

Planting Seedlings In Summer

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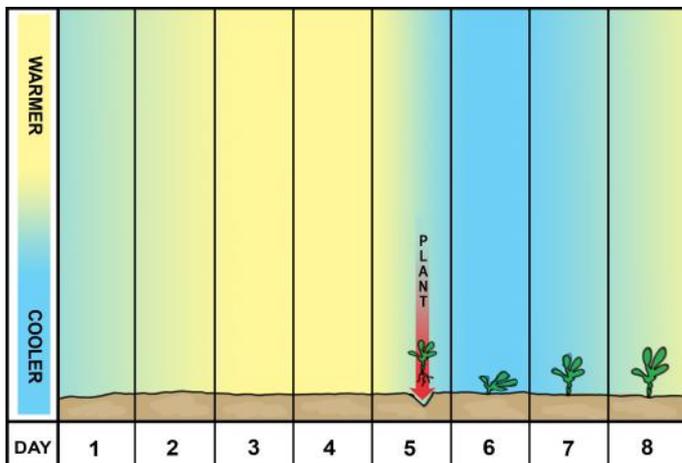
Planting seedlings in summer can be tricky as they are more prone to heat stress, but with care you can get as high a success rate as seedlings planted when the weather is cooler. Here are some hints to ensure your seedlings thrive.

Weather surf

Even the toughest of seedlings will have difficulty surviving if planted on a hot day, so in the warmer months I practice what I call weather surfing. This involves planting seedlings to coincide with cooler dips in the weather cycle. Instead of catching a wave you catch a cold front.

The ideal time to plant seedlings in summer is just as a cool change breaks because this gives the seedlings a few days of milder conditions to establish themselves before another bout of hot weather comes along.

Of course it is not always possible to plant when the weather is cooler. Seedlings that have outgrown their seedling trays need to be planted as soon as possible and work commitments may mean you can only garden on weekends. If you have to plant seedlings when the weather is hot then at least wait until the evening to plant them.



If possible wait until a cool change drops the temperature down before planting seedlings in summer.

Apply liquid fertiliser

No matter how carefully you transplant seedlings inevitably some damage will be done to their roots, but plants can absorb nutrients through their leaves as well as roots. If you water both the leaves and the roots with a dilute liquid fertiliser solution it will give the seedlings a nutrient boost to help them establish themselves more quickly. While all newly planted

seedlings will benefit from a dose of liquid fertiliser it is even more important to apply it in warmer weather. I water all my seedlings in with liquid fertiliser followed by a second watering a few days later.

There are a number of different liquid fertiliser products on the market such as Seasol and Charlie Carp or you can make up your own liquid fertiliser concentrate by placing manure in a porous bag and soaking it in a container of water.



Adding liquid fertiliser concentrate to a watering can. Inside the drum is a sealed porous bag full of chicken manure and blood and bone. Seasol concentrate was also added.

Temporarily shade your seedlings

In warmer weather seedlings that are shielded from direct sunlight for the first week or two after they have been planted will establish themselves more quickly and grow more vigorously than seedlings exposed to full sunlight. There are two ways you can temporarily shield your seedlings from direct sunlight.

STRAW SHADE

The simplest way to shade your seedlings is to cover them with a thin layer of loose straw. Once established the seedlings will grow through the straw, pushing the stalks aside as they get bigger. There is no need to remove the straw as it will provide mulch for the bed.



Newly planted seedlings covered by 50% shade cloth to protect them from the sun. The shade cloth is being held up with 13 millimetre polypipe sticks.

SHADECLOTH SHADE

The problem with the straw method is that it also provides good cover for slugs. A safer method is to cover the seedlings with shade cloth. It is light enough to be laid directly on most seedlings but I prefer to suspend the shade cloth above the seedlings with the use of polypipe sticks or hoops.

I use 50% shade cloth but 70% will probably also work as well, although it is a little shady for my liking.

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