

Making Your Own Seed Tapes

Plants need space to grow. Sometimes it is hard to plant very small seeds - like carrots, lettuce, spinach and radishes - one-by-one at just the right spacing. If the seeds are too close together, you can pull out the extra seedlings when they begin to grow. You have to be very careful when you do this because you can bother the seedlings you want to leave in the ground and they may not grow well!

To make it easier you can make "seed tapes". Seed tapes are narrow strips of paper that you glue the seeds to at just the right distance apart - 1/2 inch, 1/4 inch, 1 inch or 2 inches. The seed packet will tell you how far apart to put your seeds.

To plant the seed tapes in the garden, make a little trench called a "furrow" at the right depth for the kind of seed you are planting (check the seed packet for this). Lay the seed tape in the furrow and cover it with the soil from the furrow and pat it down gently. Keep it watered and watch for the seedlings to grow!



Cut 1 1/2" - 2" wide strips of paper towel, toilet paper or newspaper. All work equally well. Or cut narrower strips (3/4" - 1") wide and use one for the bottom and one for the top of each seed tape.



Fold wide strips in half lengthwise. In the center of the bottom half of the folded strip, place drops of glue at the proper spacing for the crop you are sowing. Too much glue can damage the seed coat. If you wish, substitute a paste of flour and water for the glue. (Narrow strips do not need to be folded.)



Put 1-2 seeds on each drop of glue or paste.



If using folded strips, fold over the second half of the paper strip to cover the seeds and glue. If using the narrower strips, place the second narrow strip over the one with the glued seeds. Press to make them stick together.



Fold the tape onto itself and hold it together with rubberbands. Write the crop and variety on a plant label. "Industrial" Sharpie markers resist UV light and will not fade. Store in airtight containers in a cool location until ready to sow.



In spring, sow your crop directly into the garden at the time recommended on the seed packet. Make a wide furrow at the depth stated on the seed packet. Cover all areas of the tape with moist soil so it doesn't dry out. Water gently. Keep moist until seeds germinate and seedlings have at least their first set of true leaves.

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