



Soil blocker

TO PRODUCE VIGOROUS PLANTS (VEGETABLES, FLOWERS, ETC.) BY YOURSELF.

The making of soil blocks

The seedling, up to the "2-leaf" stage, finds most of its food in the seed. The poorer the initial environment, the more roots the plant will produce, which is preferable at this stage.

In order to continue its growth, it will gradually seek nutrients in the surrounding soil. If the soil is too rich, or has a high compost content, the plant will grow too quickly, be frail and prone to attack by crown rot (or black foot), which is a fungal disease.

The potting soil should therefore be similar to good garden soil, but not particularly rich.

Like the latter, it should be loose, have sufficient humus content and good water retention capacity, contain all essential nutrients and have good biological activity. In addition, the soil blocks must meet the special requirements of the seedlings and young plants.

That is why they must:

- A. *remain flexible despite the pressures they undergo during their formation.*
- B. *have good mechanical stability allowing care, transport and installation without damage.*

These criteria can be met by making a mixture of peat, compost, garden soil and sand.

Proportion of the mixture

The following formula is given as a guide. This mixture may vary according to the specific characteristics of the different components.

2 buckets (10 litres each) of **white peat**
1 bucket of **compost** (more than one year old)
1 bucket of **garden soil**
2 to 3 litres of **sand**
2 to 3 handfuls of **rock powder**
1 to 3 handfuls of **limestone amendment**

NOTE

Potting soil from the specialist trade

Most potting soil companies have a potting soil in their range. It is usually based on peat. Preferably those made from **composted peat**..



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How to make soil blocks?

1 Sieve

Use a sieve (empty 4 mm mesh). A round sieve is easier to handle than a square sieve. It is best to sieve each component separately.

2 Mix

Mix the different components well in a large container to obtain a homogeneous potting soil.

3 Moistening the soil

Water the potting soil. Simply squeeze a handful of potting soil; the ideal degree of moisture is reached when drops of water ooze through your fingers.

4 Filling the soil blocker

- Insert the soil blocker several times vertically into the moistened mixture.
- It is best to work along the sides of the container to the bottom.

The soil blocker is filled when potting soil or water appears between the upper gaps. At this point, smooth the excess material over the rim of your container

5 Ejecting soil blocks

Place the soil blocker in the growing container.

Tighten the handles slightly, while removing the mould. The blocks are separated as they come out of the soil blocker. However, it is possible that the soil blocks may touch each other. To prevent the plants from rooting too uncontrollably, it is a good idea to leave enough space between each row of soil blocks.

6 Sowing

It is easy to place all the large seeds in the holes of the soil blocks by hand. For small seeds (up to the size of a radish seed) or very fine seeds (begonia up to 100,000 seeds per gram), use a small planter and a simple trick:

- Place the seeds in a bowl or on a sheet of paper.
- Touch the chosen seed until it sticks.
- Place the seed in the imprint and press lightly to ensure good contact with the soil.

7 Cares

In order to obtain vigorous plants, the following factors must be monitored:

Water: If the plugs are sown immediately after they are made, the water content is normally sufficient for the next few days. Watering should be done directly on the blocks with a spray bottle or a fine apple (coarse watering breaks up the blocks and drowns the seed).

Optimal germination temperature: it is important to respect the temperatures considered optimal for a good emergence! We will therefore group the species we grow according to their respective needs.

Heat and light: you can place your seedlings in front of a south-facing window. But be careful, the seedlings only receive part of the light they would get outside. On the window sill they receive too much heat and not enough light, which could make them stunted. These seedlings are then said to have "wilted".

Try to keep your seedlings cool, between 15 and 18°C to encourage slow growth. Beware of frost for plants placed on windowsills. You can place a blanket between the window and your plants to keep them warm at night.

8 Monitoring the crop

Planting in soil blocks is so exciting that you risk losing control of your crops. It is therefore advisable to keep careful records of the essential elements: origin of the seed, sowing date, quantity of plants needed, emergence rate, etc. This will allow you to plan your gardening season well. In the event of failure, the cause can be determined more quickly.

9 Setting up

Setting out the plants in the field replaces transplanting. The best time to do this is in the late afternoon on an overcast day. The soil blocks should be well soaked with water so that the plant has a reserve. Of course, care must be taken to ensure good contact between the root ball and the surrounding soil. The work should be completed with a general watering.