



A21 Potting on seedlings



Many seedlings benefit from an ‘inbetween’ stage where they are given more space to grow before being transplanted into their final location in the soil or large container (A11/A22). Two similar techniques are explained here: ‘pricking out’ and ‘potting on’ used depending on how seedlings are grown (see below).

Resources

- Seedlings in pots/trays
- New pots/trays and compost
- Pencil
- Labels

Activity

- 1 Water seedlings and leave them to drain.
- 2 Follow instructions on the next page for pricking out and potting on.
 - a Pricking out - moving seedlings ‘bare-root’ from pots or ‘seed trays’ to larger pots or modular trays where seedlings can grow on individually rather than in clumps.
 - b Potting on - giving seedlings already on their own in pots or modular trays more space to grow.
- 3 You may have some spare seedlings. Some may be edible like salad leaves; others can be transplanted to fill gaps left by uneven germination or loss by pests and diseases. Otherwise add to the compost heap.

Top tip



‘Container’ or ‘pot’

Pots are generally smaller and used for younger plants before transplanting (A18, 19 and 22).

Containers are basically large pots, but the term is used here to refer to final planting location (A11).



Health & Safety

Wash hands after handling compost and soil.

See also Health and Safety Guidelines (Section B3.3)

Further information

A11 Planting in containers
A22 Transplanting young plants
B5.4 Potting on seedlings
Food Growing Instruction Cards

Instructions for pricking out and potting on seedlings

a Pricking out

- 1 Prepare a new pot or modular tray by filling with organic, peat-free potting compost. Firm the surface with something flat, like the bottom of another pot, or tap the container to settle the compost.



- 2 Start pricking out seedlings when large enough to handle. Don't hold by their stem or growing tip as both are easily crushed.



Hold each seedling by the 'seed leaves' (the first pair of smaller leaves). Loosen the surrounding compost with a pencil. Lift with as much root and moist compost as possible.



It often helps to lift out a lump of compost first with a few seedlings in and then gently break this apart.

- 3 Use the pencil to make a hole in the compost. Gently lower the roots of the seedling into the hole, pushing back the compost and lightly firming with fingers and the pencil.

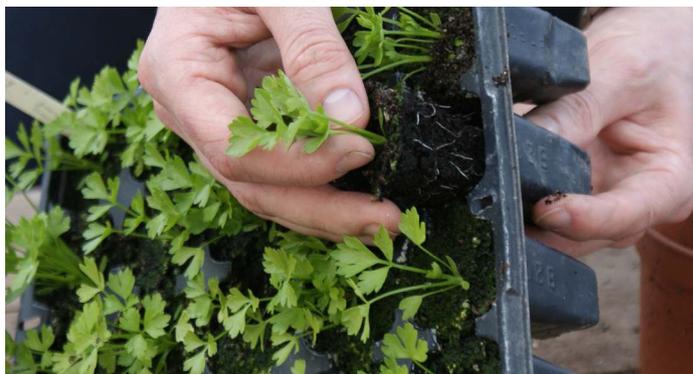


- 4 Repeat until you have enough seedlings. Water with fine rose ended watering can to settle the compost around the roots. Label.



b Potting on

- 1 To remove plants, turn pots over and support the stem with a finger on either side, gently squeezing the sides and bottom of the pot to loosen the root ball so it falls out whole. For plants in modular trays, push from beneath to loosen the root ball and gently pull the seedling (see A22).



- 2 Place the plant in the hole, backfilling and gently firming the compost so there are no air pockets.



- 3 The final height of the compost should allow for 1cm gap at the top of the pot for watering.



- 4 Water well and put in light position.

