

Build a Seed Starting Grow Light Stand

By Wendy Weidenman

This is a good time to start thinking about your vegetable garden. Getting a head start on your vegetable garden will ensure having all your vegetables in the ground when Mother Nature allows. Many vegetable seeds can be directly planted as soon as the soil is warm enough. However, some of the more popular vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant need to be started indoors. Not only is it cost effective to start your own vegetables from seed, you also have the opportunity for earlier harvests along with stronger healthier plants. Additionally, there is something to be said for the satisfaction of seeing them sprout, and a great learning experience for the kids.

No need for a greenhouse to start your own veggies indoors. However, warmth and light are a must, two elements that are not readily available this time of year. Basically, you need a structure that will hold a 4-foot double bulb fluorescent light fixture. Using PVC makes this a very easy task. PVC is inexpensive, and anyone can assemble this with minimal effort and tools. This light stand can be very simple, or you can get more detailed with its functions. You can build your light stand for a tabletop or freestanding. Either way, the seedling-starting trays need to be on some type of table.

There are plenty of different designs to be found on YouTube, along with detailed instructions. I used 1 ½ inch PVC tubing and couplers, making the stand strong enough to do the job and not so pricey as to empty your pocketbook. Tools needed for the job are a hacksaw to cut the PVC and a drill if you want to get fancy with hanging your light fixture. No need to glue. Once the seedlings are started and, on their way, out to the garden, the stand can be dismantled for easy storage. The light fixture needs to be adjustable. When the seedlings start growing taller the light needs to be raised. This can either be done by adjusting the chain on the light fixture, or making the light stand adjustable. The project should cost a minimum of \$35.

Next, you'll need to provide warmth to your seedlings. Just the warmth of your inside air temperature is not enough. Most seedlings need the soil to be around 65 degrees to germinate. There are heat pads specially made for starting seedlings. I found a nice size heat pad on Amazon for \$13. If you can, try to designate an area inside your house for your seed starting project. While your seedlings are sprouting, you'll be misting them, so protect your floor from the overspray.

There are many sites that give step-by-step guides to building your own grow light stand, like this one: <https://oldworldgardenfarms.com/2013/01/08/how-to-build-an-indoor-seed-starting-rack-cheap/>. Get your structure ready now. May is right around the corner!

Wendy Weidenman is a University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Tuolumne County.

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