Starting Seeds

Seedlings can easily be started indoors under artificial lighting or in a sunny window and transplanted outdoors just after your ‘average’ date of last frost. If seeds are started indoors they will take about 4-8 weeks of growing time before they can be transplanted. An easy way to start you plants is by using common plastic ‘flats’. Most seeds should germinate in 7-10 days.

- Fill the flats with your soil mix and thoroughly soak the soil.
- Sow the seeds by scattering them on the soil surface 1/4-1/2 inch apart and then cover them with about 1/4 inch of additional soil mix.
- Mist the newly added soil until it is nice and damp.
- Cover the flat with a clear plastic cover or a plastic wrap to keep the seeds from drying out while germinating.

Once you seedlings have emerged;

- Keep soil should moist
- The best way to water flats from the bottom by placing the flat in a sink or large pan filled with water.
- Once the soil surface feel wet to the touch you can remove the flat from its bath and allow to drain.
- The soil should be kept moist but not soaking wet to prevent mold and fungal growth that can eventually kill your plants.

Seedlings can be transplanted when they are about 3-6 inches in height. Before transplanting they will need to be acclimated to outdoor conditions for a few days. This is easily done by placing the flats outside in a sheltered area during the day and then bringing them back in at night. This procedure should be repeated for 4-7 days depending on the outside temperatures. The newly transplanted plants should be watered frequently. Nothing beats good organic compost but plants can eventually be fertilized 2 or 3 times during the growing season without adverse effects on butterflies.

If your seeds have not been properly cold stratified;

- Place milkweed seeds into a cup and pour about 1/2 cup of scalding water over them
- Cover the cup with a lid or plastic wrap over night
- Plant the seeds 1/4" to 1/2" deep in a flat or peat pots