

MAY FAMILY SERVICE PROJECT

Transplanting Seedlings

- Once the daytime temperatures are above freezing, set the seedlings outside for an hour on the first day (a cloudy day would be best at first), two hours the next day and so on, building up to a full day. After you expose them to their daily dose of sunlight, bring them back inside. Once the nighttime temperatures are above 35 to 40-degrees F, you can leave the plants outside.

- Tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants benefit from being transplanted to a larger container and growing on before you plant them in the garden.

- Assuming seeds were started in small-celled packs or containers, it's time to transplant seedlings when they are 3 to 4 inches tall and have their second set of leaves (called true leaves). At this point, one plant per container gives them plenty of room to grow and establish roots.

- Plant deeply. This helps seedlings form more roots along the stem and eliminates leggy and spindly plants. This also results in strong, sturdy plants by the time they are ready to go into the garden. You can plant most seedlings deeply to encourage strong stems and roots to develop.

- Use a sterile seed starting mix. If you add compost, make sure you have not composted last year's tomato plants which could harbor potential disease spores.

