SAVE FUEL -- BUILD A GERMINATING CHAMBER

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Many suggestions have been made and written on how to conserve fuel. Here is one more to add to the list. Build a germinating chamber. This will not only save fuel but also seed costs. By using a chamber, more seeds will germinate and early growth will be more uniform. As a result, more seedlings will be usable at transplanting time.

Most seeds germinate faster at warm temperatures (65-75°F). Once they are up, they can be cooled or "hardened" at 50-55°F and held until transplanting.

A germinating chamber in the greenhouse can maintain these two temperatures; warm temperatures in the chamber and cooler temperatures in the greenhouse.

Tony and Frank Pallatto, State Street, North Haven, Connecticut built a chamber four years ago (figure 1). Most of their seedlings are started in it with great success.

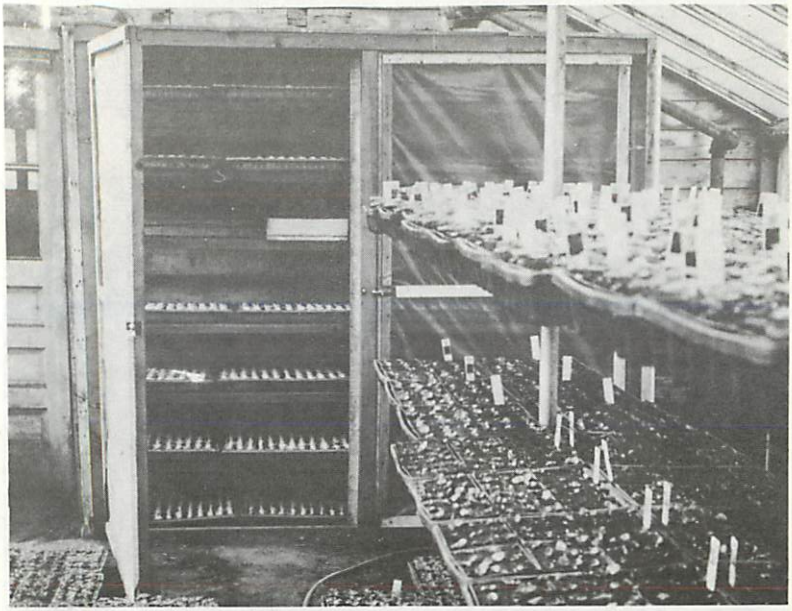

Figure 1. A practical seed germinating chamber.

The chamber was built and attached to the head house in the end of the greenhouse. A frame was made out of 2" x 2"'s, 7' high, 2' deep and 8' wide. Extra heating pipes with a thermostat were attached to the wall. The frame was then covered with 6 mil polyethylene. Two large doors, 3 1/2' wide, covered the front. There are six shelves in the chamber 11" apart. Over each shelf is a F30 T8 Gro-Lux fluorescent light supplying 10 watts per lineal foot.

The seeds are sown in a peat-lite mix and placed in the chamber. As soon as they are up, they are removed and placed in the greenhouse (figure 2). Tony and Frank feel that the chamber is an asset to their bedding plant operation.

Figure 2. A good flat of verbena seedlings started in the germinating chamber.