



Tips for buying seedlings

Sometimes we think buying the biggest seedlings is best.

However, there's more to choosing the best seedlings from your local nursery.

Four top tips for choosing seedlings:

- 1. Choose seedlings with only one seedling in each section of the punnet.
(Or two, if they're small and not close together).**

Why? Seedlings need to be separated from one another when being planted, otherwise they will compete for resources and likely none will flourish. This means you need to disentangle their roots. Soaking in a seaweed solution before will help, as will using bare hands and being very gentle, but inevitably some roots will get broken in the process. If seedlings are advanced and/or have lots of seedlings in each section of the punnet, many roots may get broken and the seedling will struggle to recover, or die, once planted out.

- 2. Choose seedlings in sectioned punnets rather than with all the seedlings together in one bigger pot.**

Why? See above.

- 3. Choose seedlings that have their second set of leaves, and are green, lush and not 'leggy'.**

Why? Seedlings should have their second set of leaves to show that they are big enough and strong enough to plant out. And those seedlings that are green, lush and with a more compact shape are likely to still have nutrients available in their punnet, and are not stressed. If they are looking 'leggy' (which means they look tall, and often their stems are falling over), they're overdue for being planted out and may not flourish.

- 4. Avoid seedlings that are yellowing, and especially ones that are flowering or, worse, going to seed.**

Why? A seedling that is flowering or growing seeds is likely stressed. Plants will push to grow flowers and set seed earlier than they should when they are stressed – they're trying to reproduce before they die. And a yellow seedling is likely nutrient deficient, and less likely to flourish once planted out.

Good luck and happy gardening!