

# Seed Starting on a Budget Series: Inventory & Supplies



For the next few weeks, I'll be focusing on the topic of seed starting. I'll be providing you with budget-friendly tips, hints, and strategies to get you started this gardening season without breaking the bank. This week, let's talk about inventory and seed starting supplies.

## Inventory

Every year I have a mini panic about the stuff I'll need to purchase to get through the seed starting period. And then I quickly realize I already have plenty on hand from years prior. Carefully taking inventory is how I avoid overspending on seed and supply orders. Here's what I ask myself:

- Do I have enough seed trays and pots?
- Are there any seeds I need to buy? Which ones?
- How many plants of each type will I grow? I suggest

referring to any [plans](#) you've drawn up during the winter months.

- How many bags of soil mix do I need?
- What do I have on hand that I can re-use?

Guestimating is your enemy. Guessing how many pots or soil mix I need is a recipe for overspending. Knowing the exact numbers will save you from wrecking your budget.

## Buying Supplies

Before you start clicking around online to purchase seed and supplies, have a budget in mind. I typically set mine to no more than \$50.

The three most important tools required for seed starting are:

- Seed starting soil mix
- Seeds
- Containers

Through seed saving, you can drastically reduce your spending on seeds, but sometimes it's fun to try new varieties. A tip for saving money if you're buying seeds: buy them with a friend or two to save on shipping costs. Often, packets include way more seed than most gardeners would use in a single season. Pair up with another gardening pal so you can share and split the cost.

Each year I [re-use](#) my seed starting flats and containers. The number one rule? Make sure to sanitize! Otherwise, you might end up with a whole tray of dead seedlings. Use found and recycled containers to save money. Only buy new containers and flats if current ones are totally broken and unsuitable for planting.

Soil mix is where I don't skimp. I buy the best mix I can afford as long as it fits into my set budget. Buy larger bags of soil mix to save cash. If buying online, keep a close eye

on shipping costs. Some companies may charge extra fees for shipping bulky items. Don't substitute bags of earth or potting soil for seed starting mix. Before buying, figure out how much soil you'll need to fill your trays and containers. Remember, you can always buy more seed starting mix if you need it.

## **Start Small**

You don't need to start with an intense operation all at once. Start small and increase your seedling production each year. I started off starting seedlings under a small grow light in a single tray. Today, I have a homemade shelving system equipped with adjustable grow lights. I hope to add a shelf next year, but I'm in no rush. Be patient and purchase supplies when they're on sale. As time progresses, you'll find yourself more well-equipped than ever.