

## **DIY Seed Tapes** (published 2025-03-29)

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Seed tapes are an innovative gardening tool designed to simplify the planting process, especially for small or delicate seeds. They consist of biodegradable materials embedded with evenly spaced seeds, allowing gardeners to plant with precision and ease. While commercially available, creating your own seed tapes at home offers numerous advantages.

The biggest advantage of seed tapes is the accurate sowing of small seeds, such as carrots, lettuce, spinach, and radishes. These tiny seeds can be challenging to handle and often lead to uneven planting when sown directly. Seed tapes ensure that seeds are appropriately spaced, taking the guesswork out of “eyeballing” the placement of seeds in the soil.

The benefits of making your own seed tapes are numerous. By controlling the exact spacing of seeds on the tape, gardeners can ensure that each plant has adequate room to grow, leading to healthier plants and better yields. Accurate spacing also minimizes the need for thinning, thereby conserving seeds and reducing waste.

The protective layer of the seed tape also prevents seeds from being washed away by rain, or disturbed by wind, and reduces pilfering by animals and insects. This added layer of protection increases the chances of successful germination.

Making seed tapes at home is also more economical, utilizing readily available materials like toilet paper and flour paste. This DIY approach eliminates the need to purchase pre-made seed tapes. They can also be prepared in advance during the grey winter months, allowing gardeners to plan/organize their planting schedules even when there's snow on the ground. Creating your own seed tapes is a straightforward process that requires minimal materials and time. Here's a step-by-step guide:

First, you'll need some basic materials that are most always readily available in your home. These materials are toilet paper (preferably single-ply), flour, water, toothpicks or small paintbrush, ruler, pen or marker, paper plate (for holding seeds), plastic sandwich baggies (for storage), and (of course) your favorite seeds.

After assembling your materials, just follow these simple instructions:

1. Prepare the adhesive: Make your “seed glue” by mixing a 2:1 ratio of flour to water (e.g., 2 tablespoons of flour to 1 tablespoon of water) until it reaches a thick, glue-like consistency.
2. Prepare the paper: Unroll a manageable length of toilet paper and fold it in half lengthwise to create a crease, then unfold it.
3. Mark seed spacing: Refer to your seed packet for the recommended spacing. Using a ruler, mark dots halfway between the crease and one edge of the paper at the recommended planting intervals. Your dots should be centered between the crease and the paper edge.
4. Apply adhesive and place seeds: Dip a toothpick or paintbrush into the flour paste, then pick up a seed and place it on a marked dot. Repeat this process for all marked spots.

5. Seal the tape: Fold the unmarked half of the toilet paper over the seeds until the outer edges align, adding a few additional dots of paste along the edge to secure it. Label the tape with the seed type for future reference.
6. Dry and store: Allow the seed tape to dry for a few minutes. Once dry, fold it gently and place it in a plastic baggie for storage until you're ready to plant.

Once the seasonal conditions for planting your selected variety of seeds are suitable, it's time to plant your seeds. Refer to the seed packet for the recommended planting depth. For seeds that require less than ¼" depth, roll the seed tape directly on the soil. For those that require deeper planting, use a trowel or similar tool to create a planting furrow of appropriate depth.

After unrolling the seed tape onto the soil and covering with the appropriate depth of soil, gently water the area to moisten the soil, ensuring good contact between the seed tape and the soil. Similar to traditional seed planting, you'll need to keep the soil consistently moist until the seeds germinate, and seedlings establish.

That's it...you're done. So, if you find yourself anxiously awaiting the spring planting season, consider incorporating DIY seed tapes into your gardening routine. This method can lead to more efficient planting, better crop yields, and a more enjoyable gardening experience. Until next time, keep workin' th' dirt!

### **Resources**

“Make Your Own Seed Tape.” University of Maryland Extension.

<https://extension.umd.edu/ensp.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-03/FC-MGPub%20Make%20Your%20Own%20Seed%20Tapes%20Fair.pdf>

“Making A Seed Tape (Handout).” Virginia Cooperative Extension.

[https://ext.vt.edu/content/dam/ext\\_vt\\_edu/topics/4h-youth/makers/files/ww1-seeds-war-gardens.pdf](https://ext.vt.edu/content/dam/ext_vt_edu/topics/4h-youth/makers/files/ww1-seeds-war-gardens.pdf)

“Prepare Seeds with Seed Tape.” Kansas State Research and Extension. <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/news-and-publications/news/stories/2024/03/horticulture-seed-tape.html>

For more information about gardening, visit UTHORT's YouTube site for helpful videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjS3d1IkIH1OZ1Z2qPvhgfQ>

Or Washington County's YouTube site:

<https://www.youtube.com/@utextensionwashingtoncounty>

### **How do I ask a question?**

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net). Click the link at the top of the page, “ASK A MASTER GARDENER” to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.