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University of Idaho Extension
Extension Educator
Mike Bauer 263-8511

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

PLANT PROPAGATION FROM SEED:
AN INTERVIEW WITH LAURIE BROWN

Laurie Brown, of North Star Farm, teaches classes in plant propagation for University of Idaho Master Gardeners in Bonner County. There are a number of methods of propagating plants. This interview with Laurie is limited to starting garden plants indoors from seed.

What types of seeds need to be started indoors?

Laurie: In north Idaho, we have a short growing season. Plants requiring a long growing season or needing warm soil to germinate, such as tomatoes, eggplant, peppers and many annual flowers have a better chance of maturing if started indoors under controlled conditions.

Conditions needed for germination of seeds indoors?

Laurie: To germinate, seeds need moisture, oxygen, and a medium to maintain constant conditions. Use fresh, fine textured, sterile planting mix in clean containers. A general rule is to plant seeds to a depth of about three times the diameter of the seed. Moisten the planting medium, and cover with plastic, not touching the seed or soil. Maintain a temperature of 55 to 75 degrees for most plants. Plants take varying times to sprout, from a few days (calendulas, zinnias) or a week (tomatoes) to up to several weeks or longer for some plants. Avoid direct sun

during this time, as it can cause overheating. A tip for easy placement of seeds is to fold a 2” wide by 3” long piece of light cardboard lengthwise, place seeds in the fold and coax individual seeds into the planting container with a sharp instrument such as a knife point.

When the plants emerge and the first set of true leaves is visible, remove the plastic cover and make sure plants have sufficient light to keep them from getting leggy. Window light may not be enough for plants at this stage; adding full-spectrum florescent tubes placed about two inches above the leaves may be necessary. Begin feeding lightly with half strength fertilizer about twice a week.

Laurie Brown will join a panel of gardening “experts” on April 15, 6 to 8 p.m. at the University of Idaho Bonner County Extension office to answer additional questions. The class costs \$10. Call 263-8511 to reserve a seat.

Ann Warwick has been a University of Idaho Master Gardener in Bonner County since 1996. Laurie Brown is owner of North Star Farm and a former UI Master Gardener in Bonner County.

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