



Winter Sowing



Winter sowing in milk jugs is a fantastic, low-cost way to start hardy seeds outdoors while it's still cold. The jug acts as a miniature greenhouse, protecting seeds from birds and heavy wind while providing the "chill" many native plants and perennials need to germinate. Here is how to prep your jug for success.

Materials Needed

- **Empty plastic milk or water jug** (translucent/clear works best)
- **Sharp utility knife** or heavy-duty scissors
- **Duct tape**
- **Hammer and a large nail** (or a drill)
- **Potting Soil**
- **Perennial Seeds**



Step-by-Step Instructions

1. Clean and Prep

Thoroughly rinse the jug to remove any milk residue, which can cause mold or odors. **Discard the cap**. You will not need it; the open top allows for essential ventilation and lets rain/snow enter.

2. Create Drainage Holes

- Flip the jug over. Using a hammer and nail or a drill, poke **at least 6-8 large holes** in the bottom.
- Don't skip this! Without proper drainage, your seeds will drown during spring rains.



3. The Hinge Cut



- Locate the base of the handle. You want to cut the jug horizontally about **4-5 inches from the bottom** (deep enough to hold a good amount of soil).
- Start cutting around the perimeter, but **stop just before you reach the handle**.
- Leave about 1-2 inches of plastic intact under the handle to act as a **hinge**. This allows the top to flip back while you plant and stay attached in the wind.

4. Fill and Plant

- Flip the top back and fill the bottom with 3–4 inches of **pre-moistened potting mix**.
- Sow your seeds according to the packet depth.



5. Label and Seal



- Label the **bottom or inside** of the jug with a permanent marker (labels on the outside often fade in the sun).
- Flip the top half back down so it sits flush with the bottom.
- **Seal** the jug back together with duct tape.



6. Placement

- Place the jugs outside in a spot where they will get sun and be exposed to the elements (rain/snow) but be protected from winds that could blow them around.

Maintenance Tips

- **Check Moisture:** Look for condensation on the inside of the plastic. If the jug looks dry and light, add water through the top hole.
- **Success!** Once the weather warms up and the seedlings have their first true leaves, you can peel back the tape and flip the lid open during the day to prevent them from overheating.