



A word about Minnehaha Master Gardeners: We are volunteers trained through the South Dakota State University Extension [Master Gardener Program](#). The mission of MMG is to enhance and supplement community educational efforts of the SDSU Extension Master Gardener Program and to provide research-based education and information on horticulture and environmental stewardship. For more information on becoming a Master Gardener, visit [SDSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer program](#)

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Find out more about us!





Early Blight



Septoria Leaf Spot

Tomato Blight: Identify, Prevent, and Treat

Carla Goetsch, Master Gardener

Tomato blight is a serious group of fungal infections that attack tomatoes in different ways at different times. Prevention is better than attempting a cure, since once on the plants, it is very difficult to treat. Knowing what type of blight is present helps in attempting a cure.

There are three main types to look for: early blight, late blight, and septoria leaf blight.

Early Blight: This fungal disease occurs when lower leaves come into contact with contaminated soil or when water splashes from soil onto leaves. Dark brown or black, large lesions appear on the lower leaves. They have a ring-like appearance, like a bull's eye.

Eventually, leaves fall off, and it moves to the tomato fruit. Up to 50% of the fruit can be lost. There is no cure for early blight, but damage can be minimized by removing infected lower leaves. To prevent early blight, do not compost these leaves and wash hands/gloves before touching the healthy plant. To prevent water plants from below and practice crop rotation to avoid tomatoes being in the same location for more than one year. Some varieties of tomatoes are more blight-resistant.

Late Blight: This far less common but far more deadly to the plants. It affects all the nightshade vegetables. It was the cause of the Great Potato Famine of the 1840s. It is more common in cool, moist conditions. It appears as dark green or brown lesions covered with a white fungal growth. Leaves and the stems appear water-soaked. Fruits decay very quickly. Pruning the affected area may offer minimal benefit, but the best course of action would be to pick the unaffected tomatoes and pull out the plant.

Any pruners or hoes need to be disinfected. You need to avoid planting any nightshade vegetables in that location for four years. No image of this type is needed since the plant will appear waterlogged one day and very dead the next couple of days.

Septoria Leaf Spot is the most common tomato blight, but it is also the least harmful. It appears late season after wet or humid weather. It appears as small black dots on the lower leaves that begin to fall off. The tomatoes are usually not affected, but if the plant is severely damaged, the yield can be reduced. Prevention is the same as for early blight.

Treatment involves removing affected leaves, and, as a last resort, fungicide can be used.

SEED SNAILS: Starting Seeds Using A Space-Saving Method

Debi Ulrey-Crosby, Master Gardener



Have you heard of the new seed starting craze called “seed snails”? It’s sometimes referred to as “seed roll,” “snail nursery,” or even “seed snail jelly roll.”

But whatever you call it, I think it’s a fun way to start seeds indoors while saving space. It’s also a great way to recycle various types of plastic and paper, such as pet/animal feed bags, soil bags, and Amazon packing envelopes. That’s another plus in my book!

There are several advantages to using seed snails to start your seeds, and it’s not too late to try this growing season. Saving space is probably the best reason for trying this.

Many seedlings can be grown in a small footprint, making this an ideal method for apartments or small shelf space. The plant’s roots are usually less tangled than when grown in a tray, and transplanting is easier with less root disturbance and easier separation. The spiral shape helps retain moisture while still allowing good airflow.

Supplies are easy to find, and most are probably sitting around your house already:

- Flexible plastic/paper bags
- Potting mix soil (some use seed-starting mix, but do not use garden soil)
- Seeds of your choice

- Spray bottle or watering can
- Painters’/duct tape or rubber bands (painters’ tape is easiest)
- A tray or shallow container in which to sit the seed snail
- Optional: clear plastic humidity dome

Good Seed Candidates for seed snails:

- Lettuce
- Tomatoes
- Peppers
- Herbs
- Flowers
- Root crops *extra care needed since these crops don’t like their roots disturbed

Tips for success:

- Pre-moisten potting mix and remove any large pieces of bark.
- Don’t overwater – soggy snails can mold.
- Label each snail so you know what you’ve planted.
- Bottom watering works better than pouring from above.
- Thin weak seedlings early.
- Provide bottom heat, if possible, especially when newly planted.
- Provide strong light for 6 to 12 hours.

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SEED SNAILS - continued from page 4

Detailed directions are easy to find on the internet and various Instagram sites, but these quick step-by-step directions will get you started:

- Pre-moisten your soil.
- Cut strips of paper/plastic 4-6 inches tall and 2-4 feet long.
- Add ½- 1 inch of soil along the strip, leaving the last 2 inches free for taping the roll closed.
- Roll up the strip (snug but not too tight), starting at one end, rolling like a cinnamon roll.
- Secure the roll with 2-3 strips of tape, string, or rubber bands.
- Place seeds on top of the roll according to the seed packet instructions, cover lightly with soil, and mist gently with water, keeping the top of the soil slightly moist until seeds begin to grow.
- Place the seed snail upright in a tray. After the seedling begins growing, water only from the bottom.
- Transplant seedlings once they develop 2-3 sets of true leaves, or roots begin growing out the bottom.

References:

Farida Sober - Instagram

<https://www.instagram.com/faridasober?igsh=dWUOMnk4ZXBmNmNy>

GrowVeg: The Revolutionary Method for Starting Seeds

<https://share.google/ydvLAisnAcBA6YScd>

Seed Snails Review By Kendall's Greenhouse

<https://share.google/KVDUUAWAi8lhuWXvG>

Rural Sprout

<https://www.ruralsprout.com/snail-seed-starting-method/>



Turning Good Intentions into Success...

Houseplant Series, Part 3: The Adaptables: Easy, Vining Houseplants

Pam Conklin, Master Gardener

Some plants don't just survive—they adjust.

In nature, vining plants grow along forest floors and climb toward available light. They are built to adapt, using flexibility and movement to find better conditions. Indoors, they are among the most forgiving and rewarding houseplants.

This group includes Pothos, Heartleaf Philodendron, Satin Pothos, and Hoya. Their shared strategy is simple: grow toward opportunity while conserving energy.

Pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*) produces long, trailing vines with nodes that can root as they grow, allowing it to spread and recover easily. Heartleaf Philodendron (*Philodendron hederaceum*) has soft, thin leaves that efficiently capture filtered light. Satin Pothos (*Scindapsus pictus*) features slightly thicker, textured leaves that help reduce water loss.

Hoya (*Hoya spp.*), or wax plant, takes a slightly different approach. Its thick, waxy leaves conserve moisture, allowing it to tolerate some drying between watering. Given enough bright, indirect light and consistent care, it produces clusters of star-shaped flowers—a sign that conditions are just right.

In nature, these plants solve the problem of limited light by moving through their environment while carefully managing resources.

Care at a Glance

- Light: Low to bright indirect; adaptable
- Water: Moderate; allow the top inch of soil to dry (Hoya prefers slightly drier conditions)



A vining plant habitat: Pothos, Heartleaf Philodendron, Satin Pothos, and Hoya thrive together when their needs—light, water, and humidity—are matched.

- Soil: Well-draining, moisture-retentive
- Temperature: Average indoor conditions
- Humidity & Airflow: Prefer moderate humidity but tolerate typical indoor air

Extension Insight

Research from Penn State Extension notes that many low-light-tolerant houseplants, including pothos and philodendron, adapt well to indoor environments because they can continue to grow even with limited light. Their ability to adapt to varying light levels makes them reliable choices for a range of indoor spaces.

Houseplant Series, Part 3: Vining Houseplants Continued from page 3

Common Problems

Leggy growth or long leaf gaps often indicate insufficient light. Yellowing leaves may signal overwatering, while dry, crispy edges can point to underwatering or very dry air.

How to Help Them Thrive

Place these plants in areas that receive indirect light and give them room to trail or climb. Occasional pruning encourages fuller growth, and cuttings can be rooted easily in water or soil.

These plants respond to care—you'll see new growth, longer vines, and fuller foliage when conditions are right. Some, like Hoya, may even reward you with flowers when light and care are consistent.



Hoya (wax plant) produces beautiful, fragrant clusters of star-shaped flowers when conditions are just right.



Thanks to everyone who was able to join us at the 2026 Minnehaha Master Gardeners Plant Sale on May 9. We love sharing plants and gardening tips with you and hope you found all you were looking for.



Therapeutic Effects of Gardening

Candy Van Dam, Master Gardener

In recent years, gardening's therapeutic benefits have been recognized in both mental and physical health. Engaging with nature through gardening fosters a sense of well-being, reduces stress, and promotes health.

Reduces Stress and Anxiety

Gardening offers a natural way to relieve stress and anxiety. The act of nurturing plants and being in a green environment can promote relaxation. Studies have shown that interacting with plants and soil can lower cortisol levels, the stress hormone, while boosting feelings of calm and tranquility. The rhythmic tasks of gardening, such as digging, planting, and watering, can serve as a form of meditation.

Enhances Mood and Emotional Well-Being

Spending time in nature has a restorative effect on mental health. Studies have shown that exposure to greenery can reduce symptoms of depression and increase feelings of happiness. Gardens can also serve as peaceful retreats, places where individuals can escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Physical Health Benefits

Digging, planting, weeding, and watering can help improve strength, stamina, and flexibility. Regular gardening can also contribute to better cardiovascular health. It can also help maintain a healthy weight, lower blood pressure, and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

Social Interaction and Community Building

Gardening can foster social connections and a sense of community. Community gardens, for example, bring people together to collaborate, share knowledge, and cultivate not just plants but also friendships. Gardening groups can create a support network in which members encourage and motivate one another.

Whether through maintaining a personal garden, participating in community initiatives, or simply tending to houseplants, the benefits of gardening are accessible to everyone. Embracing gardening allows individuals to connect with nature and also nurtures the mind, body, and spirit—planting the seeds for a healthier, more fulfilling life.

ABCs of Gardening: E-H

Bonnie Lynch, Master Gardener

The following article is a reprinted series from 2008-2009.



E is for Earthworm – A terrestrial member of the phylum Annelida. Earthworms are very valuable to the garden because they transform organic material into humus, a plant food and soil conditioner. They are regarded as a helpmate, aiding in aerating the soil (allowing air and water to penetrate) and depositing castings as organic fertilizer. If you do not see worms when you dig in your garden, your soil is lacking organic matter. Add more compost.

F is for Fertilizer – Plants need food to grow and thrive. Organic or inorganic plant foods are used to amend the soil to improve the quality or quantity of plant growth. Common organic fertilizers are manure, fish emulsion, compost, and blood meal. Inorganic fertilizers may be dry, liquid, pelleted, or slow-release. The familiar listings of three numbers, such as 5-10-10 on commercial products, indicate the percentage of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

G is for Growing Season – The number of days between the average date of the last killing frost in spring and the first killing frost in fall. Vegetables and certain plants require a minimum number of days to reach maturity, so be sure your growing season is long enough for the selections you wish to grow.

H is for Hardening Off – Hardening off is the gradual acclimatization of greenhouse- or indoor-grown plants to outdoor growing conditions before transplanting. Normally, the plants are placed in a sheltered, sunny location outside for a few hours each day. They are moved each night indoors. Time outside should be gradually increased each day until the risk of frost has passed and the plant can be moved to a permanent outdoor location. The hardening-off process should continue for one to two weeks before transplanting.