

## Fall is Planting Time, for Seeds?

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There are some perennial seeds that can be planted in the fall to sprout the following spring. Purple coneflower is a great example of a perennial seed that does well when sown in fall. In cold-winter areas, plant seeds at the depth given on the package instructions after a killing frost but before the ground freezes.

### **Why plant seeds in the fall?**

The goal for planting in fall is not to have your seeds germinate but to give them a period of stratification, or exposing them to cold and moist conditions. The alternating freeze and thaw of winter helps break down the seed coat and starts the growing process. Not all perennials do well with this technique, however.

A short list of some perennials that need stratification in order to grow:

Astrantia major

Black-eyed Susan, Rudbeckia fulgida

Delphinium, Delphinium elatum

Lupine, Lupinus spp. and hybrids

Oriental poppy, Papaver orientale

Penstemon, Penstemon spp. and hybrids

Perennial geranium, Geranium spp. and hybrids

Perennial sunflower, Helianthus spp. and hybrids

Pincushion flower, Scabiosa spp. and hybrids

Prairie coneflower, Ratibida spp.

Purple coneflower, Echinacea purpurea

Wild columbine, Aquilegia canadensis

## Benefits of Planting Seeds in Fall

### There is More Time to Plant in Fall

Every fall-planting advocate mentions it. In the fall, the gardener has far more time to get work done for two reasons. First of all, there is a longer period and far more "good days" for planting in the fall than during the tricky weather in spring. Secondly, the gardener always has more time during the fall than during the spring rush to get everything done after winter. Many gardeners combine seed planting with fall bulb planting, and that is a great idea. The times for both are identical.

There are fewer garden chores in fall and more comfortable hours during the day. With the temperatures falling, it is no longer a game of seeing how long you can tolerate being outdoors before melting into a puddle of sweat.

In fall, most weeds are dormant, so there are fewer pesky plants to contend with, making the job more pleasant in general. You can prep your fall beds in one weekend and not worry that they will be full of weeds by the time the next weekend rolls around and you're ready to do your planting.

It's a great idea to amend the soil at this time. Organic soil amendments need time to break down, again this is why it's best to do this in fall, there is all winter for these to break down and enrich the soil.

How to plant: spread your seeds out over the planting bed or container and lightly tamp them down and resist the urge to cover them. Just let it be. Walk away and leave until spring.

When spring comes, make sure that your flower bed remains moist. You are unlikely to have to do much watering, but if the soil appears to be drying out, give it some water. Once your seeds sprout, don't allow the soil to dry out completely.

