

Houseplants are easy for anyone--even beginners--to grow from seeds. Use new clay pots that have been conditioned by immersing in water. Soak until the clay has absorbed all the moisture it can hold--until the bubbling and hissing stop.

You'll need a well-balanced soil mixture for good germination--a rich commercial potting soil will work fine. Fill the pot with soil and gently sprinkle seeds across the surface. Cover the seeds with a layer of soil no deeper than twice their diameter. Don't pack them down.

Set the pot in a pan of shallow water until it soaks up enough moisture to make the soil surface damp. Then remove the pot from the water, let excess water drain out, cover with a plastic bag, and place it in a bright east or west window where the temperature is relatively stable. Don't water at all during this time.

When seedlings appear, remove the bag and begin watering the surface whenever the soil starts to dry out. Nighttime dampness encourages mold and fungus, so water early in the morning. Turn the pot periodically--or set under grow-lights--to keep plants growing straight, instead of leaning toward the window.

Thin out the seedlings if you plan to keep the plants in the same pot. If not, remove the seedlings when the first true pair of leaves appears, and plant them in their own small pots.