

What can you winter sow?

Some examples...

Annuals: alyssum, ageratum, bidens, calendula, cosmos, dahlia, gaillardia, helianthus, nicotiana, petunia, portulaca, rudbeckia, verbena, & viola.

Perennials: asclepias, aster, digitalis, echinacea, flax, grasses, heuchera, Joe Pye Weed, liatris, malva, monarda, nepeta, oenothera, poppy, salvia, & yarrow.

Herbs: basil, chamomile, chives, dill, hyssop, marjoram, mint, oregano, parsley, sage, & thyme.

Veggies: beets, broccoli, cabbage, chard, celery, kohlrabi, lettuce, onions, radish, strawberries, tomatoes, & winter squash.

Seeds for successful winter sowing are often characterized as follows: needs stratification (cold dormancy to germinate), sow outdoors in fall or early spring, hardy, self sows, will colonize, weeds (ie. butterfly weed), wildflower, and/or is native.

Materials needed:

containers - milk jugs or plastic boxes with transparent or translucent tops. Plus - potting soil, seeds, ice pick, paint pen, seeds, duct tape, and a box cutter.

How to Winter Sow

1. Begin in late December or January. (after any chance of a warm spell)

2. Soak your containers in a 1:10 Clorox solution and allow to air dry.

3. If using milk jugs cut 4" from bottom, right below the handle and not in two. Leave 2" + at the handle to create a hinge.

4. Use a soldering iron or heated ice pick to poke 8-10 drainage holes in the bottom and a knife to make several air vent slits in the top of the container.

5. Identify seeds using a grease pencil on plastic markers or duct tape on bottom of container writing with industrial sharpie. (The sun will fade magic markers.)

6. Fill the container a uniform 3" with wet (not sopping) potting soil .

7. Sprinkle the seeds and tamp to make sure there is good contact with the soil.

8. Attach lids to bottoms with duct tape.

9. Choose a full sun or part shade location where runoff will not drown the seeds.

10. Visible condensation is good as it means there is sufficient moisture. If there is no condensation you may have too many transpiration holes (tape over some) or the soil is drying out.

11. Seedlings will germinate in late winter and continue through mid Spring.

12. As spring arrives and air warms up, air vent holes should be made bigger and bigger. This is how to "harden off" your plants.

13. Do not thin or plant seedlings to larger pots. Plant hunk-o-seedlings directly into the ground. No hardening off is needed.



How to Sow Seeds Outdoors in Winter

What is "winter sowing"?

Winter sowing is a method of simple inexpensive winter seed propagation.

Why "winter sow"?

You can start hardy and vigorous seedlings outdoors during winter using mini-greenhouses. There are no heating devices, no energy wasting light set-ups, and the plants will not need hardening off.

This method works with plants which reseed in a temperate climate.



Very little labor or attention is required, but gardening patience does bring spring rewards.



For more information visit the following websites.

- <http://www.wintersown.org>
- <http://faq.gardenweb.com/faq/wtrsow/>
- <http://native-wildlife-gardening.com/winter-sowing-in-milk-jugs>

Suggestions:

- Use clear, translucent or tinted containers so you can watch the seedlings emerge in the spring.
- How many seeds? For tiny seeds use 1/2 - 1 packet for one container, larger seeds maybe 16 per container.
- Label containers with name of seeds which have been planted. You can use duct or freezer tape and a paint pen, or pencil and plastic markers.
- When condensation stops showing tilt the container and carefully add water being careful not to dislodge the seeds.
- After germination in the Spring the containers may get too warm - increase ventilation by making holes bigger.
- For fun keep a notebook to record kinds and # of seeds, when planted, germination date, and when flowers first appear.

