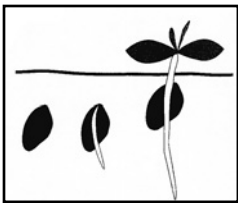


IT STARTS WITH A SEED

If you think of a plant as being like a movie script or perhaps even a computer program, you can better see how its life unfolds according to a predetermined chain of events. We call this chain of events the "stages of growth," and each of these stages can be triggered by internal or external stimuli. For plants, it all starts with a seed, which after sprouting becomes a seedling, and eventually becomes a mature plant capable of reproducing itself by creating new seeds. Note that when plants reach their reproductive stage, external genetic material is introduced which may ever so slightly, or even drastically influence the "program" of the next generation. This is how plants breed



All plants start from seeds. While many plants can be propagated by taking cuttings, most growers begin by planting some seeds and marvelling as they unfold into mature plants. The diagram shows how a seed planted just below the ground level first splits its case upon absorbing water, drops a root which grows downward with gravity and then breaks the surface forcing forward its first set of leaves as the husk drops away.

outdoors in their natural state. By growing plants indoors, breeders can control which plants exchange genetic material with each other to influence the outcome in a particular way that is beneficial for the breeder. For instance, if a tomato grower likes a particular tasting tomato, but finds it grows too slowly, he may "cross" it with a more rapidly maturing variety to speed up the process in future generations. I don't want to get too deep into the subject of breeding at this point, but I must stress that even with the most advanced hydroponic methods, garbage in = garbage out. So choose your stock carefully!

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