

Hardening Off

"Hardening off" refers to the process of acclimating plants from indoor temperatures to the outdoors. Because plants are usually grown in greenhouses, they've been pampered. They need to be introduced slowly to the elements of wind and intense sun.

Initially, put plants outdoors only for short periods of time, perhaps for a couple of hours. Set them in a shaded and wind-protected area of the yard. Gradually, increase the time plants are kept outdoors; also, gradually increase their exposure to sun. After 6 to 8 days these plants should be ready to remain outdoors.

It's a good idea to transplant on a cloudy day, when the plants won't get full exposure to the hot sun on their first day in the ground. When transplanting, arrange soil to provide support for stems and water with a weak solution of fertilizer.

Be aware of the possibility of frost and be prepared to protect tender transplants. Improperly hardened off plants will suffer leaf damage, stunted growth and could even kill a plant. Bell's Nursery will not be responsible for any improperly hardened off plants.

