

SPROUTING SEEDS

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A large variety of seeds may be sprouted for human consumption. In all cases, the vitamin content may be expected to increase dramatically, particularly vitamin C. Exposure to sunlight during the sprouting will further increase the content of this vitamin, but may also result in a slight increase in bitterness in some sprouts.

Seeds commonly sprouted are: alfalfa, mung beans, wheat, lentils and corn. The unquestionable favorite to eat among my students has been alfalfa. These are excellent raw on sandwiches and in salads. Mung beans are the seeds used to produce Chinese "bean sprouts," and are superb in egg foo yong and chop suey. Do not overcook these, or they turn to mush. Wheat sprouts are very sweet, and can be used in salads if they are chopped to reduce their stringiness, or included in bread dough to produce wheat-sprout bread. Lentils may be used raw in a salad, but must be used with other ingredients because of their strong flavor. Corn sprouts are best ground and added to cornbread, or yeast raised breads. Moonshiners use them to make mash.

In the dead of winter, sprouts offer a means of producing one's own fresh greens and vegetables, and provide healthful and tasty foodstuffs at a time when vitamin content is lowest in commercial foods. At home, we usually sprout $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of alfalfa seeds in a gallon jug. We get alfalfa seed from the Landmark Feedmill in Bethel. Verify that the seeds have not been treated with any poisons!

Fresh sprouts may also be used for the preparation of chromosome squashes by digesting, staining and squashing the very tips of the roots where mitosis is frequent. Sprouting onion (suspend by toothpicks $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep in water) gives excellent mitotic figures.

EQUIPMENT

Mason quart jars with rims and lids
(alternatively, a jar with rubber band)
clean discarded panty hose
small ziplock bags

SUPPLIES (VIABLE SEEDS, one pound each):

<i>Dicots:</i>	<i>Monocots:</i>
alfalfa	wheat
mung beans	popcorn
lentils	rye

TO SPROUT THEM:

1. **Soak seeds over night** in a wide-mouthed quart jar half filled with water: use 1 Tbl (15 mL) alfalfa, or 2 Tbl (30 mL) of any the rest.
2. **Cover mouth of jar with a piece of nylon stocking**, held in place with a rubber band. (A more coarse-mesh stocking lets the water drain out better.)
3. In the AM, perform the following, but treat them gently to avoid snapping:
 - a. **pour out water**
 - b. **rinse twice with fresh water** to cleanse the seeds
 - c. **place upside down to drain freely**
4. **Repeat the rinsing and draining at least twice a day until the seeds have sprouted.** *Do not shake.* Keep them near the sink where you are more likely to remember to rinse them. If exposed to bright light they will develop a green color, and additional vitamins (as well as a trace of bitterness).
5. After they have sprouted to the desired degree, (for eating, 1-2 inches long. For chromosomes, roots should be $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 inch long), place in the fridge in a damp towel inside a plastic bag for at least a week. This is usually five or six days for alfalfa, and a week or 10 days for the rest.