



Action Step 2

Soil: Preparation

Soil is your plant's home. Take care of your soil and your plants will love you for it. Apart from the soil where your main organic vegetables grow to full size, you will use a soil-less medium where you will grow 'saplings' (also known as 'starts' or 'transplants'). Your saplings will then be planted outdoors when the outdoor conditions are right. We start seeds indoors to get an early start on the season and also because some vegetables grow better when planted as saplings as opposed to being sown directly as seeds. Refer to the tables in **Action Step 8** to know which vegetables ought to be started indoors as transplants, and which ought to be sown directly in the soil as seeds (and also which ones do well either way!).

What you will need

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Potting cell trays | 4 | Labels |
| 2 | Tub (to contain and prepare potting mix) | 5 | Marker |
| 3 | Bottom trays (to bottom-water potting cells) | 6 | Potting table (or high surface) |

Note: Complete the procedures under this Action Step ONLY when you are ready to plant. If you are not ready to plant, just review this Action Step so you understand the difference between indoor and outdoor planting and HOW you ought to prepare your soil.



Seed starting indoors

There are two simple formulas you can follow for your growing mediums. Here's the first one.

FORMULA 1
STARTING INDOORS

For growing saplings that will be transplanted into the main growing area later (balcony or backyard):



USE

Commercial organic 'seed-starting mix'

OR

50% peat moss (or coco coir) + 50% vermiculite



Peat moss



Vermiculite



Commercial organic 'seed-starting mix'



Prepare your growing medium

- 1 Thoroughly wet your mix using lukewarm water. You will use approximately 1 litre water in 20 litres of the mix. Ensure the mix is wet, but not dripping wet.
- 2 Fill your potting cell trays fully with your wet mix. Tap the potting cell trays on your working surface/potting table a few times to allow the mix to settle.
- 3 Top-up with more of the mix until each cell is full.
- 4 When you're ready to sow, head over to **Action Step 6**.



This is the second simple formula you can follow for your growing mediums

FORMULA 2
GROWING OUTDOORS



Soil in the main growing area (balcony or backyard):

USE *

All-purpose organic 'potting mix' for vegetables

OR

Make your own Mix 1, with:

- Topsoil (60%)
- Compost (30%)
- Peat moss (10%)

OR

Make your own Mix 2, with equal parts of:

- Compost (one-third)
- + Peat Moss OR Coco Coir (one-third)
- + Vermiculite (one-third)

If your topsoil, which is the top layer of the soil in your yard/garden, has a sandy profile, or you would like to use sand (which is 'red' or 'sweet' sand, i.e. without any salt content), first amend the sand by mixing in 4 inches of aged chicken or cow manure (remember, it must be aged manure, not fresh). Many backyards in the Middle East, and especially in The Gulf, have regular sand - unless you've replaced it with red sand.

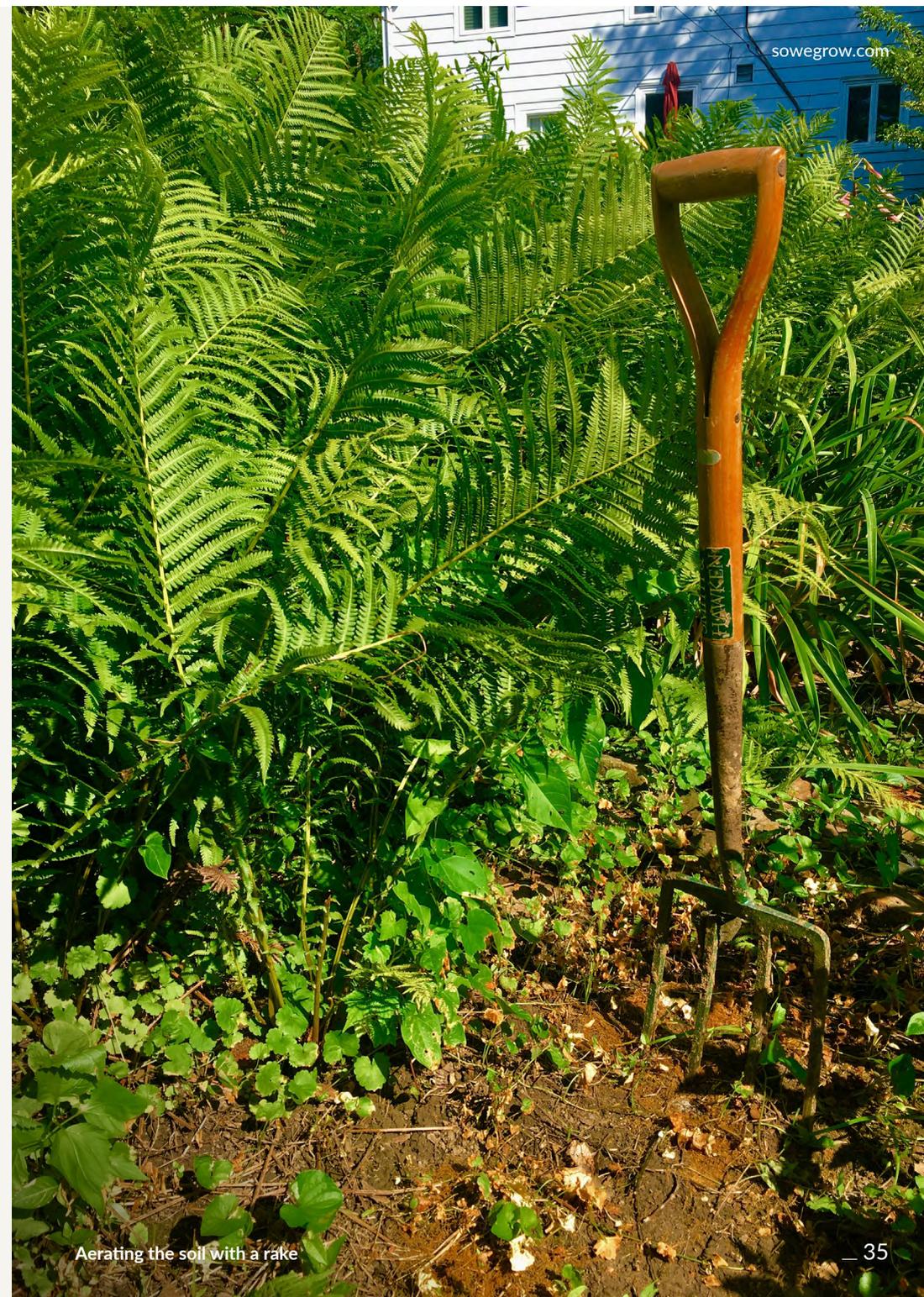
For Mix 1, if your topsoil has a clay profile, then add more peat moss, i.e. 20-30% peat moss, instead of just 10% (so you will use less topsoil in Mix 1).



Commercially produced organic compost

Prepare the soil to grow your organic vegetables

- 1 If you are making your own Mix 1 (see diagram on previous page), and planting in the ground, aerate (loosen) the soil with a garden fork or broadfork first
- 2 Depending on the volume of soil you are preparing, mix all items thoroughly with a shovel or a hand trowel
- 3 Don't prepare your soil much before you are ready to plant; to maintain nutrients and soil moisture, prepare your mix at most 2 days before you are ready to plant
- 4 When you're ready to sow or transplant, head over to **Action Step 6**



Aerating the soil with a rake



Proceed to the next Action Step once you have completed:

Your mix for indoor saplings + preparation

NOTES: _____

Your mix for outdoor saplings + preparation

NOTES: _____

