

Ferocactus Growing Tips – For seed packet in your welcome bag donated by Fresno Cactus and Succulent Society.

Starting from seed: Growing cactus from seed is easy and rewarding. Cactus seeds need light to grow; sow them on top of wet cactus mix. Cactus need well- draining soil. A common cactus mix is 1/3 washed sand, 1/3 cactus compost, and 1/3 perlite. Some people prefer to mix their own soil and some people use commercial cactus mix and both work. The key is good drainage and plant seeds on top of the soil.

You can use the commercial seed starters with plastic domes. Fill these with cactus soil, place the seeds on top and cover with the dome. Let them sit on a semi-shady shelf. A couple times a week, take a quick peek to see how they are doing; that also refreshes the air in the dome. Depending on number of seeds available, you might plant 2 seeds per space in the domed containers, but make sure to allow at least 1-inch between each seed to prevent overcrowding later. The soil should be moist before you sow the seeds. Leave about 1/2- inch water in the bottom of the tray to make sure the seeds don't dry out. Do not let the soil dry out completely or become soggy. Either extreme will prevent or slow down germination. Cactus starts should be kept at around 77°, or 91° daytime maximum and 59° night-time minimum.

Germination can take place from 1 week to 5 months depending on growing conditions and quality of seed. Once the seeds have germinated, give them filtered light or partial shade. They need as much time in the light (not direct) as possible. 16-18 hours is good for cactus starts but not a requirement.

At this stage the cactus starts are very susceptible to mold. Slightly reduce how wet the soil is kept. If you do see mold then make a solution of 7 ounces of water to 1 capful of hydrogen peroxide. Mist this solution on the cacti lightly. Over the months keep increasing the warmth, the light/brightness, and let the soil dry out more between watering. Occasionally a seed might not germinate. If you have 2 healthy ferocactus starts close together, you can delicately separate these and put them into a section where a seed didn't germinate. Or you can leave 2 or 3 ferocactus starts together to make a clump, just be aware it can be susceptible to mold in areas where the light doesn't reach. In about 1-2 years, when the plants are big enough to almost touch spines they are ready for transplanting into individual containers.

