

Try These Types of Soils For Your Potted Plants



Dark tone color, Close up Child hand carry black and organic soil. Image Source: 123rf.com

Caring for potted plants can be challenging. Make sure you are using the best soil for potted plants, use the right pots for drainage, and make sure the mixture of soil you're using is right for the plant you're growing. Here are some things to consider when it comes to the dirt in your potted plants.

The Perfect Potting Mix: What to Look For

Choosing the right soil for your potted plants is like selecting the perfect outfit—it sets the stage for growth and

beauty. Whether you're nurturing succulents, flowering annuals, or leafy greens, [the soil mix matters](#). Let's explore the best options to keep your potted plants thriving.

Lightweight and Fluffy: The Ideal Texture

When it comes to potting soil, think light and airy. Imagine a mix that feels like a cloud—fluffy, well-draining, and easy for roots to navigate. Look for these key ingredients:

- [Peat Moss](#): Provides moisture retention without compaction.
- [Perlite or Vermiculite](#): Adds aeration and prevents soil from becoming too dense.
- [Pine Bark](#): Enhances drainage and texture.

Nutrient-rich and Balanced

Your potted plants deserve a gourmet meal, and that means nutrient-rich soil. Opt for a mix that contains organic matter, such as compost or well-rotted manure. These natural fertilizers release nutrients slowly, feeding your plants over time. Avoid synthetic chemical fertilizers—they're like fast food for your green companions.

The pH Factor: Neutral or Slightly Acidic

[Soil pH matters](#) more than you'd think. Most potted plants thrive in a slightly acidic to neutral range (around 6.0 to 7.0). If you're growing acid-loving plants like azaleas or blueberries, lean toward the lower end of the scale. But for most houseplants and ornamentals, aim for that sweet spot.



Hands dirty with clay , soil background. Image Source: 123rf.com

Custom Blends: Tailoring to Plant Needs

Why settle for off-the-rack when you can have a bespoke blend? Customize your potting mix based on your plant's preferences:

- **Cacti and Succulents**: Mix regular potting soil with extra perlite or coarse sand for excellent drainage.
- **Orchids**: Orchid bark or sphagnum moss creates an airy, moisture-retentive mix.
- **Herbs**: Blend potting soil with a touch of compost for flavorful herbs.

Avoid These Soil Pitfalls

When it comes to soil, there are plenty of things you should avoid. Don't fall for these common pitfalls:

- [Garden Soil](#): Too heavy and compact for pots.
- [Topsoil or Fill Dirt](#): Lacks nutrients and may contain debris.
- [Compost Alone](#): Great for the garden, but not ideal for containers.

Soil Magic for Happy Plants

Remember, your potted plants rely on their soil for sustenance. So, mix with care, water wisely, and watch your green beauties thrive. And if you ever doubt your soil choice, just ask your plants—they'll show you their gratitude in vibrant leaves and blossoms.

How To Transplant Pepper Seedlings: A Step-By-Step Guide



Transplanting pepper seedlings is a critical step in the journey of growing peppers, whether you're a hobbyist gardener or a commercial grower. The process can significantly impact the health, growth, and yield of your pepper plants. With the rising interest in home gardening and sustainable living, understanding when to transplant seedlings and the right way to transplant pepper seedlings has never been more relevant. This guide will walk you through the process step by step, ensuring your pepper plants thrive in their new environment.

When to Transplant Pepper Seedlings



Timing is everything when it comes to transplanting pepper seedlings. The ideal time is after the last frost when the soil has warmed up to at least 60°F (15°C), typically in late spring or early summer. Pepper plants are warm-season crops that thrive in warm temperatures, and transplanting them too early can stunt their growth or even be fatal.

Wait until your seedlings produce their third set of true leaves, which indicates they are strong enough to handle the

transition. Usually, that occurs about 3 to 4 weeks after sprouting, though the exact timeline can vary. This timing also aligns with the growing interest in seasonal gardening, making it especially relevant for those looking to optimize their gardening efforts.

Preparing the New Home



Before you transplant, it's essential to prepare the new location, whether it's in your garden bed or a larger container. Ensure the soil is rich in organic matter and well-

draining to promote healthy root growth. Amend the soil with compost or a balanced, slow-release fertilizer to provide essential nutrients. The pH of the soil should ideally be between 6.0 and 6.8.

If you're planting in containers, choose ones that are at least 12 inches deep to accommodate the pepper plants' root system. This preparation is crucial for the plants' success and aligns with the trend towards organic and sustainable gardening practices.

Acclimatizing Your Seedlings



Acclimatization, or “hardening off,” is a process that gradually introduces indoor-grown seedlings to outdoor conditions. Over 7 to 10 days, start by placing your seedlings outside in a shaded, sheltered area for a few hours each day, gradually increasing their exposure to sunlight and outdoor temperatures. This step is vital for reducing transplant shock, a common issue that can stunt growth and affect the overall health of the plants. With the increasing popularity of starting seeds indoors, this step has become more relevant for gardeners looking to transition their plants outdoors successfully.

The Transplanting Process



When it's time to transplant, water your seedlings thoroughly a few hours before moving them; this makes the soil cling to the roots and reduces stress on the plant. Dig a hole in the prepared soil slightly larger than the seedling's root ball. Gently remove the seedling from its current container, being careful not to damage the roots. Then, roll the root ball gently to loosen it up and ensure the pepper plant isn't rootbound. After that, carefully place it in the hole.

The base of the stem should be level with the soil surface. Backfill the hole with soil and press lightly to remove air pockets, then water the seedling gently but thoroughly to help settle the soil around the roots. This process is crucial for ensuring a smooth transition and promoting strong root development.

Post-Transplant Care



After transplanting, it's essential to provide your pepper plants with consistent care to ensure they thrive. Keep the

soil evenly moist, but avoid overwatering, which can lead to root rot. Mulching around the base of the plants can help retain soil moisture and regulate temperature. Provide support with stakes or cages as the plants grow, especially for larger varieties that can become top-heavy with peppers.

Regular feeding with a balanced fertilizer can also promote healthy growth and fruit production. This ongoing care is essential for maximizing the yield and health of your pepper plants, reflecting the broader trend toward meticulous and informed gardening practices.

**Congratulations! You've Transplant
Pepper Seedlings Successfully!**



Transplanting pepper seedlings successfully is a key step in growing healthy and productive plants. By following this step-by-step guide, gardeners can ensure their pepper plants are well-prepared to thrive in their new environment. The process, from choosing the right time to post-transplant care, reflects current trends in gardening towards sustainability, organic practices, and the joy of growing your food. With patience and attention to detail, you can enjoy a bountiful harvest of peppers from your garden.

Edible Plants You Can Grow Inside



Growing edible plants inside isn't tricky.

All you need is an appropriate container, enough light, and to pick varieties that grow well in containers.

Picking the Right Container

Whenever you want to grow edible plants inside, you need to pick a container that meets the needs of your plants.

When picking a container, you must consider several things, like drainage and size.

Drainage

Sitting water encourages root rot, and this problem can persist in the winter because lower temperatures do not cause evaporation like in the summer.

Make sure any pot you use has drainage holes. You can obviously buy pots with holes, but when I grew herbs in containers, it was much cheaper to buy other containers and add holes with a drill.

Size

Some plants grow more extensive root systems or have root systems that spread out and stay relatively shallow in the soil.

So it is crucial to understand the plant's needs for the size and shape of your plants. For example, you don't need a deep container if you want to grow strawberries. However, a tomato plant produces a more extensive root ball, so its container must be much deeper than the strawberry.

Light

When growing plants inside, you must ensure they get enough light.

You may be lucky for things like small herbs and have a south-facing window without obstructions blocking the light. This means they may get enough light just sitting on the window sill.

But if you want to grow things like fruits or veggies, you must get a grow light that will provide 8 hours of sunlight daily.

You can choose grow lights to fit your needs, too. For example, you can get them with automatic timers, so you don't

have to remember to turn them off once the plants have met their daily light needs.

Edible Plants that Grow Well in Containers

Many plants grow well in containers. Below is a list of the most common edible plants you can grow inside.

Herbs

Herbs are a popular choice for growing edible plants inside. They do well in containers and only take up a little space.

The best herbs for growing inside are basil, oregano, rosemary, chives, thyme, sage, and mint. And these herbs come in various varieties, so you can produce many different versions simultaneously.

Peppers and Tomatoes

Peppers and tomatoes need bigger pots, but they can thrive indoors, given enough light. Wouldn't it be awesome to have fresh garden salsa all year long?

Microgreens

Microgreens are different from the above plants. They can quickly grow inside because they don't need light. Microgreens are the early growth of things like beans. To grow them, lay beans on damp (but not wet) paper towels, cover them with another damp paper towel, put them in a plastic bag or tray, and put them in a dark place. In as little as 5 days, they will have grown into leggy little, delicious things.

Conclusion

Do you grow any edible plants inside? Tell me about it!

Container Gardening: Fabric Pots vs. Plastic Pots



CONTAINER GARDENING:

Fabric Pots vs. Plastic Pots

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I love to plant crops in containers, especially finicky plants like eggplant and peppers. I use a variety of containers in my

garden, including fabric pots. If it gets too cold, it's simple enough to haul them inside. Containers are also great for those living in rental properties or those with limited space. It's easy to shuffle them around a deck or balcony and you can manage to plant quite a bit in multiple containers. I've collected many [plastic pots](#) from the garden center over the years. I reuse them to plant herbs, tomatoes, and whatever doesn't fit in the rest of my garden. But plastic pots have their pros and cons, and they aren't the only option for your gardening needs.

The Trouble With Plastic

Black plastic pots are great for heat-loving plants because the dark material is a heat magnet. What's not so great about plastic? Unless you've purchased self-watering containers, plastic pots require careful monitoring so that plants are evenly watered. Without proper drainage, plants may become root-bound or drown if [over-watered](#) (always make sure there are drainage holes underneath). Plastic doesn't breathe very well, either. Imagine wrapping yourself in a sheet of plastic instead of breathable clothing. You'd end up a sweaty, suffocated mess.

That doesn't mean plastic pots aren't useful. They're typically very inexpensive, easy to find, and they're available in all shapes and sizes. But there's already SO much plastic in the world. If there's a worthy alternative, why not try it? By choosing a different type of plant pot, you can reduce your ecological footprint and stop creating unnecessary plastic waste.

An Alternative: Fabric Pots

You could use any pot for planting, but fabric pots offer a few distinct advantages:

- **They're relatively cheap.** Often sold in packs, fabric containers are a suitable option for frugal gardeners.
- **They last a long time.** Cracked plastic and broken ceramic pots begone! Fabric pots are made of sturdy materials that won't rip, even when filled with wet soil. Re-use them year after year.
- **They're breathable.** The fabric allows for optimal airflow.
- **No water-logging.** You won't have to contend with rotted roots using fabric pots, the material allows for proper drainage.
- **Easy to handle.** Handles make it easy to drag fabric pots around the garden.
- **Foldable sides.** Fabric pots are ideal for growing [potatoes](#) since the edges can be rolled down.

If you're looking for a good beginner's guide to growing in pots, I highly recommend the [Vegetable Gardener's Container Garden](#). It's a book that I still refer back to!

I also recommend checking out this handy YouTube video on how to grow potatoes in containers:

What's your favorite vegetable to grow in fabric pots? Leave us a comment to let us know!

How to Reuse Grow Bags



HOW TO REUSE

Grow Bags

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Grow bags are an excellent container option for the frugal gardener. They're extremely versatile and work for a variety of plants. Did you know that you can reuse them from year to

year, too? Here's how to reuse grow bags and save money down the line.

What is a grow bag?

A grow bag is a flexible container for growing plants. It's usually made out of a breathable fabric. The breathable material lets air and water through but keeps all your earth neatly contained.

Benefits of using grow bags

Grow bags have a ton of wonderful advantages and are especially useful for frugal gardeners. They are great for:

People on a budget. If you don't have a lot of money to spend on fancy containers, grow bags are an excellent choice. They're fairly durable, so you can reuse them for several years.

People without a lot of room. If you have a small space or are gardening on a patio or balcony, grow bags are an excellent option. They're available in multiple sizes, and when they're empty, they fold down flat. You can also drag them around in spaces where the light moves around quite a bit, which can help you keep your plants happy.

Temporary gardening spaces. Not sure if you'll be gardening in the same location next year? Use grow bags! When you're done, they can come with you. They're easy to store and transport when empty.

Certain plants. Grow bags are great for growing certain kinds of plants. I'm particularly fond of growing potatoes inside large grow bags. It keeps the potato plants contained, and at the end of the season, I just dump out the earth making it easier to spot ready-to-eat tubers.

Beginner gardeners. If you're new to gardening, building [raised beds](#) or creating an in-ground plot can seem like daunting tasks. Grow bags are easy and convenient growing vessels that require not an ounce of physical labor.

How to reuse grow bags

You'll get more life out of your grow bags if you empty them and store them in a dry place over the winter. Dump out the earth in your compost bin (or in a raised garden bed, if available) and then rinse, dry, and store your bags for the season.

You can also leave them full of dirt and reuse them next year. You'll need to mix in fresh [compost](#) next season.

However, if any of your plants were diseased or experienced severe pest infestations, you're better off safe than sorry. Toss out all the dirt and start fresh.

Some grow bags are also safe to toss in the washing machine, which is great if you need to sterilize them once the growing season is done. Never put grow bags in the dryer, though. The heat can cause shrinkage or weaken the fabric.

By reusing your grow bags, you can save money and avoid waste.

If your grow bags rip, don't throw them away! You can use the pieces as a weed barrier in pots or raised beds.