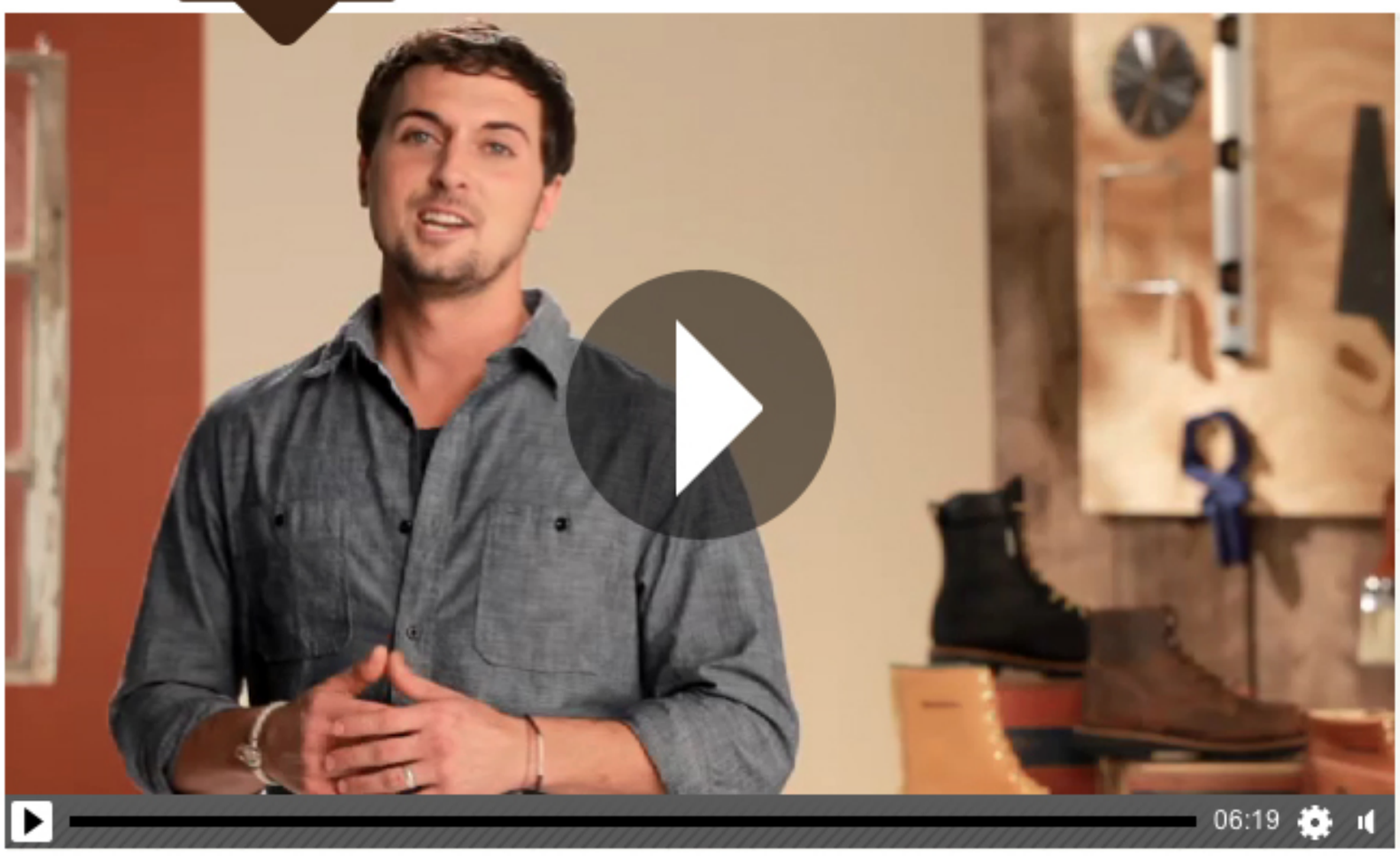

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