

# Start Seed in Winter.. Outdoors!

One way to grow a plentiful crop of perennials, or any plant that doesn't mind a little cold, is to start them from seed in containers outdoors in the winter. This technique saves space and can improve results.

This same technique can be used to germinate annuals and vegetables. It is most successful with annuals that are cold-tolerant, such as: cabbage, parsley, petunia and viola.



## Materials

- Seed
- Containers such as gallon milk or juice jugs, large pop bottles, clean and sterilized reusable food containers of all sorts including clear deli boxes.
- Tools to make small holes in tops and bottoms of your collection of containers
- Packaging tape
- Potting soil or seed starter, water
- A secure outdoor area where containers won't blow over or be disturbed by animals, etc.
- Labeling method

## Procedures

- Start any seed at any point in the winter. Seed will germinate when the weather warms.
- Ensure your container has room for 3-4" of soil and at least 2" of head space for the emerging plants
- Punch ventilation holes in the top and sides of containers and drainage holes in the bottoms.
- Label the containers.
- If you use milk jugs, cut them in half leaving the jug attached, like a hinge, below the handle
- Fill containers with 3-4" of soil.
- Moisten the soil and plant seeds at proper depth according to the seed packet.
- Secure the lids on the containers/tape the opening around the jug. Alternatively, punch holes at the opening you've cut in the jug and use string or a stick through the holes to close the opening.
- Place the containers in a secure place outdoors. From time to time check the containers for moisture. If they get completely dry, moisten the soil. As the weather warms prop the lids open or remove them to keep the seedlings cool after they germinate. Close the lids to protect the plants during cold nights.
- Once the seedlings have true leaves and all threat of frost has passed (on average May 15 in the Mankato area) transplant seedlings to the garden. Use half strength fertilizer after planting to the garden. An alternative to planting to the garden is to transplant to pots to allow the plants to mature further.



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