



Starting Garden Transplants from Seed

It's not too early to begin gathering seeds for the spring garden. Select seeds from reputable sources to ensure high quality, healthy seeds.

Starting transplants for the vegetable garden typically requires four to eight weeks from seeding to transplant date. Utilize K-State Research and Extension's [Kansas Garden Guide](#) where you can find the Average Expected Planting Calendar to know when the best start date is for seedlings intended for transplanting into the garden.

Always use a disease-free, soilless planting media or seed-starting mix for seeds. The containers for seed-starting can be individual cups, trays or even recycled containers as long as they have drainage holes in the bottom. Fill the container with a couple inches of media and then lightly cover the seeds with the mix after planting. Keep the soil moist until the seeds germinate and keep the containers under lights in a warm location.

When the seedlings have grown two to four small leaves, they are ready to be transplanted into small pots. This will allow them to continue growing until it's time to transplant into the garden.

It's important to give plants time to harden off before transplanting. This should typically be started about ten days before the transplant date and involves gradually acclimating the seedlings to the outdoor conditions by reducing the amount of water the plants receive while slowly increasing their exposure to the outdoor conditions. This prevents the plants from experiencing transplant shock so they can continue normal growth when they are transplanted.

Cynthia Domenghini, Ph.D., Instructor; Horticulture Extension Specialist

Feeding cracked versus whole corn

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Beef producers make decisions about what to feed their animals daily and the answer often depends on the age and sex of the animal and what its job in the herd is. When deciding which type of feed to offer, cost is a consideration, Kansas State University beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said.

Speaking on a recent Beef Cattle Institute [Cattle Chat](#) podcast, Lancaster addressed a question about feeding cracked corn to steers being raised to the finished stage on the home operation.

"There is a difference in the digestibility of whole corn versus cracked corn," he said. "Because the steer ration will have a high level of corn, there is a benefit to feeding them cracked corn, and that is about a 5% increase in the net energy of gain from that corn."

In the case of the steers, Lancaster said the price of corn would guide his recommendation.

"Is it cost-effective to feed cracked corn? If the feed mills are charging \$10 a ton to crack the corn, then the price of the corn needs to be about \$6 per bushel or higher for that to pay off," Lancaster said.

As for the cows that are getting a feed supplement along with their high forage diet, Lancaster advised feeding whole corn instead of cracked corn.

"Because it is a lower percent of the diet and the cows will be able to do the mechanical breakdown by chewing their cud, it is more cost-effective to feed them whole corn," he said.

Lancaster added that even if producers observe whole corn kernels in the feces, it doesn't mean that the animal did not get energy from the corn.

"Whole corn will be less digested than cracked corn, but bacteria will still penetrate the hull and some starch from the inside will be digested," he said.

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension news service