

# **SEED GROWING**

## **By Michael Ludwig**

Clean, Clean, Clean! I think this is the most important thing to remember when growing from seed. I've found it very easy if you keep everything clean, starting with the seed. Make sure it is clean of particles of the pod. Roll the seed down a sheet of paper. This is a good way to clean the chaff away and making sure you have viable seed. I've had some seed germinate even though it didn't roll but most good seed will roll. Chaff will promote mold growth and it will grow faster than the new seedlings.

Sterilize! I wash pots and containers in bleach and store unused ones in sealed bags to prevent spores from landing on them. Use a seed mix that is fine so the seed sits on top. I place the soil in small containers. I then place a batch of them in a deep pan and, with a baster, moisten each with boiling water. Some people use distilled water but I don't. I add enough water through the pots so that there is about 1 inch (2.5 cm) in the pan. I then cover the pan with plastic wrap and let cool. I leave the cover on until I plant them.

I take the pot from under the cover (I leave the cover on the other pots so that stray seed won't end up on other pots) and sow the seed on the surface of the soil. It only takes a little seed. You can sow it from a sheet of paper, from a flat toothpick or with a pinch of the fingers. I then label the pot with the variety and put it in a clear shoe, sweater or blanket box. I fill the box with pots and put about 1/2 in (1.5 cm) of boiled water in the bottom, then put a clear cover over the box. Then place the box under florescent lights. They are about one foot from the lights. I run these lights 24 hours a day. Once they have germinated I move them under lights that have a day-night cycle of about 12 hours of light.

I then like to move the seedlings very early. I said like and not that I always do! As they start their second or third pair of leaves I move them into pots that have been prepared in the same way as for seed. I take clumps and move them into another pot. This seems to keep them growing. They have very few roots and just keep growing when sometimes they stagnate if not moved. I use a mister bottle and water to settle the soil around the roots. I then place them in a similar box with just a film of water in the bottom. I let them stay in these pots until they are several inches tall. At this stage I transplant them into individual pots or into rows in a flat. They start out covered for several days so they can recover from the move, but then I start to acclimate them to the real world. Every couple a days I open the cover just a bit more and after a week to ten days, they are growing in the open. Ready to face the trails that it has to offer.

This is my method and there are others that work for different people. Keep trying until you find a method that works for you.