

How to Get Annual Seedlings Off to a Good Early Start

1. Purchase seeds from a competent and reliable seed house. If old seeds are used, it would be advisable to germinate a portion of them early in the season to see how well they are germinating. This may save valuable time. Seeds having high germinating ability usually produce vigorous seedlings.

2. Proper preparation of seed bed. The mix for most soils should be 1 part peatmoss, 1 part coarse sand and 1-2 parts loam. Add superphosphate and lime - a 3 inch pot of each if needed, to 3 bushels of soil. A soil test will indicate whether soluble salts are low or not and the general nutrient level. The soil should be sterilized at 180°F. for one

hour. Be sure to use a thermometer and store soil where it will not become contaminated.

3. Fresh or dried manures create soluble salt problems as well as an accumulation of ammonia after sterilizing. A soil test after sterilizing will indicate whether there would be any problems developing from the manure.

4. Seeds need good oxygen supply - a soil may become crusted to exclude oxygen or may be packed too tightly because of poor structure.

5. Plant seeds at proper depth.

6. Avoid keeping seedlings too long in the dark to cause stretching. Even if kept for a few extra hours in the dark, it may cause severe stretching. The snapdragon is very sensitive to this condition.