

TRANSPLANTING

Whether you're buying young plants from a local farm or nursery, or starting your own plants from seed, you'll eventually need to move them to their forever home: your garden! This process is known as transplanting. Always choose the best quality plants you can find for transplanting; look for stocky seedlings that appear healthy and free from insect damage or disease. Pass over any that are spindly or have weak stems.

To prevent wilting, try to transplant on a cloudy day or early in the evening when the plants will suffer less water loss than on a hot, sunny day. To transplant, follow these steps:

- An hour or two before transplanting, thoroughly water the soil in the pots in which the plants are growing.
- With a trowel or your hand, make a hole in your garden bed large enough to easily fit the root ball of the transplant.
- Gently squeeze the container in which the plant is growing to loosen the soil in the container. If necessary, cut the soil between multiple plants with a knife so each plant can separate easily with a substantial root ball attached.
- Carefully tip the container to the side, let the root ball slide out and lightly support it.
- Handle the plants carefully to avoid disturbing the roots and bruising the stem.

Be sure to protect young plants against heat, cold and damaging winds during the first 2 to 4 days after transplanting. An easy way to shield them is to place boxes, baskets, plastic milk jugs, or flower pots over the transplants. If it gets warm during the day, remove the protectors to provide proper ventilation for the plants. Do not leave covers over the plants longer than necessary because they will need sunlight and air circulation to mature.

Submitted by Donna Mackie

GROWING GUIDE | PAGES

- Transplanting | 16
- Plant Compatibility | 81
- Planting Schedule | 83-84
- Vegetable Guide | 22

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- Seed to Seed: Seed Saving and Growing Techniques for Vegetable Gardeners | Suzanne Ashworth