Winter Sowing Workshop

January 18, 2025

Presented by

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Agenda

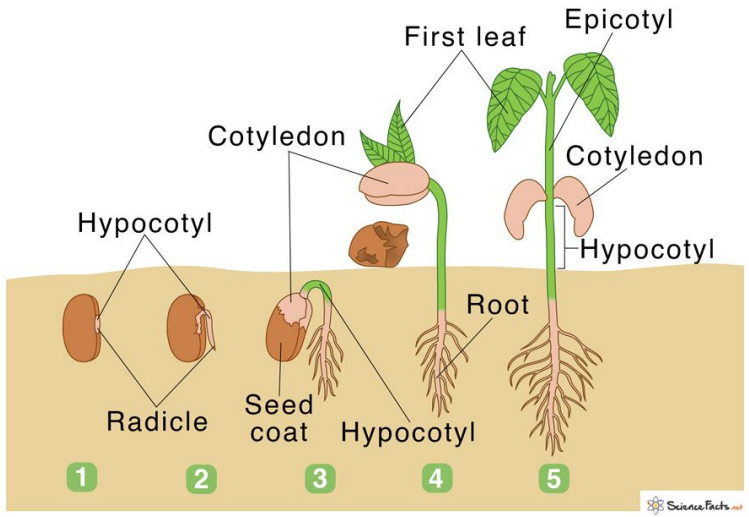
1. Background
2. Materials and Supplies
3. Project steps
4. After the workshop
5. Closing

Growing your own plants

- Easy to try
- Seeds are cheap
- See plant through all its life stages
- Gift extra plants to friends, family

Background

- Winter sowing method is primarily for seed **germination**
- Takes up no indoor space
- More soil than other methods
  - Space for roots to develop
  - Holds moisture better



DIY “Greenhouse”

Ideal growing environment

- Traps the Sun’s heat
- Retains moisture
- Keeps out birds, squirrels, etc.

Experiences cold, outdoors, snow…

- Seedlings don’t need to be “hardened off” before transplanting outdoors
- Stratification
  - For seeds that need to experience winter to germinate

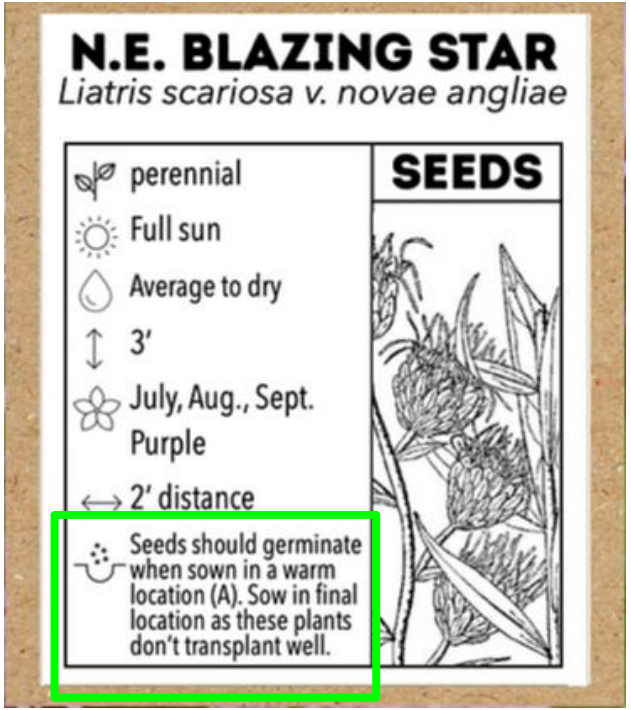
Germination codes

Seed packages will list a code specifying conditions needed to germinate

Examples:

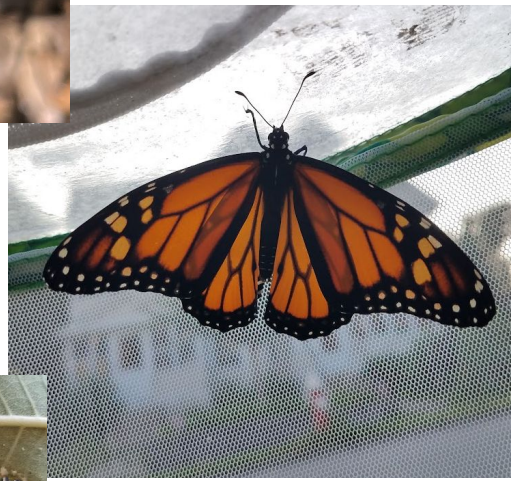
- “C-30” for seeds that need 30 days of cold weather
  - “C-60”, “C-90” or “C-120”
- “A” ready to sow, no stratification required
- “D” sow on the surface, needs light

Seed packet example from Blue Stem Natives



Why Native Plants?

- Evolved with insects and other wildlife
- Specialized relationships, like
  - Monarchs
    - Milkweed
  - Black swallowtails
    - Dill, parsley, fennel
  - Many more!



Watertown Community gardens

Diversity of Bees

Much more than honeybees

Honeybee

Metallic green sweat bee

Leafcutter bee

Leafcutter bee

Mining bee

Bumblebee (sp?)

Perplexing bumblebee

Carpenter bee

Sculptured resin bee

Cellophane bee

Materials & Supplies

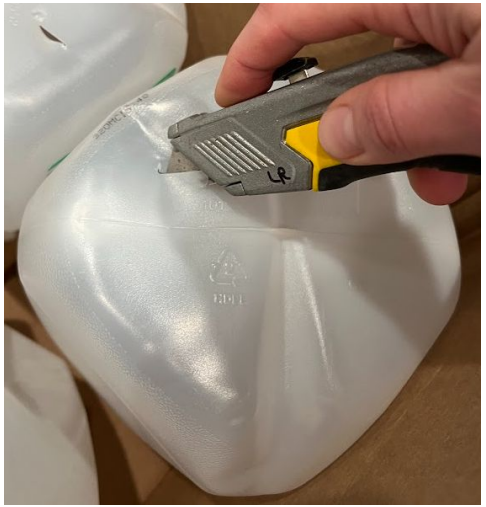
- Translucent/transparent plastic jug
- Potting soil (not seed-starting soil)
- Seeds
- Scissors or boxcutter
- Drill
- Marker/Paint Pen
- Plant labels
- Tape
- Water

Project Steps

1. Collect Translucent Jugs
2. Wash out Jugs
3. Add Drainage holes
4. Cut jug - almost in half leaving a section to use as a hinge
5. Fill the jug with 4 inches of soil
6. Plant the seeds
7. Seal the jug with tape
8. Set the jugs outside
9. Monitor the dampness level and water when needed
10. Transplant the plants into your garden

Steps

- Collect translucent jugs
- Wash out jugs
- Add drainage holes
  - Cut with knife
  - Drill
  - Soldering iron



Steps

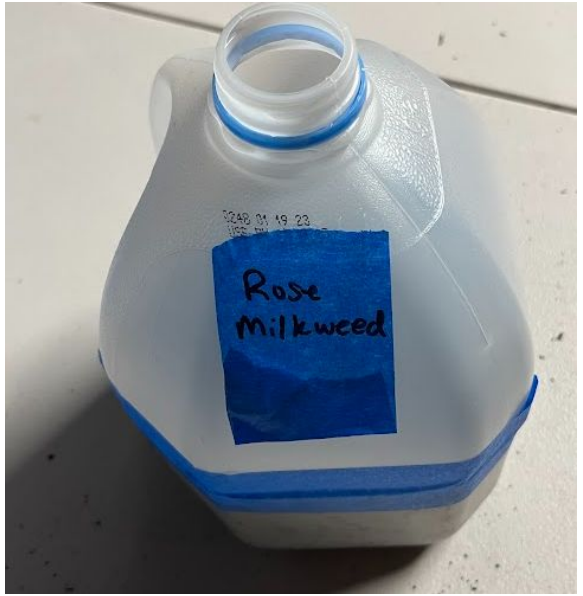
- Draw line around jug, ~4 inches high
- Cut jug
  - Almost in half leaving a section to use as a hinge
- Fill the jug with 4 inches of soil

Steps

- Plant the seeds
- Tuck the upper portion of the container inside the lower portion
  - Condensation falls down into soil, instead of outside of container

Steps

- Seal the jug with tape
- Make sure they are labeled



Next

- Set your jugs where they get **part sun**
  - Don’t want to cook the seedlings
- The jugs need to be **exposed to rain and snow**
- Monitor for **moisture**
  - Make sure the jugs have condensation on the ceiling
- The jugs should be raised for **drainage**
  - Cinder block
  - Paver stones
  - Pallet

In the spring

After the danger of frost

- Untape the jugs - plants experience breeze
- If a cold night is predicted, close them up for protection

Notes:

- Some plants “Sleep in” you may not see sprouts until summer.
- When the second set of “Real” leaves have shown up, it is time to transplant.

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Spring flowers

Red columbine

golden alexander

hairy beardtongue

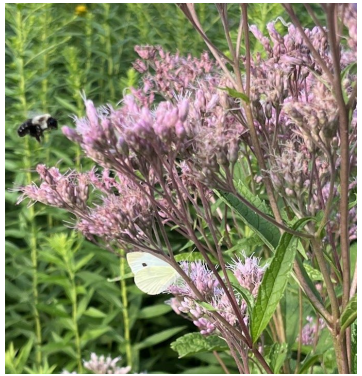
foxglove beardtongue

LR

Summer flowers

Great blue lobelia

Wild bergamot



Joe Pye weeds

Common Milkweed

partridge pea

purple coneflower

Rose milkweed

Butterfly milkweed

LR

Fall flowers

New England aster

Flat topped aster

Sneezeweed
(Helen’s flower)

Goldenrod

LR

Plant labels

Spotted Joe Pye
(*Eutrochium Maculatum*)
Sun: full – partial
Water: wet – med
Ht: 5’ Bloom: pink, Jul - Sep
Germ: 30 days cold / moist

Great Blue Lobelia
(*Lobelia siphilitica*)
Sun: Full - partial
Water: wet – med Ht: 3’
Bloom: purple Jul - Oct
Germ: 60 days cold/moist

Little Bluestem
(*Schizachyrium scoparium*)
Sun: Full-Part
Water: Med - Dry
Ht: 3ft
Bloom: Grass; Sept
Stratification: none

Golden Alexander (*Zizia Aurea*)

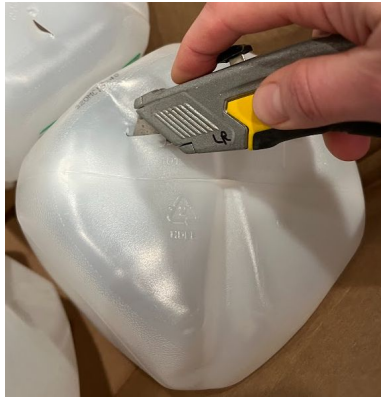
Sun: Full - partial
Water: med/wet – med/dry
Ht: 3ft Bloom: Apr - Jun
Germ: 60 days cold / moist
Fall sow

NE Aster
(*Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*)
Sun: Full – partial
Water: wet - dry
Ht: 5’ Bloom: Aug – Oct
Germ: 60 days cold / moist

Sweet Joe-Pye Weed
(*Eutrochium purpureum*)
Sun: Partial - shade
Water: Med
Ht: 7' Bloom: Jul - Sep
Germ: 30 days cold/moist

Showy Goldenrod
(*Solidago speciosa*)
Sun: Full - Part
Water: dry – med
Ht: 5’ Bloom: Sep - Nov
Cold Strat: 60 days

Hands-on section



Closing

SCAN ME

Thank you for doing your part to

Support our native pollinators and Boost Biodiversity!

What are your thoughts?

Suggestions?

Comments?

Email us: info@watertowngardens.org