

Winter Seed Sowing Lesson Plan

By Martha Alexander and Chris Lentz

Winter seed sowing involves sowing seeds in semi-transparent containers such as gallon milk or water jugs and allowing them to sit outdoors through the winter. It can be done on or after the winter solstice and through March depending on the stratification requirements of the seeds. Winter sowing is ideal for native perennials as you will be mimicking nature. As the seeds freeze and thaw in a moist environment, the seed coat is broken down. This allows for germination when the soil temperature is warm enough. The milk jug is like a mini greenhouse that allows the seeds to germinate early in the spring. The seedlings do not need to be hardened off before planting in the garden.

Supplies:

Semi-Transparent milk jugs or other similar containers

Potting soil or potting mix of peat, perlite, vermiculite. Avoid potting soil with fertilizer.

Water

Tub or 5 Gallon bucket for mixing the potting soil and water

Trowel

Seeds

Knife or box cutter

Marker

Popsicle sticks

Duct tape

Procedure:

1. Cut the milk jug around the circumference, about 5 inches high, stopping an inch from where you started cutting. It is good to leave uncut the section with the handle. Get rid of the lid.
2. Make drainage holes in the bottom. You probably want to do all the cutting before teaching the kids the process.
3. Fill the bottom of the milk jug with 4 inches of potting mix, and plant seeds following the seed packet directions.
4. Label the container with a sharpie and write the name of the plant on a popsicle stick to place inside the jug.
5. Close the jug and attach the lid with duct or packing tape.
6. Put the jugs outside where they will get some rain or snow and wait for spring.