



Did you know that some plants require a period of cold in order to thrive? Thus, they are best planted in the fall. The process is called cold stratification. Read on to learn more and check out which plants you should be planting this fall.

Cold stratification is a process that mimics the natural winter conditions many plant seeds need to break dormancy and germinate successfully in the spring. In Massachusetts, the cold winters naturally provide the necessary conditions for these seeds. Here is a list of plant seeds that typically require cold stratification:

Perennial Flowers and Wildflowers

- Milkweed (*Asclepias* spp.)
 - Essential for monarch butterflies; seeds need cold stratification for 30-60 days.

- Lupines (*Lupinus* spp.)
 - Requires stratification for 30-60 days for better germination rates.

- Echinacea (Coneflowers, *Echinacea* spp.)
 - Seeds should be cold stratified for 30-90 days.

- Black-Eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*)
 - Cold stratification for 30-60 days improves germination.

- Columbine (*Aquilegia* spp.)
 - Needs 3-4 weeks of cold stratification for optimal germination.

- Penstemon (*Penstemon* spp.)
 - Typically needs 30-60 days of stratification.

- Poppies (*Papaver* spp.)
 - Some varieties benefit from cold stratification for 30 days.

- Primrose (*Primula* spp.)
 - Requires 4-6 weeks of cold stratification.

- Baptisia (False Indigo)
 - Needs cold stratification for 4-6 weeks.

- Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*)
 - Cold stratify for about 30 days for best results.
- Jacob's Ladder (*Polemonium* spp.)
 - Requires 4-6 weeks of cold stratification.
- Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*)
 - Requires cold stratification for about 60 days.
- Wild Geranium (*Geranium maculatum*)
 - Needs cold stratification for 30-60 days.

Native Grasses

- Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
 - Requires 30-60 days of cold stratification.
- Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)
 - Cold stratify for 30-60 days.
- Purple Lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*)
 - Benefits from cold stratification for 30 days.
- Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)
 - Requires cold stratification for about 30 days.

Trees and Shrubs

- Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)
 - Needs 30-60 days of cold stratification.
- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.)
 - Requires 60-90 days of stratification.
- Maple (*Acer* spp.)
 - Many species require 40-90 days of cold stratification.
- Dogwood (*Cornus* spp.)
 - Seeds need 90-120 days of cold stratification.
- Hazelnut (*Corylus* spp.)
 - Requires 90-120 days of cold stratification.

- Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)
 - Needs a longer cold stratification period of 90-120 days.
- Oak (*Quercus* spp.)
 - Acorns often require 30-60 days of cold stratification.

Herbs

- Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.)
 - Some varieties require 30-40 days of cold stratification.
- Echinacea (Coneflower)
 - Needs 30-60 days of cold stratification.
- Angelica (*Angelica archangelica*)
 - Requires 30-60 days of cold stratification.
- Asparagus
 - Plant crowns or seeds in the fall for establishment over winter.
- Rhubarb
 - Plant crowns in the fall; they will establish roots over winter.

Vegetables (These plants don't require cold stratification in order to germinate properly, but they could overwinter nicely for an early harvest!)

- Garlic
 - Plant cloves in the fall for a summer harvest.
- Onions (Sets or Seeds)
 - Fall planting can lead to larger bulbs in the spring.
- Shallots
 - Similar to garlic, plant in the fall for a summer harvest.
- Carrots
 - Some varieties can be planted in the fall and overwintered for an early spring harvest.
- Spinach
 - Cold-hardy and will often overwinter for early spring growth.
- Kale
 - Can be planted in late fall; it will grow in early spring when temperatures are still cool.

- Radishes
 - Some varieties can be sown in the fall and harvested before the ground freezes or in early spring.
- Turnips
 - Sow seeds in late summer to early fall for a fall harvest or overwintering.

Cover Crops

- Winter Rye
 - Excellent for soil improvement and erosion control; plant in late fall.
- Crimson Clover
 - Adds nitrogen to the soil and protects it over winter.
- Field Peas
 - A legume that fixes nitrogen and provides organic matter.
- Hairy Vetch
 - Fixes nitrogen and adds biomass to the soil.

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