

# Garden Starter Tray

## Planting & Growing Guide



English



**AeroGarden™**

**NOTE:**

*Do not unwrap Tray until you are ready to plant your seeds. The plastic cover retains moisture that is critical for easy planting and fast germination.*

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**Photos of *Garden Starter Tray* for AeroGarden 6 and all 7-Pod model AeroGardens are shown throughout this Guide to accompany instructions. The same instructions apply to *Space•Saver 6 Garden Starter Tray*.**

*Additional blank Planting Schedules, Seeding Logs, Tray Layouts and Quick Start Guides are available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com)*



The *Garden Starter Tray* enables you to use your AeroGarden to start seedlings for transplanting into an outdoor garden. In just a small amount of space, with minimal care, you can now start up to 66 seedlings (36 seedlings for *Space•Saver 6* models) and get a jump-start on the outdoor gardening season.



This Guide will assist you in deciding what to grow, when to start your seeds, how to seed the **Garden Starter Tray** and how to care for and transplant your seedlings to an outdoor soil garden or containers. We recommend that you read this entire Guide before starting your seeds.

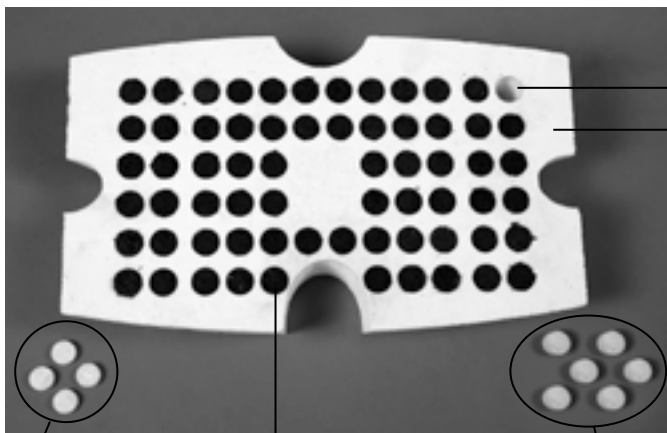
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## Garden Starter Tray Basics

The *Garden Starter Tray* has supplies for starting 36 or 66 seedlings (depending on model you are using) – enough to start a summer vegetable or butterfly flower garden for your yard.

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### What's Inside (66 Seedling Garden Starter Tray shown)



Grow Sponge Opening

Seed Tray

Small Nutrient Tablets (4)

Biodegradable, pre-moistened Grow Sponge with Dibble (36 or 66)

Large Nutrient Tablets (6)

**!** Do not unwrap Tray until you are ready to plant your seeds. The plastic cover retains moisture that is critical for easy planting and fast germination.

# Introduction *(Continued)*

## ***Additional Supplies***

There are a few additional items that you will need.



AeroGarden with *Deck* removed



Seeds



Watering Can

## **Planning Your Garden – Seed Selection**

### ***Sample Gardens***

There are thousands of seed choices available to grow in your *Garden Starter Tray*. To simplify the planning process, we've provided some plant lists for theme gardens that you can start in your *Tray*. Feel free to modify the lists any way you like, or plant a garden of your own design.

<b>Spring Vegetables</b>	<b>Summer Vegetables</b>	<b>Butterfly Garden</b>	<b>Children's Garden</b>	<b>Kitchen Herb Garden</b>	<b>Cutting Garden</b>
Lettuces	Beans	Alyssum	Beans	Basil	Zinnias
Spinach	Tomatoes	Cosmos	Pumpkins	Oregano	Black-Eyed Susans
Scallions	Bell Peppers	Nasturtiums	Watermelons	Thyme	Dianthus
Beets	Chilies	Petunias	Cucumbers	Cilantro	Snapdragons
Radishes	Cantaloupe	Verbenas	Crazy Carrots*	Mint	Phlox
Swiss Chard	Cucumbers	Candytufts	Marigolds	Sage	Rudbeckias
Broccoli	Eggplants	Phlox	Nasturtiums	Parsley	Calendulas
Brussels Sprouts	Zucchini	Zinnias		Savory	Campanulas
Cabbages				Dill	Foxglove
Cauliflower				Sorrel	Coreopsis

\*Carrot seedlings transplanted from a *Garden Starter Tray* into our outdoor test garden grew into some wild and twisted shapes. Children (and adults) had fun harvesting, naming and eating them. If you're up for some garden surprises, sow some carrot seeds in your *Garden Starter Tray*. To see pictures of our one-of-a-kind Crazy Carrots, please see page 16 of this Guide.

**Determining when to plant seeds in your *Tray* so that they are ready at the right time depends on a few factors:** *the last frost date for your area, what you want to plant and how quickly each seed type germinates and grows into a seedling ready to transplant.*

## ***Last Frost Date***

The last frost date is, on average, the last day in the spring that you might have a frost that can damage tender plants. It is a useful date to know when starting seeds indoors.

A great resource for specific information for your area is a local master gardener, someone at a garden supply store or a local cooperative extension agent.

You can also check the internet for Last Frost Dates in your part of the world.

## ***Rate of Growth***

You will find that seeds started in the *Garden Starter Tray* germinate and grow much faster than you may have experienced with other seed starting systems. That said, not all plants germinate and grow at the same rate. For example, tomatoes and peppers need about 6 weeks until the seedlings are ready for transplanting. In comparison, beans and cucumbers grow much quicker and need only 2 weeks of growth in the *Garden Starter Tray* until they are ready to transplant. This information is sometimes provided on the back of seed packets, but as with much gardening, the best guidance is from experience: your own, or a trusted expert at a gardening store or local cooperative extension service. Use this information with the last frost date to calculate the earliest date to start seeds.

## ***When to Transplant***

Some plants can withstand frost, others require frost free days and certain soil temperatures to thrive. For example, beets, lettuce and some flower seedlings can all be transplanted several weeks before the last frost. Summer crops, such as cucumbers, tomatoes, melons and beans, should only be transplanted after the last frost date. Your seed packet is the best source of "when to plant" information. **Keep in mind, you do not need to seed the entire *Tray* at one time.** Instead, you can stagger when you seed your *Tray*. For example, you can seed some *Grow Sponges* with spring

crops that can withstand a frost, transplant the seedlings outside and then seed the remaining *Grow Sponges* with summer vegetables or flowers that need warmer outdoor weather to thrive.

## ***Putting It All Together: Creating a Staggered Planting Schedule***

Following are two examples of how to create a staggered planting schedule. Use the blank *Planting Schedule* on page 19 of this Guide to calculate and keep track of your seed starting dates for each plant type. In each example, a sample *Planting Schedule* is provided. A month-to-month calendar also comes in handy when setting up your planting schedule.

### **Example 1: Planting schedule for summer vegetables to transplant after the last frost (e.g., non-frost tolerant plants).**

Suppose you live in Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A. and want to grow tomato, pepper and cucumber seedlings, which are **not** frost tolerant. The last frost date for this area is May 7 (date obtained from internet). Tomato and pepper seeds need about 6 weeks to grow before hardening off (see "*Hardening Off*" on page 14 of this Guide).

Using a calendar to count backwards **6 weeks** from the last frost date (May 7), gives you a seed starting date of March 26 for tomatoes and peppers. Cucumbers need only 2 weeks to grow, so counting backwards **2 weeks** from the last frost date (May 7), gives you a seed starting date of

*Continued on next page*

# Your Seed Planting Schedule *(Continued)*

April 23 or 4 weeks after starting your tomato and pepper seeds. All seedlings will be ready to harden

by May 7. An example of a completed *Planting Schedule* (shown below) includes all this information.

<b>Planting Schedule</b>					
<b>Last Frost Date:</b> <i>May 7</i>					
<b>Plants</b>	<b>Weeks to Grow</b>	<b>Earliest Seed Starting Date</b>	<b>Ready to Harden Off</b>	<b>Transplant Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Tomatoes</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>	<i>March 26</i>	<i>May 7</i>	<i>May 17</i>	<i>For cucumbers - Seed 4 weeks after tomatoes &amp; peppers.</i>
<i>Peppers</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>	<i>March 26</i>	<i>May 7</i>	<i>May 17</i>	
<i>Cucumbers</i>	<i>2 weeks</i>	<i>April 23</i>	<i>May 7</i>	<i>May 17</i>	

*Sample Planting Schedule for seeding non-frost tolerant plants. See page 19-20 for blank Planting Schedules.*

## Example 2: Planting schedule for both frost tolerant and non-frost tolerant plants.

Continuing with the example from Lansing, Michigan, U.S.A. (where the last frost date is May 7), suppose you want to also start seedlings for frost tolerant plants such as lettuce, beets, chard and scallions, as well as for non-frost tolerant plants such as tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers.

Scallions, beets, and chard seeds need about **2 weeks** to grow until the seedlings are ready for hardening off. The lettuce seeds grow quicker and can be planted a week after the scallions, beets

and chard seeds. In addition, these plants can all tolerate a frost and can usually be planted in the ground **6 weeks before** the last frost date.

You'll need another **1½ weeks** to harden off the lettuce, scallions, beets and chard plants before transplanting outside (more on this on page 14 of this Guide). Using a calendar to count backwards **9½ weeks** (2 weeks + 6 weeks + 1½ weeks) gives you a seed starting date of February 28. An example of a completed *Planting Schedule* (shown below) includes all this information.

<b>Planting Schedule</b>					
<b>Last Frost Date:</b> <i>May 7</i>					
<b>Frost Tolerant Plants</b>	<b>Weeks to Grow</b>	<b>Earliest Seed Starting Date</b>	<b>Ready to Harden Off</b>	<b>Transplant Date</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<i>Scallions</i>	<i>2 weeks</i>	<i>February 28</i>	<i>March 14</i>	<i>March 24</i>	<i>For lettuce - Seed 1 week after scallions, beets &amp; chard.</i>
<i>Beets</i>	<i>2 weeks</i>	<i>February 28</i>	<i>March 14</i>	<i>March 24</i>	
<i>Chard</i>	<i>2 weeks</i>	<i>February 28</i>	<i>March 14</i>	<i>March 24</i>	
<i>Lettuce</i>	<i>1 week</i>	<i>March 7</i>	<i>March 14</i>	<i>March 24</i>	
<b>Non-Frost Tolerant Plants</b>					
<i>Tomatoes</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>	<i>March 26</i>	<i>May 7</i>	<i>May 17</i>	<i>Start seedlings after transplanting spring crops outside.</i>
<i>Peppers</i>	<i>6 weeks</i>	<i>March 26</i>	<i>May 7</i>	<i>May 17</i>	
<i>Cucumbers</i>	<i>2 weeks</i>	<i>April 23</i>	<i>May 7</i>	<i>May 17</i>	

*Sample Planting Schedule for seeding frost tolerant and non-frost tolerant plants. See pages 19-20 for blank Planting Schedules.*

# Seeding Your Garden Starter Tray

Once you have decided which seeds to plant and when to start them, the next step is to decide where in the *Tray* to plant seeds, how many seeds to plant in each *Grow Sponge* and how deep to plant seeds. We recommend using a *Blank Tray Layout* (pages 21-22) and/or *Seeding Log* (page 23) to keep track of your choices and create a *Seeding Plan*. (Additional blank *Tray Layouts* and *Seeding Logs* available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com).)

## Tray Layout

The *Grow Sponges* are all the same size and receive the same amount of light, warmth and moisture. Following are a few guidelines that will help you decide where to plant each seed type. Use a blank *Tray Layout* (pages 21-22 of this Guide, or online at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com)) to work out and record your *Seeding Plan* (sample shown below).

- Use the outer *Grow Sponges* for seedlings with large, spreading leaves (such as beans, cucumbers and okra) to prevent them from shading other seedlings in your *Tray*.
- For a staggered seeding of plants with the same planting out date (e.g., all frost tolerant plants or all non-frost tolerant plants) use the inner *Grow*

*Sponges* for the slow growing seeds (which get seeded first) and the outer *Grow Sponges* for the fast growing seeds. This allows you to plant the fast growing seeds without reaching over and potentially damaging the seedlings that are already growing.

- For a staggered planting of seeds with different planting out dates (such as the lettuce, beet, scallion, chard, tomato, pepper and cucumber example on bottom of page 5 of this Guide), consider using every other *Grow Sponge* for the planting of frost tolerant plants. Again, this will ensure that leaves from the larger non-frost tolerant seedlings get enough light.

**Seeding Plan (AeroGarden 6 and all 7-Pod AeroGarden models)**

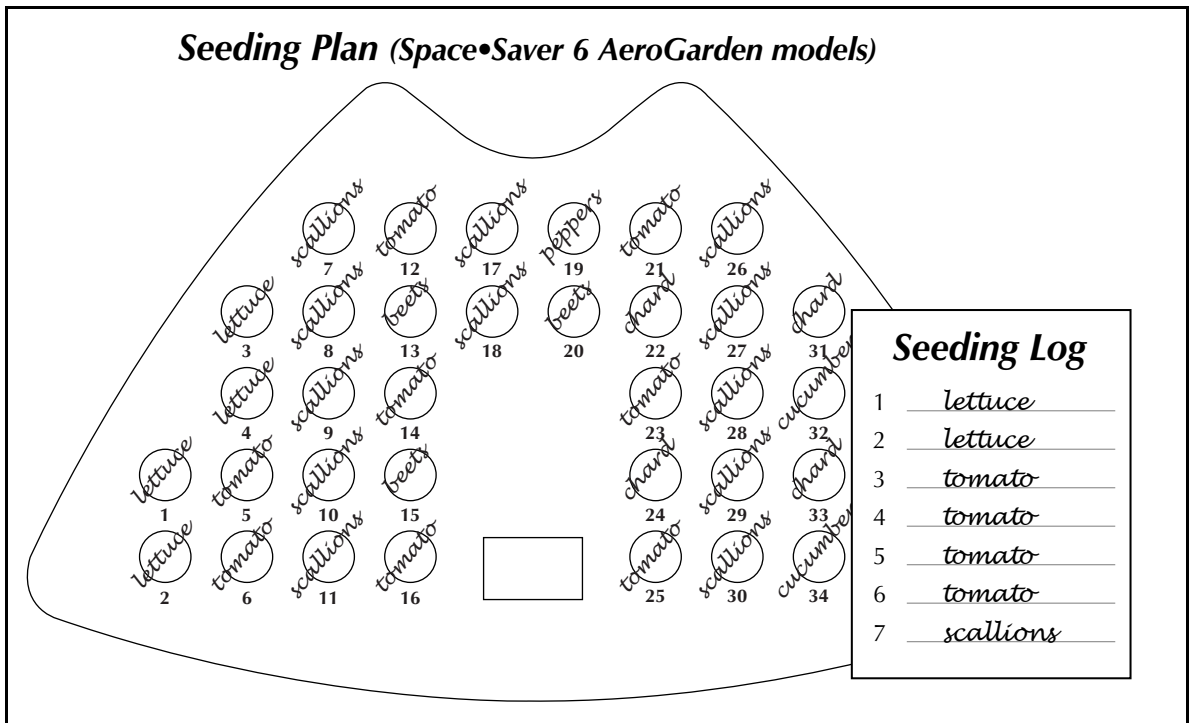
**Seeding Log**

1	lettuce
2	lettuce
3	lettuce
4	lettuce
5	lettuce
6	lettuce
7	tomato

Sample Seeding Plan for frost tolerant and non-frost tolerant plants from Example 2 on page 5. Blank Tray Layouts and Seeding Logs found on pages 21-24 of this Guide and also available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com).

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# Seeding Your Garden Starter Tray (Continued)



Sample Seeding Plan for frost tolerant and non-frost tolerant plants from Example 2 on page 5. Blank Tray Layouts and Seeding Logs found on pages 21-24 of this Guide and also available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com).

## Number of Seeds

As with an outdoor garden, it is important to plant extra seeds in each *Grow Sponge* to ensure germination success. A good rule of thumb is to sow only a few extra seeds for large seeds and fruiting plants. Increase amount of seeds as seed size gets smaller and for plants that grow in bunches, such as chives. For small seeds, typically 6 seeds does the trick. The table below provides recommendations of how many seeds to plant in each *Grow Sponge*.

### Recommended Number of Seeds per *Grow Sponge* and *Dibble* Size

Seed Size	Small	Medium	Large
<b>Example</b>	lettuce, scallions, chives, basil	beets, chard, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant	beans, cucumbers, melon
<b>Number of Seeds per <i>Grow Sponge</i></b>	6	4	2
<b>Recommended <i>Dibble</i> Size</b>	Universal <i>Dibble</i> 1/4" wide and 3/8" deep (already in each <i>Grow Sponge</i> )	Universal <i>Dibble</i> 1/4" wide and 3/8" deep (already in each <i>Grow Sponge</i> )	Enlarge <i>Dibble</i> to just larger than the size of the seed (see facing page)



## Seed Depth

The planting depth of seeds in your *Garden Starter Tray* will not necessarily be the same as recommended on seed packets from suppliers. Each *Grow Sponge* has a small, tapered hole near the center called a *Dibble*. The *Dibble* is adequate for most small and medium sized seeds. For larger seeds, the *Dibble* may need to be enlarged. We recommend using a *Tray Layout or Seeding Log* to keep track of which *Dibbles* need to be enlarged. Please refer to the table on page 7 for some guidelines on planting depths.

### Changing *Dibble* Size

Enlarging *Dibble* size requires only tweezers.

- Open tweezers to desired width of *Dibble* opening.
- Insert open tweezers into *Dibble* to desired depth, then close tweezers.
- Pull up on closed tweezers to remove part of *Grow Sponge*.
- Repeat above steps until *Dibble* is desired depth.
- Be sure to make **all** *Dibble* adjustments before seeding the *Tray*.



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## Seeding Your Garden Starter Tray *(Continued)*

It is important to seed your *Grow Sponges* and get the *Tray* into your AeroGarden on the same day. Otherwise, the seeds will start germinating without the benefit of moisture, warmth and light provided by your AeroGarden.

### Place Seeds in Grow Sponge

To avoid confusion, work with only one seed type at a time.

- 1 Empty contents of 1 seed packet onto a piece of paper or clean work surface. For larger seeds, you may be able to grab seeds right from seed packet.
- 2 Count out the number of seeds needed for one *Grow Sponge*. For example, take 4 seeds if you are planting beets. (Use the table on page 7 of this Guide to help you decide the number of seeds to plant in each *Grow Sponge*.)
- 3 Drop seeds into the *Dibble* with your fingers or tweezers.
- 4 Mark *Seeding Plan* to indicate which *Grow Sponges* are planted.
- 5 Repeat steps until all *Grow Sponges* for that seed type are planted.
- 6 Return unused seeds to packet.

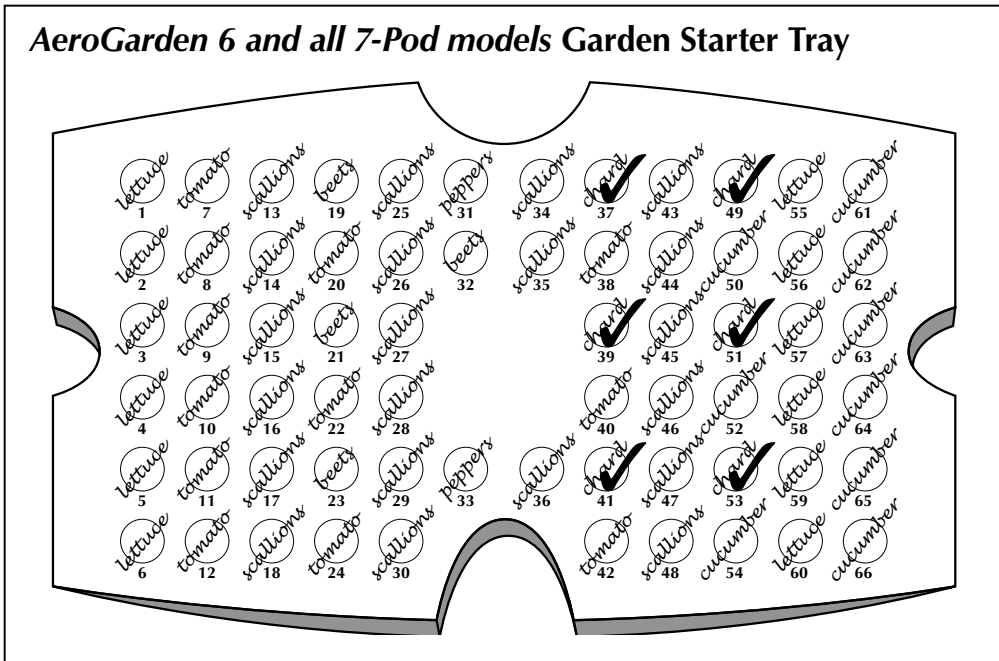


#### HELPFUL HINTS:

To avoid losing track of where you are on the Seeding Plan:

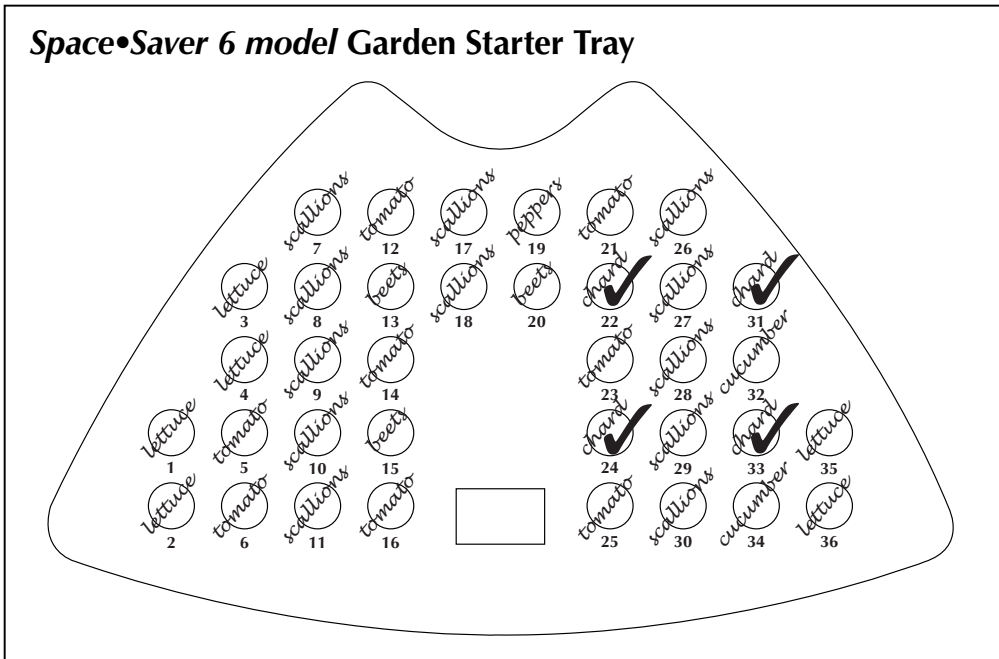
- Plant all of one seed type at a time.
- Start planting seeds on one side of the Tray and work your way across (rather than jumping around).
- Remember to check off each *Grow Sponge* on the Seeding Plan as you get it planted. (This way if you get distracted, you'll know where you stopped!)
- If you accidentally put in an extra seed or two, don't worry. There is still plenty of room for seeds to germinate and plants to grow.

## AeroGarden 6 and all 7-Pod models Garden Starter Tray



Sample Seeding Plan with planted Grow Sponges marked. Blank Tray Layouts and Seeding Logs found on pages 21-24 of this Guide and also available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com).

## Space•Saver 6 model Garden Starter Tray



Sample Seeding Plan with planted Grow Sponges marked. Blank Tray Layouts and Seeding Logs found on pages 21-24 of this Guide and also available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com).

# Setting Up Your AeroGarden

## Place Tray in AeroGarden

- 1 Remove *Grow Surface* from *Bowl* and set aside.
- 2 Lower *Lamp Hood* to lowest position.
- 3 Place *Bowl* on *Base*.
- 4 Add water up to "Fill to Here" inside *Bowl*.
- 5 Plug in AeroGarden.
- 6 Press "Select" button to set AeroGarden to "Tomatoes/Peppers" on 7-Pod models, and "Vegetables" on AeroGarden 6 and Space•Saver 6 models.
- 7 Press and HOLD "Reset" button for 6 seconds (Space•Saver 6 models), and 9 seconds (AeroGarden 6 and all 7-Pod models).

When "Add Nutrient" light begins to blink, release "Reset" button. Nutrient timer is reset.

*NOTE: In some cases, you may see other lights blink as well. This is nothing to worry about.*

- 8 To place planted *Tray* into AeroGarden:
  - Carefully lift *Tray* from work surface. Keep *Tray* steady to avoid spilling seeds from *Grow Sponges*.
  - Gently lower *Tray* into *Bowl* so the large semi-circle cutout for "Fill to Here" mark is in front.

*NOTE: To inhibit algae growth, cover any empty Grow Sponge Openings. (There is no need to cover unplanted Grow Sponges.) A bottlecap, a cut-out piece of plastic from a container lid or aluminum foil all work well.*



AeroGarden Classic shown



- Use room-temperature water. Very hot or very cold water will hurt your plants.
- We recommend using municipal tap, bottled or purified water. Well or softened water **SHOULD NOT** be used because the extra minerals in these sources may be harmful to aeroponically grown plants.

## Add Water

There should always be water in the *Bowl* of your AeroGarden. Using a spouted container, pour water into front of *Bowl* where "Fill To Here" is indicated. Always add water when "Water Low" light illuminates.



- Use room-temperature water. Very hot or very cold water will hurt your plants.
- We recommend using municipal tap, bottled or purified water. Well or softened water **SHOULD NOT** be used because the extra minerals in these sources may be harmful to aeroponically grown plants.

## Add Nutrients

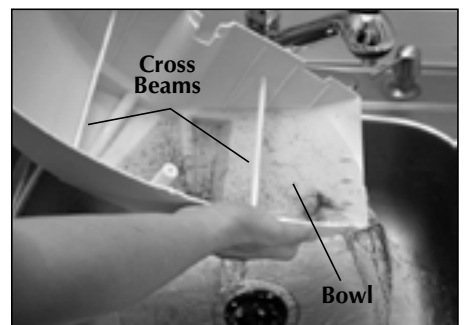
**For the first 2 weeks of growth, seedlings will derive all necessary nutrients from the *Grow Sponge*. After 2 weeks, you will need to add nutrient tablets.**

Every two weeks, "Add Nutrient" and "Water Level Low" lights will blink. At that time:

- 1 Unplug AeroGarden.
- 2 Remove *Bowl* from *Base* and bring it to a sink.
- 3 Remove *Tray* from *Bowl* and place on a counter that can get wet.
- 4 Empty contents of *Bowl* into sink and rinse *Bowl*. (Use water only.)
- 5 Fill *Bowl* with room-temperature water up to "Fill to Here" and set *Bowl* on counter.
- 6 Place *Tray* back on *Bowl* arranging roots over *Cross Beams* (if present).
- 7 Carefully replace *Bowl* on *Base* and plug in Garden.
- 8 **First Feeding—two weeks after seeding**  
Add 2 nutrient tablets from "Starting Nutrients" bag, reseal bag and press "Reset" button.

### All Other Feedings

Add 2 nutrient tablets from "Growing Nutrients" bag, reseal bag and press "Reset" button.



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## Tending Your Seedlings *(Continued)*

### **Thin Plants**

We recommended earlier in this Guide that you plant multiple seeds in each *Grow Sponge*. Often times this results in more than one plant growing in a *Grow Sponge*. Herbs, lettuces, and plants that grow in bunches (such as chives) do not require thinning. However, with broad-stemmed varieties, such as fruiting plants, it is best to thin plants as described below.

- When plants are about 2" (5cm) tall, check each *Grow Sponge* for multiple plants. Using scissors, gently snip the smallest plants at the base of stem, leaving ONE healthy plant in each *Grow Sponge*.
- Thinning seedlings ensures that the remaining plant in each *Grow Sponge* will have room to grow, get enough nutrients.



! Be sure to cut, not pull, the extra seedlings to avoid damaging the roots of the strongest plant in each *Grow Sponge*.

## Planning Your Outdoor Garden

A good time to plan and prepare for your outdoor garden is while seedlings are growing.

### **Prepare Your Soil**

For seedlings to thrive, they'll need to be transplanted into soil that is amended with organic matter so it has good drainage, can retain water, is aerated and has an ample supply of nutrients.

Make sure soil is not too wet before you begin working it or transplanting seedlings outdoors. To check for moisture, pick up a small handful of soil and squeeze it into a ball. If soil clumps together, then soil is still too wet to work. Let it dry out some more before working it. If the ball of soil can be easily broken apart by pressing it between your thumb and index finger, then soil is ready to be worked.

### **Plant Size**

Though seedlings are small – mature plants can be quite large. Consider how much space each mature plant requires and make sure you

have room in your garden. See seed packets for minimum space requirements between plants and rows. (*Raised beds, intensive and container gardening methods allow for closer plant spacing.*)

### **Garden Plans**

It is helpful to know where you want to place each plant in your outdoor garden before you begin transplanting. Pre-planning makes transplanting go quickly, which means less stress on your young seedlings. Here are a few basic rules to follow when planning your outdoor garden:

- If possible, orient the long axis of your garden in an east-west direction, to maximize the amount of sun each plant receives.
- Refer to seed packets for recommended plant and row spacing, as well as light, water, and fertilizer requirements.

# Moving Seedlings to Your Outdoor Garden

Once soil is prepared and seedlings are grown, it is time to harden off and transplant seedlings to your outdoor garden. If you are new to gardening, please take a moment to read this entire section and “Caring For Young Seedlings” before transitioning delicate seedlings to the outdoors.

## Hardening Off

Hardening off seedlings eases their transition from the AeroGarden to the outdoors, where they will be exposed to full sunlight, temperature variations and wind. It entails slowly increasing the amount of time seedlings spend outside while still in the comfort of the AeroGarden. Allow about 1½ weeks for hardening off. (See *Sample Hardening Off Schedule*, right.)

### To harden off seedlings:

- Remove *Bowl* (with *Tray* and seedlings) from *Base* and bring outside.
- Return *Bowl* to *Base* when you bring it indoors.
- Keep *Bowl* filled with water to “Fill to Here.”
- Remember to add nutrient tablets when “Add Nutrients” light illuminates.
- Bring *Bowl* inside if weather turns bad or temperature is below 45°F (7.2°C). Add a day to the hardening off schedule for any weather-related missed days.

## When to Plant

Although a clear warm day may be a nice time to be in the garden, it is **NOT** what you want when it is time to transplant your seedlings outdoors. A perfect day for transplanting is one that is damp, drizzly and cool. If such a day does not come your way, then transplant seedlings near the end of the day, when the sun is low and temperatures have cooled. It is okay to keep your seedlings in the *Tray* and AeroGarden for a little extra time if you want to wait for the weather to cooperate or just for convenience. Just be sure to add nutrients if “Add Nutrients” light is on.

## Sample Hardening Off Schedule

- Day 1:** Put *Bowl* outside in a shady, protected area (i.e., no wind), for 2 hours between midmorning and early afternoon
- Day 2:** As above, but outside for 4 hours
- Day 3:** As above, but outside for 6 hours – start nudging the *Bowl* towards sun to provide partial sun
- Day 4:** As above, but outside for 8 hours and a little more sun
- Day 5:** As above for 4 hours and then full sun for 4 hours
- Day 6:** Partial sun 2 hours full sun for 6 hours
- Day 7:** Full sun 8 hours
- Day 8:** Full sun 10 hours
- Day 9:** Full sun—outside 12 hours
- Day 10:** Outside all day and night
- Day 11:** Transplant

## Water Garden

The day before you plant (preferably after the hottest part of the day has passed), water your outdoor garden or container. The moisture in the soil will help ease the shock to your newly transplanted seedlings. If you miss the night-before watering, you can water early in the morning of the day you plan to plant. Just allow plenty of time for the water to drain before you begin transplanting. Transplanting in saturated soil is not a good idea. You’ll end up compacting the soil.

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# Moving Seedlings to Your Outdoor Garden *(Continued)*

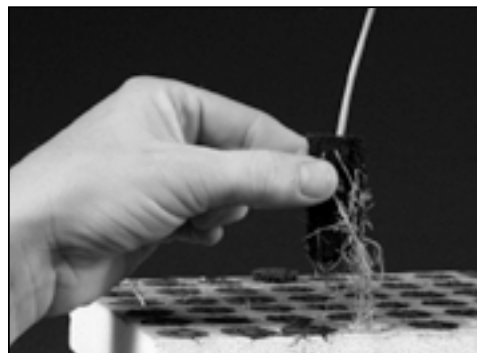
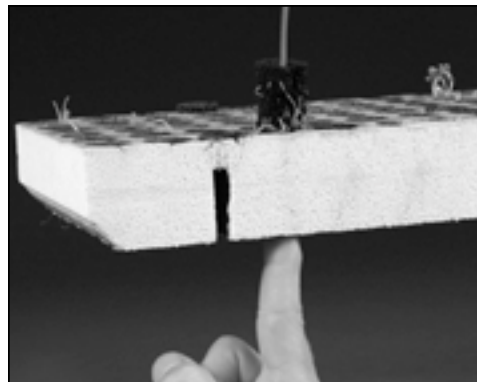
## ***Transplant Seedlings***

### Supplies needed:

- ✓ A filled watering can
- ✓ A narrow trowel
- ✓ Your garden plan indicating seedling locations
- ✓ Your *Tray* of hardened-off seedlings

To transplant seedlings, take entire *Bowl* and *Tray* outside. Follow these 4 basic steps for each seedling until entire *Tray* is planted:

- 1) Dig hole;
- 2) Remove seedling from *Tray*;
- 3) Place seedling in hole and fill; and
- 4) Water seedling.



### **1 Remove Seedling from *Tray***

- Lift *Tray* from *Bowl*.
- With finger, gently push up on *Grow Sponge* bottom.
- Remove from *Tray* holding *Grow Sponge* – not plant.
- Return *Tray* to *Bowl*.

### **2 Dig Hole**

- Insert trowel about 3" (7.6cm) into soil at marked location.
- Pull trowel toward you to create an opening in soil and leave trowel in soil...

### **3 Place Seedling in Hole and Fill**

- With trowel still in soil, put *Grow Sponge* in hole so its top is about 1/2" (1.2cm) below the surface.
- Hold *Grow Sponge* in place and pull out trowel.
- Fill with soil around, and to the top of *Grow Sponge*.
- Lightly press down soil to remove air pockets. At the same time, make a shallow, bowl-shaped, depression around base of seedling. This will help direct water toward your plant.

### **4 Water Seedling**

Water each seedling at its base by pouring 1 to 2 cups (.23 to .47 liters) of water into depression immediately after transplanting. (Do not pour water on top of delicate seedling!).

Repeat these 4 steps until all seedlings from *Tray* are planted. Once finished, go back and give each seedling another cup or two of water.



**Your seedlings will do best if they have care and attention after transplanting.**

## **Daily Watering**

Your seedlings need water every day. It is best to water when the sun is low, either in the early morning or evening. Water each plant at the base, rather than dousing the fragile stems and leaves with water from above (such as with a sprinkler). If you do not want to water each plant individually, then use a soaker hose or drip irrigation system. Provide enough water so that soil is moist to a depth of 3" (7.6cm). As your plants grow, you can start top watering rather than continue with the time-consuming watering of individual plants.

## **Frost**

Despite the best planning, a damaging frost may come your way. Keep an eye on the weather for any reports of frosts (temperatures below 32°F/0°C) and be prepared to cover young plants if necessary. Some easily found household items that

make good covers are yogurt containers, cardboard boxes, milk jugs, flower pots or baskets. Just remember to put a rock (or other weight) on top of these containers to stop them from blowing away. It is a good idea to place a small rock over the hole in a flower pot, to provide the best protection from a hard frost. Be sure to remove covers when the weather warms up.

## **What to Expect**

It takes about one to two weeks for your seedlings to adjust to the change in environment. After that, your seedlings will start to grow again. Follow the directions on your seed packets for fertilizing and caring for your plants. Soon you'll have wonderful harvests.

**HAPPY GARDENING!**

## Troubleshooting

### **My seeds are not germinating. What can I do?**

If seeds in your *Garden Starter Tray* do not germinate, the first thing to check is the expiration date on the seed packet. Viability of seeds decreases significantly with age. Also verify that your seeds were stored properly. Excessive humidity and/or heat can ruin a seed.

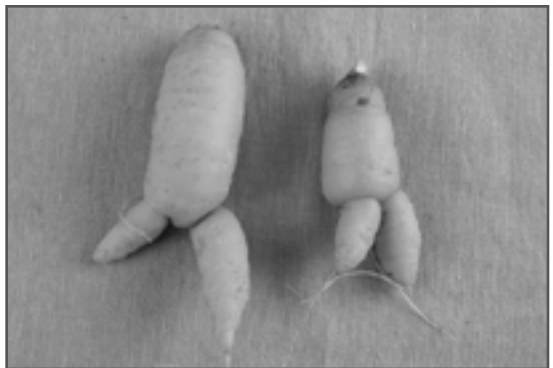
A hard outer coat on a seed may also hinder germination. Refer to your seed packet for suggested pre-planting treatments.

Finally, make sure you plant more than one seed in a *Grow Sponge*. Even the best seeds do not germinate 100% of the time. See page 7 regarding how many seeds to plant in each *Grow Sponge*.

### **Why are my fully grown carrots such strange shapes?**

The change in conditions between the *Grow*

*Sponge* and garden soil triggers some bizarre growth patterns in carrots. Enjoy the surprise of these unique shapes. Kids love to harvest these Crazy Carrots and eat them too!



Two examples of what your Crazy Carrots might look like.

*Continued on next page*

## What do I do if one of my seedlings die?

Occasionally you might find that one of the seedlings in your *Tray* does not thrive. If a plant dies, remove entire *Grow Sponge* from AeroGarden and cover empty *Grow Sponge Opening* to inhibit algae growth in *Bowl*. Choose a moisture-tolerant material such as aluminum foil or a plastic milk jug lid.

## Can *Grow Sponge(s)* be reused?

If your seeds did not germinate, you should be able to re-use your *Grow Sponge(s)*.\*

Gently remove *Grow Sponge* by pushing it up from the bottom of *Tray*. Remove non-germinated seeds and clean off any residue on *Grow Sponge*. Store in a sealed plastic bag or re-seed immediately.

*\*If there is any indication of algae growth or mold on *Grow Sponge(s)*, they are not re-usable and should be discarded.*

## What if one of my *Grow Bulbs* burns out?

Purchase replacement bulbs from your retailer or at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com). *Grow Bulbs* should be replaced after 6 months of use.

## What if my *Grow Bulbs* aren't working?

Make sure *Grow Bulbs* are firmly inserted into the *Lamp Hood*. Also check that your Garden is plugged into a working electrical outlet and the *Lamp Cord* is plugged into the *Lamp Hood*.

## Can I move my AeroGarden to another location?

Go right ahead! Your AeroGarden has a built-in backup system that lets you unplug it without losing any of the settings.

To move your AeroGarden, be sure to pick it up by holding the *Lamp Arm* with one hand and sliding your other hand under the bottom of the *Base*.

## My seedlings don't look healthy.

### What can I do?

If you are concerned about the health of your seedlings, please go through the following:

- Keep lights as close to seedlings as possible without leaves touching the *Grow Bulbs*.
- Replace *Grow Bulbs* after 6 months of use (see your models *Quick Start Guide* for instructions).
- Follow thinning instructions (see page 13).
- Don't use softened or well water.

## How do I take care of my garden when I go out of town?

Add water to raise level up to "Fill to Here." A newly planted *Tray* may not need care for 2 weeks or more. If your seedlings are more than a couple inches tall, and you will be gone for some time, you may want to make arrangements to have someone care for your Garden while you are away.

## Do I need to turn the AeroGarden lights on and off manually?

No. Your AeroGarden includes a built-in timer that turns your lights on and off at specific intervals. These intervals are designed to maximize the growth of your seedlings. The timing system started when you plugged in your AeroGarden. Every day it will automatically turn your lights on for 16 hours beginning at that time.

## Can I change the time of day lights go off?

Yes. To change the time your lights go off, follow the "Personalize Your Light Timer" instructions found in your model's *Quick Start Guide*.

## Does it matter what time of day lights go off?

No, for seedlings. It makes no difference to them when your lights go on and off. Some people like to have the lights turn off when they go to bed and come on in the morning when they awake. Others prefer to use the AeroGarden as a nightlight.

## Can I temporarily turn off my lights?

Absolutely. Just push "Lights" button and then immediately release to manually turn lights off (or back on). This will not change any settings for your AeroGarden and your lights will turn on (or off) at the next regularly programmed time. Occasional use of this feature will not harm or slow the growth of seedlings.

## What do I do with my AeroGarden after all seedlings have been planted?

For step-by-step instructions regarding the care of your AeroGarden after your seedlings have been planted, refer to "Prepare for your Next Garden" section in your model's *Quick Start Guide*.

See next page for *Garden Starter Tray* sanitizing and preparation instructions.

# Prepare for Your Next Garden Starter Tray

## **Clean AeroGarden:**

For step-by-step cleaning instructions, please refer to the "Prepare for your Next Garden" section in your model's *Quick Start Guide*.

## **Clean Tray before reusing:**

- Rinse *Seed Starter Tray* in water to remove plant or *Grow Sponge* debris. A small scrub brush or old toothbrush is helpful for this task.

## **Sanitize Seed Starter Tray:**

- Fill a sink or 5 gallon bucket with water.
- Add ¼ cup (.06 liter) chlorine bleach per 5 gallons (3.78 liters) of water.
- Dip *Tray* into solution for 2 minutes giving it an occasional swish or scrub. (If entire *Tray* does not fit into bucket/sink, turn it around to ensure that you sanitize all parts of it.)
- Rinse *Tray* under cold running water for about 2 minutes.

## **Place Grow Sponges in Tray (Do this only when you are ready to plant seeds)**

You do not have to plant something in each *Grow Sponge Opening* in your *Tray*. Just remember to store any unused *Grow Sponges* in an airtight bag and to cover all empty *Grow Sponge Openings* to inhibit algae growth in *Bowl*.

- Remove pre-moistened *Grow Sponge* from bag.
- Place *Grow Sponge* into *Tray* so that the *Dibble* is on top. (*Grow Sponge* is tapered, with the lower section narrower than *Dibbled* top.)
- Cover any empty *Grow Sponge Openings* with a moisture-tolerant material.

Your *Garden Starter Tray* is now ready for seeding.

*Refill packs* for Garden Starter Tray are available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com) or from your retailer.



*NOTE: Don't worry about Tray discoloration. As long as Tray is sanitized, staining will not affect the growth of your next planting.*

**Quick Start Guides available at:  
[www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com)**



## *Planting Schedule*

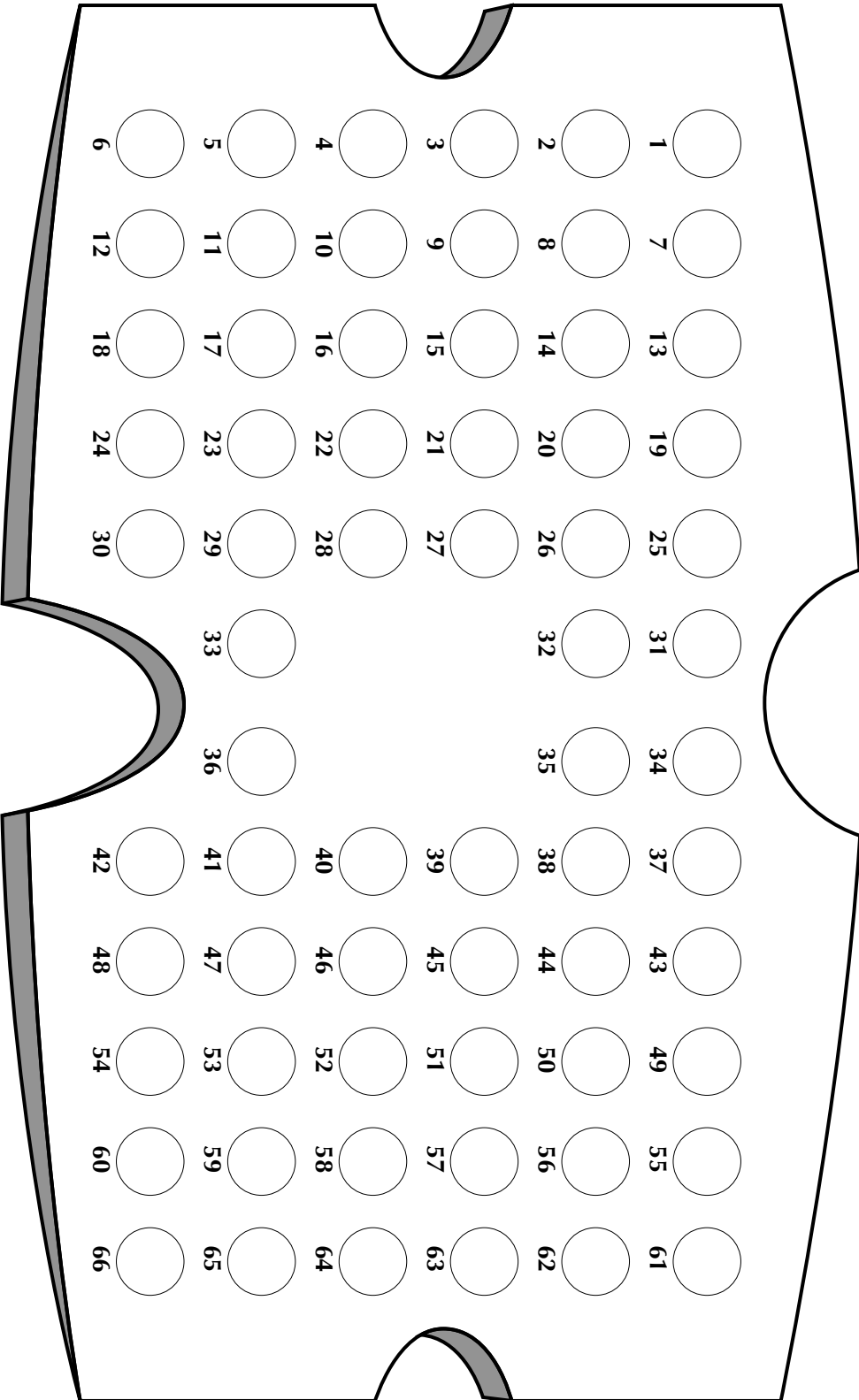
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Last Frost Date:

Plants	Weeks to Grow	Earliest Seed Starting Date	Ready to Harden Off	Transplant Date	Notes

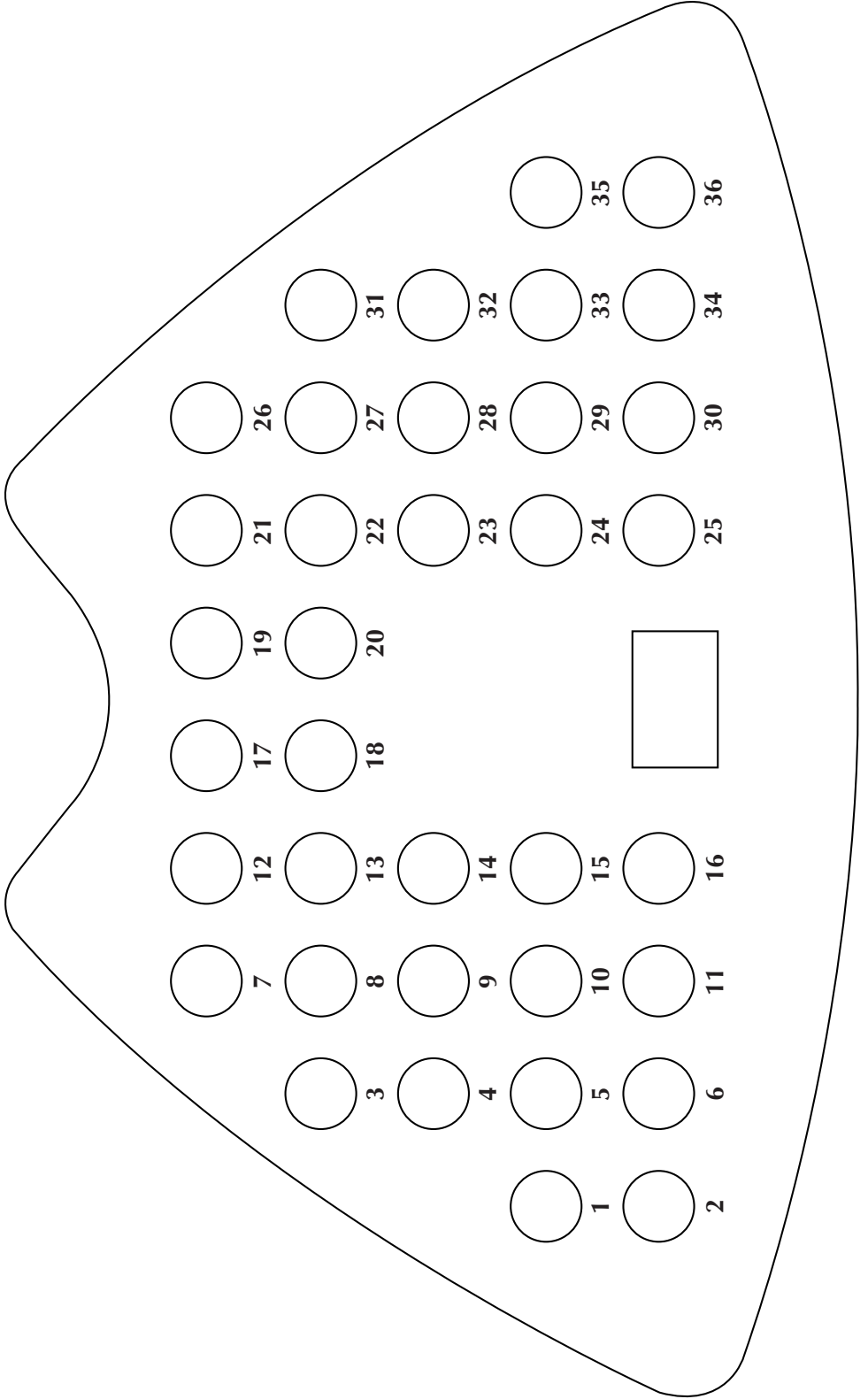
# Blank Tray Layouts (6- and 7-Pod AeroGarden models)

Use a blank *Tray Layout* and/or *Seeding Log* to record your *Seeding Plan*. Refer to "Seeding Your Garden Starter Tray" on page 6 for *Seeding Plan* examples and instructions. Larger versions of blank *Tray Layouts* and *Seeding Logs* are available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com).



# Blank Tray Layouts (Space•Saver 6 AeroGarden models)

Use a blank Tray Layout and/or Seeding Log to record your Seeding Plan. Refer to "Seeding Your Garden Starter Tray" on page 6 for Seeding Plan examples and instructions. Larger versions of blank Tray Layouts and Seeding Logs are available at [www.aerogardensupport.com](http://www.aerogardensupport.com).



# Seeding Log

This *Seeding Log* can be used with either *Garden Starter Tray*.

1	_____	34	_____
2	_____	35	_____
3	_____	36	_____
4	_____	37	_____
5	_____	38	_____
6	_____	39	_____
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8	_____	41	_____
9	_____	42	_____
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13	_____	46	_____
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24	_____	57	_____
25	_____	58	_____
26	_____	59	_____
27	_____	60	_____
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29	_____	62	_____
30	_____	63	_____
31	_____	64	_____
32	_____	65	_____
33	_____	66	_____



# Seeding Log

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1	_____	34	_____
2	_____	35	_____
3	_____	36	_____
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13	_____	46	_____
14	_____	47	_____
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33	_____	66	_____



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