

Gardening with Seeds

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The most successful gardens in the San Antonio area are mostly planted with transplants purchased from the retail nursery. Do you ever get tired of transplants and want to grow something from seeds like we did in the old days? With our weather and tight growing seasons transplants are usually the most successful way to go but here are some seeding options.

Radishes are always one seeding option. If we want to get younger children involved in the garden, we usually direct them to planting a row or container of radishes. The seeds are relatively large, and the germination rate is high. Planted in a row one-quarter inch deep they usually germinate within 4 days and the roots can be harvested in 3 weeks.

The taste of radish vegetable is not always a favorite of the young gardener, but the color is attractive and somebody in the family will eat them. Based on the radish success it is not unusual for the young gardener to graduate to planting carrots as a valued seeded crop. Carrots score higher on the taste test than radishes, but they are harder to grow. Carrots are more difficult because the seed is small, and it takes longer to germinate and to produce an edible product (3 weeks and 75 days respectively). Carrots and all the seeds do best if they are spread on the surface of a prepared soil. Prepare the soil by incorporating 2 inches of compost and 1 cup of slow release lawn fertilizer (19-5-9) per 10 sq. ft. of bed.

Another worthy vegetable to spend some time on growing it by seed is Crawford leaf lettuce. As the description indicates, Crawford lettuce will reproduce itself like a wildflower with the right conditions. Crawford Reseeding Lettuce became a favorite area vegetable when popular gardener and weatherman Steve Browne featured the easy to grow vegetable at the KSAT Garden in cooperation with Master Gardener and Gardening Volunteer of South Texas Events all over the Region. Dr Jerry Parsons and I became Crawford Lettuce Seed deliverers and were rated on our delivery prowess in addition to how well we gave a Gardening Program. If you want more information on the origin of the seed, visit plantanswer.com

The key to Crawford lettuce success is to resist covering the seed with soil !Even now after Steve Browne's retirement, thanks to Texas A&M AgriLife Horticulturist David Rodriguez and his volunteers, packets of the seed prepared by the Master Gardeners are still available at area nurseries. At least one nursery gives it for free to gardeners that visit the nursery and ask for it.

Sweet Peas are another plant worthy of making the effort to grow it by seed. If you are successful you produce one of the most desirable of our cut flowers. Some gardeners collect the seed each year after the early summer bloom period or you can obtain one of many variations in a seed packet at your favorite nursery. Soak the seed overnight and then plant it against a trellis.

Tomato cages even make a good trellis. The issue with sweet peas is that they are temperamental about weather. It is often too hot for the young plants, or just as likely, it can be too cold. It is not unusual to have to reseed each month from November through February before you produce a successful crop. It is worth the effort the flowers are beautiful with intense colors and the fragrance is unmatched. Grow

sweet peas by seed and you will have an exceptional cut flower for you to enjoy and for your fellow gardeners to admire.