



# Growing Guru



Nancy M. Eyster-Smith  
[neystersmith@bentley.edu](mailto:neystersmith@bentley.edu)  
Waltham Garden Club

## WHY SOME SEEDS SHOULD BE PLANTED IN LATE FALL

Different plant species need different conditions to stimulate germination and to grow into mature plants. Of course, moisture is always required, but other factors might be how deep to plant the seeds, how much light exposure seeds need, or when it is best to plant them depending on where one lives. Every spring many of us plant annuals, such as for vegetables or flowers for cutting. However, a lot of perennial flowering plants, ones that come back year after year, are best planted in late fall or winter, because for their seeds to germinate, they need **cold stratification**. In other words, they need the conditions of winter to break dormancy. While there are ways to mimic those conditions in refrigerators, it can take 1-3 months. The easiest thing to do is to plant the seeds in the fall or winter and let nature provide the necessary conditions. In my garden, all these self-sow, producing new seedlings in spring.

Black-Eyed Susan



Red Columbine



Purple Cone Flower



Blazing Star



These wildflowers native to North America are excellent plants for perennial gardens and for fall planting.



Blue False Indigo



New England Aster



Foxglove Beardtongue



False Sunflower

Here is a long list of other [perennials that require cold stratification](#) and additional information on [winter sowing using milk cartons](#). Heather McCargo, executive director of the [Wild Seed Project](#), also recommends autumn and winter sowing into protected containers for more success in [six easy steps](#) and in this illustrated [joe gardener podcast](#).