

# Hardening Off Seedlings

*Toughen indoor-raised seedlings before they go outside*

**DIFFICULTY** Easy

**TYPE** One-off technique, repeated each season

**TIME** 7–10 days total



**DIFFICULTY**  
Easy



**TIME**  
7–10 days



**COST**  
Free



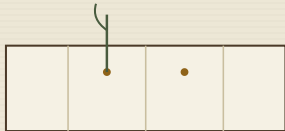
**BEST SEASON**  
Before transplanting out



**FREQUENCY**  
Seasonal

## 01 A gradual transition

Seedlings raised indoors or under cover haven't experienced wind, direct sun, or temperature swings — hardening off toughens their tissue gradually so the move outside doesn't stall or kill them.



seed tray, correct depth



growing on, or a rooted cutting

## 02 What you'll need

- A sheltered outdoor spot (porch, cold frame, or similar)
- Seedlings ready to transplant
- A watering can for more frequent checks during the process

## 03 Method

1. Start 7–10 days before planting out.
2. Day 1–2: place outside in a sheltered, shaded spot for 2–3 hours, then bring in.
3. Day 3–5: increase to half a day, introducing a little direct sun.
4. Day 6–8: leave out most of the day, including some direct sun and light wind.
5. Day 9–10: leave out overnight if temperatures allow, then transplant.

## 04 Troubleshooting

- **Wilting or scorched leaves** — moved too fast into full sun; slow the process down.
- **Seedlings blown over** — introduce wind exposure more gradually.
- **Forgot and left out overnight too early** — a late frost can undo weeks of work; check forecasts carefully.
- **Seedlings dry out faster outside** — check moisture daily during the process.

## 05 Timing & maintenance

|                  |                                                                                                                |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BEST TIME        | The 7–10 days immediately before your planned transplant date.                                                 |
| DURATION         | 7–10 days for most vegetable seedlings.                                                                        |
| MAINTENANCE      | Daily moving in and out, and moisture checks — the main effort of this technique.                              |
| SIGNS OF SUCCESS | Seedlings hold their form in wind and sun without wilting, and are ready to transplant without a growth check. |

## 06 Tips & variations

PAIRS WELL WITH

Starting Seeds Indoors

COMMON MISTAKES

Skipping hardening off entirely

Rushing the process in 2–3 days instead of a full week

PRO TIP

A cold frame or unheated greenhouse makes hardening off far less labour — no carrying trays in and out twice a day.