



These instructions are tailored for your beginner gardening class in Georgia, focusing on general best practices for starting herbs and green vegetables in peat pots and eggshell trays, suitable for the summer growing season:  
General Planting Instructions for Herbs and Green Vegetables in Georgia

### **Summer:**

#### 1. Choose the Right Seeds:

- Select herbs and green vegetables that are known to thrive in Georgia's summer heat. Examples include basil, mint, dill, parsley, and many leafy greens.
- Tip: Read the seed packets for specific information about the variety, planting depth, and germination time.

#### 2. Prepare Your Containers:

- Peat Pots: Use them as they are, but support them in a tray to prevent them from becoming too soggy and falling apart.
- Eggshell Trays: Carefully crack eggs, rinse and dry the shells, and use the carton to hold them. You can add a small drainage hole in the bottom of each shell to prevent waterlogging.

#### 3. Use the Right Soil:

- Fill the peat pots or eggshells with a lightweight, sterile seed starting mix.
- Tip: Avoid using garden soil, as it can compact easily and harbor pests and diseases.

#### 4. Plant the Seeds:

- Follow the instructions on the seed packet for planting depth. Most seeds are planted at a depth about twice their diameter.
- Place 1-2 seeds in each peat pot or eggshell.
- Gently cover the seeds with the seed starting mix.

#### 5. Water Carefully:

- Keep the soil consistently moist, but not soggy. Watering too much can lead to damping off (a fungal disease that causes seedlings to collapse).
- Tip: Bottom watering (placing the containers in a tray of water to allow the soil to soak up moisture) is a good method to ensure even moisture and prevent overwatering.
- For eggshell trays, gently mist the soil with a spray bottle to avoid disturbing the seeds or seedlings.

#### 6. Provide Adequate Sunlight:

- Place your containers in a location that receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight each day.
- Tip: A south-facing window is ideal for indoor seed starting.

#### 7. Monitor and Tend to Your Seedlings:

- Check the soil daily and water as needed.
- If you used plastic wrap or a dome to create humidity, remove it as soon as the seedlings sprout.
- If more than one seedling sprouts in a container, thin them to the strongest seedling by gently pinching off the weaker ones at the soil level.

#### 8. Hardening Off:

- Gradually acclimate your seedlings to outdoor conditions before transplanting. This process, called hardening off, helps them adjust to sunlight, wind, and temperature fluctuations.
- Tip: Start by placing the containers outdoors in a shaded, protected location for a few hours each day, gradually increasing the time and sunlight exposure over a week or two.

#### 9. Transplanting:

- Once the danger of frost has passed and your seedlings have developed their true leaves, they are ready for transplanting.
- Peat Pots: The roots will grow through the biodegradable peat pots, so you can plant them directly into the ground or a larger container.
- Eggshell Trays: Gently crack the eggshell around the seedling and plant it directly into the soil. The eggshell will decompose and provide nutrients.

#### 10. Ongoing Care:

- Water regularly, especially during hot, dry periods.
- Monitor for pests and diseases and address any issues promptly.
- Fertilize as needed, according to the specific needs of each herb or vegetable.

#### **Important Note for Georgia's Summer:**

- Heat Tolerance: Georgia's summer can be hot and humid. Ensure you choose herbs and vegetables that tolerate these conditions.
- Watering: Pay extra attention to watering during hot weather, as plants in containers can dry out quickly.
- Mulching: Once transplanted, adding mulch around the plants can help retain moisture and keep the roots cool.

You're ready to start planting your heirloom vegetable seeds! Using peat pots and eggshell trays is a great way to start seeds indoors, especially for small spaces. Here's how to do it:

### **General Tips for Planting Seeds:**

- Read seed packets: Each seed packet provides specific instructions on planting depth, spacing, and germination time. Refer to these instructions for optimal results.
- Use seed starting mix: A lightweight seed starting mix or potting mix is ideal for seedlings.
- Keep soil moist, but not soggy: Water regularly to ensure consistent moisture, but avoid overwatering, which can lead to damping off.
- Provide adequate light: Once seeds sprout, they'll need bright light to grow strong. A sunny windowsill or grow lights are essential.
- Harden off seedlings: Before transplanting outdoors, gradually acclimate seedlings to outdoor conditions.

### **Planting in Peat Pots:**

#### **Step-by-step instructions:**

1. Prepare peat pellets: Peat pellets are compressed disks that expand when soaked in water. Place the desired number of pellets in a tray and add enough warm water to cover them halfway. The pellets will absorb the water and expand into small pots.
2. Add seeds: Gently tear the netting at the top of each pellet and make a small well with a toothpick or pencil. Plant 1-2 seeds in each well, following the instructions on the seed packet for planting depth.
3. Cover and label: Lightly cover the seeds with peat or seed starting mix. Label each pellet or row of pellets with the name of the vegetable planted.
4. Provide warmth: Cover the tray with a clear plastic dome or plastic wrap to create a humid environment. Place the tray in a warm location, out of direct sunlight.
5. Monitor and water: Check the pellets regularly and water as needed, ensuring the soil remains moist but not soggy.

6. Remove dome and provide light: Once seedlings sprout, remove the dome and place the tray in a sunny location or under grow lights.
7. Thin seedlings: If more than one seed sprouts in a pellet, thin them to the strongest seedling by pinching off the weaker ones.
8. Transplant: Once seedlings have developed their true leaves and the danger of frost has passed, they are ready for transplanting. Peat pots are designed to be planted directly into the ground, as they will decompose and provide nutrients to the soil.

### **Planting in Eggshell Trays:**

#### **Step-by-step instructions:**

1. Prepare eggshells: Crack eggs carefully, saving the shells. Rinse them thoroughly and let them dry. You can use the egg carton to hold the eggshell pots.
2. Optional: Add drainage holes: Some gardeners recommend adding a small drainage hole at the bottom of each shell to prevent waterlogging.
3. Fill with soil: Use a spoon to fill the eggshells  $\frac{3}{4}$  full with potting soil or seed starting mix. Don't over-compact the soil.
4. Add seeds: Make a small hole in the soil with your finger and place 2-3 seeds in each shell. Cover lightly with soil.
5. Water: Gently mist the soil with a spray bottle, ensuring it is moist but not soggy.
6. Provide light: Place the eggshell tray in a sunny window or under grow lights.
7. Water regularly: Check the soil every few days and mist as needed.
8. Thin seedlings: If multiple seedlings sprout, snip off the smaller ones, leaving the strongest.
9. Transplant: When the seedlings are a few inches tall or have developed their true leaves, they are ready for transplanting. Gently crack the eggshell, plant the seedling (shell and all) in a larger pot or your garden, and bury the shell completely.

**Small Space Gardening Tips:**

- Choose compact varieties: Look for "bush" or "patio" varieties of vegetables that are specifically bred for small spaces.
- Use containers: Pots, grow bags, and raised beds are excellent options for growing vegetables in small areas.
- Utilize vertical space: Grow climbing plants like beans or cucumbers on trellises or supports.
- Companion planting: Plant compatible vegetables together to maximize space and deter pests.
- Succession planting: Sow seeds every few weeks to ensure a continuous harvest.
- Optimize sunlight: Place containers in locations that receive adequate sunlight for the specific vegetable type.

By following these instructions and tips, you can enjoy a bountiful harvest of fresh, homegrown vegetables from your heirloom seed assortment, even in a small space!

# Final Tips and Advice for week 1

Here are some key tips and advice to share, fostering confidence and encouraging them to continue their gardening journey:

## 1. Patience is a Gardener's Best Friend:

- Explain the process: Gardening takes time. Seeds don't sprout overnight, and plants need time to grow and mature. Encourage patience and to not get discouraged if things don't happen instantly.
- Embrace the learning process: Remind them that every gardener, regardless of experience, faces challenges. Mistakes are part of the learning curve, not failures. [As pointed out by JourneywithJill.net](https://www.journeywithjill.net), each setback is an opportunity to learn and improve for the next season.

## 2. Start Small and Grow:

- Avoid overwhelm: Suggest they begin with a manageable number of plants. [According to Cobb County Georgia](https://www.cobbcountyga.gov), starting with a smaller garden is a good way to build confidence and avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- Expand gradually: Encourage them to gradually increase the size of their garden and the variety of plants they grow each year as they gain experience.

## 3. Know Your Plants' Needs:

- Sunlight: Emphasize the importance of observing their garden and determining how much sun each area receives. Knowing whether a plant needs full sun or can tolerate partial shade is crucial for its success.
- Watering: Stress the need to water deeply and consistently, especially during hot Georgia summers. Explain that the top inch of soil should be dry before watering again, and to water at the base of the plants to avoid fungal diseases.
- Soil: Highlight the importance of using a good quality, well-drained soil. Mention that amending existing soil with compost is beneficial, and that container plants may need more frequent watering and fertilizing.

#### 4. Enjoy the Journey:

- Celebrate successes: Encourage them to appreciate the small victories, like a sprouted seed or the first harvest.
- Connect with others: join a gardening club, online community, or simply talk to other gardeners. [The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#) encourages sharing their passion and enthusiasm with others.
- Enjoy the harvest: Most importantly, remind them to savor the delicious, fresh herbs and vegetables they've grown themselves!

#### 5. Additional Tips:

- Don't overfertilize: Advise them to use fertilizers sparingly, as too much can harm the plants. Explain that herbs generally don't need a lot of fertilizer.
- Mulch generously: Suggest using mulch to conserve soil moisture, suppress weeds, and regulate soil temperature.
- Stay vigilant about pests and diseases: Encourage regular observation of their plants and quick action if they spot signs of pests or diseases.
- Use local resources: Remind them that resources like university extension offices and local gardening centers can provide valuable information and support.

## **SOME FAQ's (Frequently Asked Questions)**

### 1. Where should a garden be located?

- Answer: Choose a spot that gets at least six hours of direct sunlight daily, especially for most vegetables and many flowers. Make sure it is near a water source to make watering easier, [according to Miracle-Gro](#). Also, consider the soil's quality and drainage. [According to DripWorks.com](#), the ideal soil pH for most plants is between 6.0 and 7.0.

### 2. How often should plants be watered?

- Answer: Watering frequency depends on the plant type, soil, and climate. Checking the soil moisture is a good rule of thumb. Insert a finger about an inch into the soil. If it is dry, it is time to water. Water deeply at the base of the plant, avoiding the leaves to prevent fungal diseases.

### 3. What type of soil should be used?

- Answer: Well-drained, nutrient-rich soil is key. Prepared soil mixes can be purchased, or existing soil can be amended by adding organic matter like compost or well-rotted manure.

### 4. Should seeds be started or transplants be bought?

- Answer: This depends on what you want to grow and your experience level. Some vegetables, like beans and radishes, can be sown directly into the ground. Others, like tomatoes and peppers, benefit from being started indoors and transplanted as seedlings. Starting with seedlings or transplants can be easier for beginners.

### 5. When should planting occur?

- Answer: Timing depends on the climate, specifically the area's last expected frost date in spring. The Farmer's Almanac and seed packets are good resources to help determine planting times.

### 6. What are some easy plants to grow?

- Answer: Leafy greens like lettuce, spinach, and radishes are good choices for beginners. Cucumbers and squash are also generally easy to grow.

### 7. How can plants be protected from pests and diseases?

- Answer: Good garden practices are essential for preventing pests and diseases. Maintain healthy soil, practice crop rotation, keep the garden clean, and encourage beneficial insects. [According to KidsGardening.org](#),

examine plants regularly to catch problems early and consider using barriers or traps to control pests.

8. What is "full sun" and "partial shade"?

- Answer: Full sun means the plant needs at least six hours of direct sunlight each day. Partial shade indicates about four to six hours of sunlight.

9. How can a garden be made sustainable?

- Answer: Sustainability in the garden involves choosing the right practices and materials. This can include improving soil quality, choosing native plants, using mulch, and watering efficiently.

## What does gmo stand for

GMO stands for

Genetically Modified Organism.

Definition:

A GMO is an organism (plant, animal, or microorganism) whose genetic material (DNA) has been altered using genetic engineering techniques. This means scientists have made changes to the organism's genome, typically by introducing new genes or altering existing ones, in order to change its characteristics.

Purpose:

Genetic modification is done to achieve specific goals, such as:

- Improving crops: Creating plants that are resistant to diseases, insects, or drought, or that have improved nutritional content or longer shelf life.
- Producing medicines: For example, genetically modified bacteria can be used to produce human insulin.
- Enhancing research: Creating model organisms with specific genetic modifications to study diseases or biological processes.

Examples:

- Corn plants that produce an insecticide.
- Salmon that grow faster.
- Soybeans with altered fatty acid composition.
- Mushrooms that resist browning.

Important Note: The term "GMO" is often used broadly, and some scientists use the more precise term "genetically engineered organism" (GEO) to distinguish organisms that have been directly modified using biotechnology from those that have been altered through traditional selective breeding methods.

<https://youtu.be/TQWWtQu-r9U?si=ViH7wLkLM0rScY90> - Direct Seeding Vs Starter Plants - A Beginner's Guide On How To Plant Your First Garden

<https://youtu.be/uHLChW4R5vw?si=x9GolealrJ0qZPtb> - Indoor Herb Gardens - The Definitive Guide For Beginners

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