

This week we have been getting acquainted with planting seeds and very young plants (transplants.) Besides the actual process of planting either seeds or transplants which we'll talk about in class, a lot of options are presented by choosing young transplants over planting seeds. Garden space and optimal garden usage are a couple of reasons for planting young transplants instead of planting seeds. If you go to the last page in your manual you will see a planting chart optimized for our Houston area. This chart is loaded with information that can help one to make optimal use of their garden. For instance, the chart shows average germination time (the time for a seed to start to grow once planted in the ground) and also the time needed until harvest (the average time from seed in the ground until one can hope to harvest the fruit or vegetable). Since garden space is often at a premium meaning "I wish I could grow more _____, but I just don't have any room", starting plants in small pots a few weeks ahead of when you'd like to plant them in the garden is a way to have a full garden all growing season long. In other words, this is a way to remove the germination time from your garden bed as well as lessening the time in the garden bed until plant maturity and the harvesting of produce. There are many additional reasons why transplanting is a desirable option such as always having the plant you want when you want it for that special garden space. As you are already aware, not every seed is viable, that is that the seed will germinate and produce a healthy plant. So if you need 10 broccoli plants for the space in your garden, you can plant 15 starter pots of broccoli so that you will have enough actual plants for your garden when you want them.

It's not always preferable to choose transplanting over directly planting seeds. Suppose for instance you tried planting carrots as transplants, or radishes. Can you think of reasons why these are best planted directly into the ground? It turns out root crops are very fragile as young plants and don't lend themselves to transplanting. Carrots for instance become significantly deformed when transplanted. It makes sense I think because it is the root after all that we are interested in harvesting and transplanting often disrupts the root structure. Another point to consider is the time needed in preparation for transplanting. Radishes, for instance, germinate very quickly 3-5 days so by the time you might have a decent young plant to transplant, it already will have an elaborate root system and so won't transplant well.

See if you can come up with a couple more reasons for planting seed directly into the ground over transplanting.

In the coming weeks we will be planting and harvesting all at the same time, such is the beauty of gardening. We will soon be harvesting sweet potatoes which will require a lot of team work and is like searching for treasure! We will also be planting collards, broccoli, beets, and carrots. Can you identify which ones will be transplanted and which will be planted as seed directly into the ground?