



**Thrifty Indoor Gardening Tips** by Lawrence Papoff  
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Gear needed:

- potting soil – available at any garden centre, Canadian Tire\*, Walmart\* or Dollarama\*
- a plastic ladle for shovelling – available at Dollarama\* - \$2.00
- pots/planters – use cream cheese containers, yogurt, peanut butter containers or other plastic containers or bottles. Please eat or drink the contents first.
- exacto knife to size the containers
- egg cartons – good for starting plants
- seeds from peppers, apples, pears, peaches, oranges, grapefruits avocados, mangoes, acorns, crab apples, cherries, carrot tops and potato cuttings
- a watering can from guess where? \$2.00
- A few large plastic beverage containers
- a sunny window
- a cardboard grow box
- a pair of pliers
- a small screw driver
- the ability to improvise

\*I do not own a Dollarama or have shares in one, but I live near one. I have no interest in a Canadian Tire or Walmart store either.

The gear doesn't cost much. But the tools get results. And if one of your efforts fails, all you do is throw out the seeds or plants, recycle the potting soil, clean the pots and start all over again. That's thrifty gardening.

**How to build a grow box.** Start with a cardboard box. Any size that fits your window or the sunny location of your choice. The box should be big enough to hold your seedlings in pots.

Cut off the flaps or fold them into the box. Line the inside of the box with tin foil. (See illustrations below.) The foil increases the amount of light that you need to grow your plants. Before you glue or staple in the foil, crinkle it. That reflects even more light.



## A pepper seed light meter

Not sure if your window or other sunny location has enough sun to grow plants? Try planting some peppers seeds in a small pot of soil. Dry the seeds and cover them in the soil. Moisten the soil. Put the pot in the window or other location where you want to them grow.

Keep the soil moist. It won't take more than a few days before the seeds sprout.

If after 5-10 days, the seeds sprout and send tall, skinny seedlings upwards, they won't grow into peppers. Why? Because there's not enough light in your chosen area. What the seedlings are doing is growing tall in their search for sunlight. They shouldn't have to. If they have enough light, they will grow out, not up, and bushy.

To be doubly sure, try putting your seedlings in a grow box and see what happens. Then if all you get are spindly plants, consider raising low-light plants.

Grow lights work, but take into consideration that they can be pricey. They are good if you are going to take your plants outside in the Spring.

## Starting seeds in an egg carton

A good starting place for seeds like peppers is an egg carton – the papier mâché ones with 12 pods. Fill each pod with soil and plant a few seeds in each. Put the carton in a plastic container and pour water into the container. The egg carton absorbs the water and becomes self-watering. All you need to do is make sure the water level is high enough in the container.

When your seedlings are big enough to transfer to a larger pot, simply cut the pod out of the carton, remove the bottom of the pod and plant the seedlings, pot and all.

Eventually, the pod will compost into the soil around it.

### Cracking peach pits

Thinking about growing a little peach tree in your apartment or condo? First, you'll have to crack open the pit to get the seeds. No, you can't plant the pit and expect it to rot. The stubborn little critters take forever to compost. So, you're going to have to crack open the pit.

Take a small screw driver and poke the blade into one of the grooves in the pit, then wiggle the screw driver around *GENTLY* until the pit cracks.

If that doesn't work, place a large, clear plastic bag over your hands. The plastic bag will protect your eyes should the pit shatter.

Now squeeze firmly. That should do it. If not, using a pair of pliers, place the little devil in the jaws of the pliers as if you were cracking a nut. Cover you hand with the bag. Now, squeeze. That should do it.

### Starting plants in the frigo

Try growing an apple, pear, or peach plant. Put the seeds in a small, clear plastic container like what hummus comes in. No, I won't name the deli where you can buy the hummus.

Fill the container with potting soil and dry seeds, moisten the soil and close the container. Put the container at the back of your frigo and check it once a month. Leave it until April. You should see seeds sprouting by then. Move the sprouts to an egg carton and off you go.

Why a clear plastic container? Because you can see what's going on in the container without disturbing the contents.

**Improvise! Improvise! Improvise!**

Look to YouTube for tips. Try them. If they don't work out, try something else. Don't be afraid to take the part of the tip that suits you. You may find that starting seeds by wrapping them in a damp paper towel and letting them sit in a warm, dark place such as a filing cabinet works better than putting them in a box full of soil in your frigo. Or why not put them in damp paper towels in the frigo and skip the soil? Improvise! Improvise! Improvise! Remember: You have the long winter ahead. So there's plenty of time to experiment. It'll keep you busy. Shrug off your mistakes. It's all in the game.

And please, please, please share your successes and failures with the rest of us.

For more tips, see <https://www.thespruce.com/apartment-gardening-for-beginners-4178600>

