

I've recently noticed them being offered for sale in many of the new 2014 seed catalogs. Apparently, they've been around for some time. Although I've never used them, they certainly have piqued my interest.

We've all heard of duck tape, scotch tape, painter's tape, adhesive tape, and electrician's tape. No matter the name, each of the previously listed tapes consists of a narrow strip of material covered with a sticky substance designed to bind or hold other objects together.

Behold the seed tape. My first thought was, "Oh boy, another gardening gimmick." Although somewhat similar in shape and form to the aforementioned tapes, seed tapes are designed for an entirely different purpose. The more I read about seed tapes, the more I realized they certainly can make gardening easier.

It's all about spacing. If you've ever planted carrot seeds, lettuce seeds or other tiny seeds, you know how difficult it is to space them evenly when planting. Most people plant these seeds much too closely to one another. After the newly germinated seedlings appear, they quickly become overcrowded if not thinned. Thinning is generally done by pulling or snipping off the extra seedlings. Although tedious and time consuming, the major issue with pulling the extra plants is disturbing the roots of those plants left in the garden. Such disturbance will sometimes delay or inhibit their growth and performance. Snipping-off the unwanted extra seedlings with a scissors doesn't disturb the soil, but it, too, takes time and is extremely tedious. The fact remains, if thinning is not done, the success and performance of the entire crop is greatly impaired.



Enter seed tapes. Seed tapes consist of seeds attached between narrow strips of biodegradable tissue layers ready for planting. Each strip has perfectly spaced seeds, ready to unroll into a planting furrow and cover. With seed tapes, the planting is precise, and there is no need for thinning. It's obvious, seed tapes offer convenience, while at the same time eliminating the back-breaking, time-consuming labor that thinning demands. For those reasons alone, one might consider using seed tapes in the garden. Other secondary qualities of seed tapes include the following:

- Seed tapes make it easy to plant straight rows.
- Seed tapes make for quick planting.
- Seed tapes eliminate waste.
- A seed tape prevents birds from eating freshly sown seeds.
- When covered with soil, seed tapes are less apt to wash away in a downpour.
- Seed tapes are biodegradable and cause no damage to the ecosystem.
- The germination rate for seed tapes is outstanding.
- Seed tapes are very convenient in children's gardens and for senior gardeners, especially for those dealing with arthritis or other mobility issues.

Interestingly, for the same reasons listed above, seed tapes are also offered in shapes and sizes other than a simple linear tape. They are also made into discs, mats, and carpets. Some tapes include one seed variety; others have multiple seeds, such as a salad mix. Many flower and herb seeds have been incorporated into these types of products.

One might ask, "Are there any disadvantages in using seed tapes?" The only disadvantage I could find was seed tapes are a little more expensive than purchasing seeds in bulk or in packages. That seems understandable to me considering all the extra assembling and packaging involved in the making of a seed tape. If interested in using seed tapes, I encourage gardeners to check out their availability at local garden centers and nurseries or many of the online garden retailers.

Perhaps, one might consider making one's own seed tapes. I googled ***Making Seed Tapes*** and found many excellent websites with simple instructions on making reliable, inexpensive seed tapes. Although it might take a little extra time and labor to make a seed tape, it seems a lot simpler than being bent over, kneeling on one's prayer bones in the garden and tediously pulling or snipping off all those extra overcrowded seedlings. Furthermore, it sounds like fun.