

# Hybridizing for Fun

By Gail Trimble

## Planting

As you check your seeds during stratification, you may find some that have already sprouted. These should be handled very delicately and immediately planted in individual containers. The rest of the seeds should be planted after approximately eight weeks of stratification. Planting is usually done in January or February as rose seeds germinate best in temperatures of 50-60 degrees Fahrenheit.

### SEED FLATS

Planting is typically done in “flats” – plastic trays that are approximately 11” x 22” x 2 ½ “. There is a wide variety of seed flats available. The most common one has no dividers and comes with and without drain holes. One can also buy a plastic dome in two heights to cover it. There are also flats with various configurations of removable “cells” – dividers that have 32, 48, 72, or 200 compartments. Although they are more work to fill with planting mixture, these flats are particularly useful if there are fewer seeds to plant. - they have the advantage of separating every seed. In a flat with no cells, seeds can shift around a bit when watered.



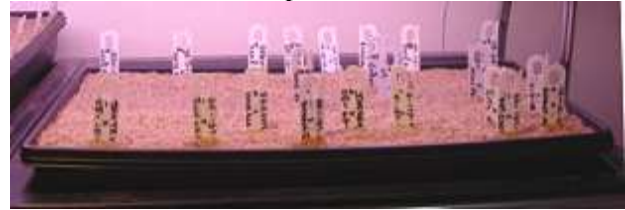
Various “cell” compartments

Deep cell trays for better root development are also available. One can even buy flats with cells that are already filled with planting material (called “plugs”). Regardless of what you use, it is essential to buy flats that have drain holes (however, the ones without holes are handy for using underneath to catch the drips if planting indoors).

### PLANTING MEDIUM

Seeds are planted in a sterile, soil-less, mixture that is mostly peat moss and perlite. There are several commercial mixes available on the market or you can mix your own. It is essential to thoroughly mix with water before putting it into the tray – this will probably require squeezing the mixture with your

hands until saturated. When the mixture is ready, fill the flat with 2 inches of medium. Seeds are placed on top of the mixture approximately one inch apart in vertical rows. The rows are usually spaced two inches apart. Be sure to label each row with the cross as in the photo below.



The seeds are then covered with ½ to ¾ inch of either horticulture sand or perlite. The use of sand or perlite helps to prevent damping off by draining immediately after watering.

### TRAY PLACEMENT

If one does not have a greenhouse or a cold frame, trays are best kept indoors as the weather in January and February can be quite cold and wet. If kept outdoors, the trays must be protected from freezing. Although the trays can be kept in a garage, light must be available as soon as germination starts, which can be as early as one week. There are many different lighting set-ups one can buy for indoor planting. They use wide-spectrum florescent fixtures and vary from table top models to stand alone mobile units.



Free-standing Light Garden

It is best to keep the tray mixture moist, but do not overwater as damping off might occur. There are trays one can buy that sit on a self-watering capillary mat with a bottom tray that has a water reservoir. These trays water from the bottom up.