

# ↘ Tried & tested / Seed sowing

**This week's jobs**  
Protect emerging bulbs and more  
Page 13

**Win a weekend away**  
We've got a wonderful trip to the Lost Garden of Heligan up for grabs Page 15

www.gardennewsmagazine.co.uk



# Get into gear for seed sowing

Geoff Hodge looks at cell trays and other products that will help you get the best results from seed sowing this season

AS WE gear up for the manic seed-sowing season - whether it's flowers, vegetables or both - we're going to need containers to sow our seeds in. Generally, I don't use seed trays - rarely do I need dozens or hundreds of seedlings of one type and I don't like to have to pull seedlings apart when pricking out as this damages the roots.

I prefer to use cell trays or plug trays - you can sow just enough seed for the number of plants you want and as each plant grows in its own 'plug' of compost, there's no need to prick out and so no root disturbance when planting out -

plants establish much more quickly and perform better.

### The test

I tested a range of seed sowing products. I looked at how easy they were to use and handle, how quickly they dried out and needed re-watering and the quality of the roots produced.

Although both Root!t Natural Rooting Sponge and Growth Technology Root Riot produced excellent results, my Best Buy went to Roottrainers as they are re-useable.

### Suppliers

Botanico, 01905 791984, www.botanicogarden.co.uk

Supplies direct to garden centres and stores  
Gardman, 01406 372237, www.gardman.co.uk  
Supplies direct to garden centres and stores

Growth Technology, 01823 325291, www.growthtechnology.com  
Haxnicks, 01747 861539, www.haxnicks.co.uk

Nether Wallop Trading Company, 01264 355553, www.netherwalloptrading.com  
Root!t, 024 7665 1500, www.propagateplants.com  
William Sinclair (J Arthur Bower's), 01522 537561, www.william-sinclair.co.uk

## ↘ Cell/plug trays

Rigid plastic trays that are re-useable



### Haxnicks Roottrainers

Compact Rapid Roottrainers From £6.99

Re-useable, rigid plastic containers. Especially useful for plants that need deep root runs and dislike root disturbance. Opens like a book for easy inspection of moisture levels, root growth and removal of the plants.

- Plug size Several sizes available; I used the Compact Rapid Roottrainers, 3.5cm x 4cm x 8cm deep (1 1/8 x 1 1/2 x 3 1/4in)
- Use & handling
- Watering
- Root growth
- Price guide £6.99; other sizes from £7.99-£10.99



### Gardman 84 and Botanico 84

Botanico Plug tray £7.99  
Gardman 84 plug tray £4.99

Available in several sizes; I tested the Gardman 84 Cell Large Plug Tray and the Botanico 84 Plug Cell and Watering Tray, which includes capillary matting.  
● Plug size 3.8cm (1 1/2in) square  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide Botanico 84 Plug Cell and Watering Tray, £7.99; 84 Cell Large Plug Tray £4.99 for two

## GN TOP TIP

Don't sow all your seeds in one go - stagger your sowing times

## ↘ Fibre pots

Biodegradable pots that are planted out with the plants and break down in the soil. The light coloured pots turn dark when wet and indicate when watering is needed.

### Botanico Fibre Starter Pots

From £2.49 3 x 12 cell trays

Made from 100 per cent biodegradable fibres  
● Plug size 5cm (2in) square cells  
● Use & handling

- Watering
- Root growth:

- Price guide £2.49 for 3 x 12 cells; other sizes available

PLANT OUT COMPLETE AND AVOID ROOT DISTURBANCE



### Gardman Fibre Pots

From £2.79 3 x 12 cells

Made from wood pulp and peat (less than 25 per cent).  
● Plug size 4cm (1 1/2in) square cells  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide £2.79 for 6 x 6 cells; Value Pack £5.99 for 6 x 24 cells; other sizes available

### J Arthur Bower's Peat Pots

From £2.79 3 x 12 cells

Made from 80 per cent wood fibre and 20 per cent light peat.  
● Plug size 4cm (1 1/2in) square cells  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth

- Price guide £2.79 for 3 x 12 cells; other sizes available

POTS BIODEGRADE WHEN PLANTED IN THE SOIL



## ↘ Plugs & pellets

Dry, compressed discs of growing media that you wet and they swell to produce a plug of compost, surrounded by a mesh to keep the plug in one piece.

● Plug size: 3.5cm diameter x 4cm high (1 1/8 x 1 1/4in)



### Botanico Coir Plant Starter Pellets

From £2.99 20 pellets

Made from coir.  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide £2.99 for 20 pellets; £5.99 for 50 pellets



### Root!t CocoCoir Plugs

£3.50 36 plugs

Made from coir.  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide £3.50 for 36



### Root!t Peat Plugs

£3.50 36 plugs

Made from peat.  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide £3.50 for 36



### Root!t Natural Rooting Sponge

From £5.99

Made from peat and bark.  
● Plug size 3.5cm diameter x 4cm high (1 1/8 x 1 1/4in)  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide Propagation Tray with 24 sponges £5.99; Windowsill Propagator with 24 sponges £9.99; Rooting Sponges 50 refills £8.99



### J Arthur Bower's Grow Tubes and Pots

From £2.79 20 pots

Bottomless pots made from Fibra biodegradable material.  
● Plug size 6cm (2 1/4in) diameter, 12cm (5in) high  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide £2.79 for 20; other sizes available



### Growth Technology Root Riot

From £6.13 24 cubes

Made from composted organic materials, they encourage healthy, rapid root growth. Inoculated with micronutrients.  
● Plug size 3.5cm diameter x 4cm high (1 1/8 x 1 1/4in)  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide Root Riot Tray Set with 24 cubes £6.13; Root Riot Propagation Kit with 24 cubes £15.29; 100 refill cubes £19.69



### Nether Wallop Trading Company Paper Potter

From £10.35

This 100% sustainable oak device allows you to recycle strips of old newspaper into biodegradable plant pots. The pots were stronger than I had imagined and didn't fall apart.  
● Plug size Original 4.5cm (1 1/8in) diameter; Big! 6.5cm (2 1/2in) diameter.  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide Original £10.35; Big! £16.50; pair £25



### Gardman Growing Pockets

From £3.29

Made from coir.  
● Use & handling  
● Watering  
● Root growth  
● Price guide 20 Growing Pockets £3.29; 50 Growing Pockets £7.49; Windowsill Sow & Grow Propagator with 22 Growing Pockets £5.49; Large Sow & Grow Propagator with 55 Growing Pockets £8.99