

Potting up Seedlings Guide

Potting your seedlings up properly gives them the best start in life, with strong, healthy, well-shaped root systems to anchor them soundly as adult trees.

Many hands make light work. Involve your school community - parents, caretakers, other staff, sponsors and landowners can help students at your potting up sessions.

Shade house

- Check that your shade house is clean, tidy and ready to use.
- Check for damage/wear to the shade house and let us know if anything needs repair.
- Test run your irrigation system making sure there will be no dry spots.
- Please check with your facilitator to see if your timer battery has been changed.

Help from your TfS Facilitator

- Your Facilitator is the best person to help ensure successful potting up. They can help streamline the process and ensure best technique for successful growth - let them guide you.
- Please ask your Facilitator to come and work with you and your students for a session potting your plants up so you know how we do it, why it matters and to give you the chance to ask questions or check your technique. Your Facilitator is there to help, please ask if you have any concerns or questions.
- Have student and teachers watch the TfS video clips [here](#). Lesson 1 - Potting On and Lesson 3- Maintenance.

Potting mix – it is not just dirt!

- No, this is not just dirt! It is a freshly mixed, carefully balanced blend of organic and mineral matter, which will give your plants just the right proportions of air, moisture and slow-release nutrients for maintaining optimum growth and ideal soil temperature. So, you must look after it!
- Take care of it by storing bags in shed or covering with tarp. Protect from sun, rain and theft. Leaving it in the rain will make it muddy heavy and unpleasant to work with and the slow-release fertiliser will be released too early.
- If you have old soil from previous years potting at school, recycle this in your school garden beds as it will not grow your seedlings well.
- You can start filling your planter bags with potting mix (as per Lesson 1) and loading them into the crates ready for when the seedlings arrive (20 planter bags per crate, 4 x 5)
- Fill the bottom of the bag properly. Tap the base on the bench to settle soil down in bag
- **Fill the bag right up to the top**, it will subside a bit once watered. **Do not pack down the soil!**

When your seedlings arrive

- When they arrive make sure these are taken out of their box, watered and go into the shade house, with auto watering scheduled, on the same day that they arrive – this is vital!
- If you need to move some big plants outside to make room, then do so.
- Keep the plastic trays for your facilitator to recycle if they are in good condition.
- If your shadehouse is in a windy situation or a suntrap your facilitator may advise you to place cardboard under the seedlings to prevent them drying out.





Potting on - What you will need

- Seedlings
- New potting mix
- Enough milk crates (1 per 20 seedlings) to fill your whole shade house
- Enough Planter bags (PB ¾ long size). You will have had either 500 or 1000 seedlings delivered. Crates and planter bags should have been returned by your landowner.
- Please use your recycled bags from last season before using new ones. **Only use planter bags provided by TfS as these are made especially for TfS to be the right size.**
- A comfortable height work bench, outdoor tables and/or tarps
- Hose or watering cans
- Gardening gloves (provided by school)
- Masks if required.

Safety with potting mix – Legionnaires Disease

- Watch the TfS video clip no 1 (we now recommend wearing gloves)
- Read the warning labels on the potting mix bag regarding legionnaires disease and heavy lifting out loud to the children.
- Not all potting mix contains the spores, but we need to be cautious. The danger comes from breathing the dry dust into your lungs.
- Work in a well-ventilated area and avoid windy conditions.
- Stop the mix from becoming dry and dusty. Close bags so it stays damp. If taking a break, cover soil. Soils could be gently misted to dampen if dry.
- Cover any open cuts.
- Wear gloves and wash hands after handling potting mix and before eating.
- People who have compromised respiratory health or immune systems should use a mask or find another way of being involved without working near the soil mix.



Potting up your TfS Seedlings

- Make sure your seedlings in the plug trays have had a drink and are not dry.
- Make a hole in the soil in top of each filled bag. If the soil is damp, it will stay open which makes it easier to plant.
- Carefully lift the seedling out of plug tray.
- If any moss is growing with the seedling, remove moss and throw it away.
- Hold the seedling by its leaves, lower the seedling into the hole, and firm it into place, at the same depth it was before. The seedling should not be buried too deep, or it will rot.
- Check no roots are visible on the soil surface, and it is standing upright not leaning. Press it gently but firmly into place.
- If you find two plants in the same plug, leave them together, **don't split up the twins.**
- **Ensure you have all the same plant species in the same crate.**
- If you take a break, don't leave any plants' roots uncovered drying out in the hot sun.



After potting

- Load your plants into the shade house, don't leave them sitting in the hot sun.
- Now your plants are in the shade house water them thoroughly (but gently) until water runs out of the drainage holes in the base of the bags. This is the most important drink they'll ever get.

Irrigation

- Make sure your irrigation timer is set to water automatically after potting up. Set the timer for 3 minutes twice a day. Your Facilitator can advise what settings are best for your situation.

