

Which Seeds Should Be Presoaked Before Planting?

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Planting a garden with seeds instead of nursery plants is economical. Seeds are less expensive, and the variety is greater with seeds from a catalog than buying plants from a big box store or nursery. The challenge with seeds is waiting for them to sprout—it seems to take forever. Seeds need warmth and water to sprout. Some seeds require darkness and others need light. The germination process is hastened by soaking seeds before planting. Seeds must be planted immediately after soaking.

Flowers

Large seeds such as sunflowers and nasturtiums benefit from soaking in warm water overnight. Other flower seeds that will germinate faster include moonflowers, lupins, sweet peas and morning glories. Place the containers in a warm place like on the clothes dryer or top of refrigerator. Smaller seeds such as zinnia and marigolds can be soaked as well. Flatten out a coffee filter. Spray it with water. Sprinkle seeds on half of the filter. Fold the other half over the seeds. Place in a zip lock bag with a 1/4 teaspoon of water. Squeeze most of the air out. After 24 hours, open and snip the coffee filter into bits that have two or three seeds inside. Plant filter and seeds together.

Cool Season Vegetables

Peas and beets benefit from overnight soaking. Smaller seeds may be treated with the coffee filter method. Carrots and spinach also benefit from soaking.

Warm Season Vegetables

Large seeds with a hard surface such as beans, corn, squash, eggplant and lima beans will all sprout more quickly if presoaked. Other smaller seeds can be treated with the coffee filter method. Some corn seed is treated with a fungicide, which soaking removes.

Fruit

Annuals with a hard seed casing benefit from soaking. These include watermelon, cantaloupe and other melons. Avocado seeds will actually sprout and grow in water. Strawberry, raspberry and blueberry seeds may be soaked using the coffee filter method. Other seeds from tree fruits will most likely sprout, but the seed may not produce a tree that grows well. Most fruit trees are grafted onto a sturdy root stock or won't grow true to the parent because the fruit is a hybrid.