

Winter & Spring instructions



sowing



Suggested containers:

Use clear or translucent plastic containers that are somewhat pliable – thick or brittle plastic can be difficult to work with and leave sharp edges. Containers should be large enough to hold at least 3" of soil and give seedlings 3" or more to grow.



Gallon sized milk and similar containers:

Rinse well and toss cap. Cut a horizontal line with utility knife from one side of the handle to the other about 3-5" from the bottom of the milk jug, leaving a 1" hinge. Grab handle and pull back to open the container. Again, don't cut all the way so you will still have a hinge.



Make four holes in bottom of the milk jug. A utility knife works well to do this, but you can also melt the plastic using a glue gun or woodburning tool in a well ventilated area.



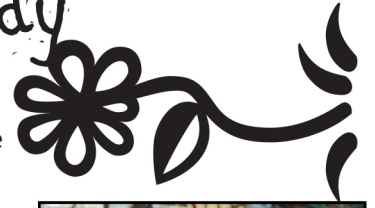
Bakery, takeout, produce, or rotisserie chicken containers:

Wash and rinse well.

Poke holes in the top and bottom (box cutters/Exacto knives work well) to allow for snow melt/watering and drainage.



Once your containers are ready



1. Add approximately 3" soil (up to 1" below the cut line on milk jugs), then even the soil to get rid of peaks, valleys, and clumps. Do not pack soil down – your seeds need space to root.



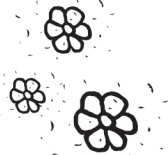
2. Add seeds, as many as you wish (only one plant type per container), and spread (somewhat) evenly.

3. Cover with soil matching the diameter of the seed (e.g., if the seed is 1/8" in diameter, add 1/8" of soil).

Additional soil is not needed if seeds are very tiny.



4. Place a plant label (or the empty seed packet) against the inside of container wall. Additional information should be tracked either on the label or somewhere handy: color, light requirements, height, etc. Also mark the outside of the container with plant name and date – preferably in two areas, top and bottom. Use a waterproof marker or paint pen, either on small labels or directly onto plastic surface.



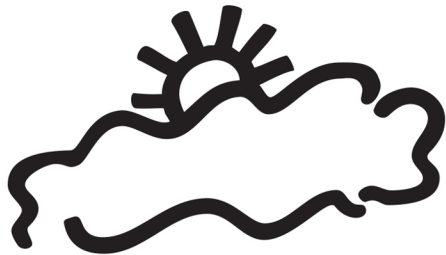
5. Close cover and tape in place; clear duct tape or clear heavy duty packing tape works best.



6. *Water* well so the soil is muddy and water drains out the bottom.



7. *Place* outside on the east, west, or south side of your house. Allow snow to pile on top – as the snow melts it will automatically keep your soil moist. Your containers should have condensation forming inside, but not drip excessively through the bottom holes. If you don't see any condensation and there's no snow on top, lightly water to keep soil moist.



Note: Containers should get approximately 6 hours of sun each day. Place the containers away from play areas and out of reach of curious pets. Do not put under deck or roofline.

For a typical Minnesota winter:

January, February, March: perennial flowers & hardy annual flowers

Late-March: cold crops

Early-April : tender annual flowers & herbs

Mid-April: warm crops



Hints

Sow perennials and hardy annuals in January, February and March. Sow annuals, herbs, and vegetables April 1-20.

Use potter's mix or a soil mix that includes organic materials and moisture control.

Watch containers for drying and water if necessary. Be very gentle when watering small seedlings.

As the weather warms, opening containers during the day, and closing at night when temps are cool or below freezing, may encourage faster growth.



On hot spring days, you may want to move your containers to receive less sun - they should not be allowed to completely dry out.

Remove the lid as your seedlings mature – if they're outgrowing their home or the weather is warm enough (usually after May 15). Once lids are removed, you may want to take precautions against squirrels, rabbits, or birds. For critter control, place chicken wire or mesh on top, or place the containers in large cardboard boxes (make sure they still get enough sunlight).



Wait for mature roots before dividing. BE PATIENT! Some seedlings take longer than others to appear, and plants don't grow at consistent rates - even in the same container.



For additional information, go to www.wintersown.org

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