

Winter Sowing

I love how winter sowing works with Mother Nature to give us a jump start on our early spring seed starting! Benefits to this system of seed starting include: earlier seedlings, re-use of existing plastic containers, no expensive equipment, no hardening off and stronger plant growth.

This method — around for more than 50 years — reuses plastic jugs and containers to create miniature greenhouses. This allows gardeners to harness the sun's growing energy early in spring and add extra heat to the soil. This results in the seeds germinating faster, but not so fast that they can't handle air temperatures once they break dormancy.

This practice was originally used to have a little more control over direct seeding native plants that needed that cold stratification period (a certain amount of time in freezing temperatures and the need for the freeze thaw process to break down seed husks).

MAKE A WINTER SOWING CONTAINER

First, save food-grade plastic containers such as milk jugs, takeout boxes, rotisserie chicken containers, water jugs or anything that has a clear-to-opaque top half.

Drill, puncture or melt drainage holes in the bottom of your containers. Add holes to the tops of anything that doesn't have a cap you can remove. Cut open (with a box knife) if needed to allow access. (Leave a hinge in jugs, or just open takeout containers.)


Add seed-starting soil. Plant seeds at correct depth and water them in well. (Overseed now, as you'll be transplanting anyway.)

Label your plants with a plant stake label in the soil and identification on the outside of the jug written with a waterproof and sunproof garden marker. Seal the cut opening with high-quality, waterproof tape. (I use silver duct tape.) Move the winter sowing containers outside to an area that gets good sunshine and has access to rain.

GROW ON

You'll grow these seedlings on in the containers for a few more weeks after germination. Once the seedlings emerge, open the tops of the jugs as needed to keep your mini greenhouses from overheating. Transplant at the same time you'd normally transplant indoor grown seedlings. These plants tend to be a little stronger than those started indoors because they haven't been coddled with the perfect indoor environment. But all this means is there are certain seeds that work better than others.

I most successfully use this process for cold-hardy spring vegetable crops, such as kale, cabbage, broccoli, Swiss chard, beets and lettuces. I've also had great luck with flowers such as poppies, calendula and marigolds. I love placing these winter-sown jugs inside my cold frames as well. This "double layer" effect bumps up my harvests another few weeks.

If you want more information on starting growing garden seeds, check out my blog, *Forks in the Dirt*, and most recent book, *Small-Scale Homesteading*.  — Michelle Bruhn

This process works great for cold-hardy spring vegetable crops, such as brassicas, and some flowers.



WINTER SOWING – What it is, and how we can all have a ton of plants for our gardens and to give away, for the price of SEEDS and SOIL Without grow lights and greenhouses!

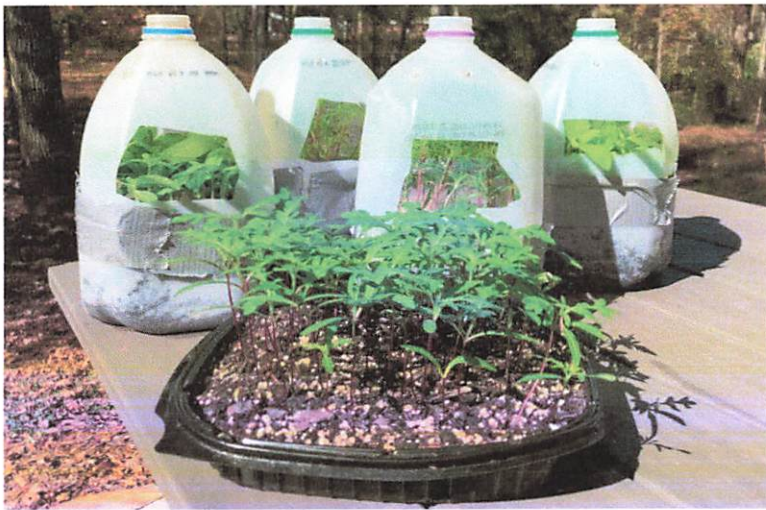
For the meeting → please bring a container – see below for details.

Who doesn't long for a little digging in the soil right about now?

I am a complete novice at this, so we will learn together. Who better than Joe Lamp'1 to get the "skinny" on How-To?

From <https://joegardener.com/podcast/130-winter-sowing> :

"Trudy Davidoff was a novice seed starter who was challenged for space. Her small cottage in New York didn't provide the room she needed to accommodate seed trays. After a little research, Trudy learned that many varieties of seeds require a chill period to trigger germination. So, she decided to try to mimic what happens naturally.



She sowed seeds in containers in late winter, left the containers outdoors and waited to see if they would germinate in the spring. Without supplemental water, fertilizer or

special coddling; the seeds did germinate, and as the temperatures rose so did Trudy's seedlings.

Flash forward a couple of decades, and Trudy's methods are becoming more popular. What's not to love? After all, some of the best tools for winter sowing are repurposed materials you already have in your home, and winter sowing couldn't be much easier. Once the seeds are in the growing medium, you can practically forget about them until they are ready to transplant into your garden beds."

AT OUR FEBRUARY GARDEN CLUB MEETING → I will bring soil, a selection of items to use to cut holes, and I'll even have extra seeds (but they may not be something you want to use, so probably better to bring some you would like to plant).

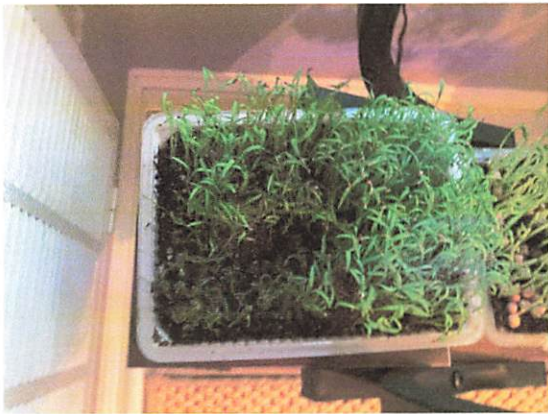


Please, if everyone could bring a container, more than one if you like.

Shown above:

- Basic storage container from Sams, Costco, Target, Walmart
- Costco rotisserie chicken container
- From Kroger, a container that used to have Driscoll strawberries in it
- A milk-water-tea jug (I read somewhere that you can get these from Starbucks)

I will have tips to make it even easier, and I will also be bringing some growing Microgreens and provide anyone who is interested with my resources and tips to growing these vitamin-packed goodies!

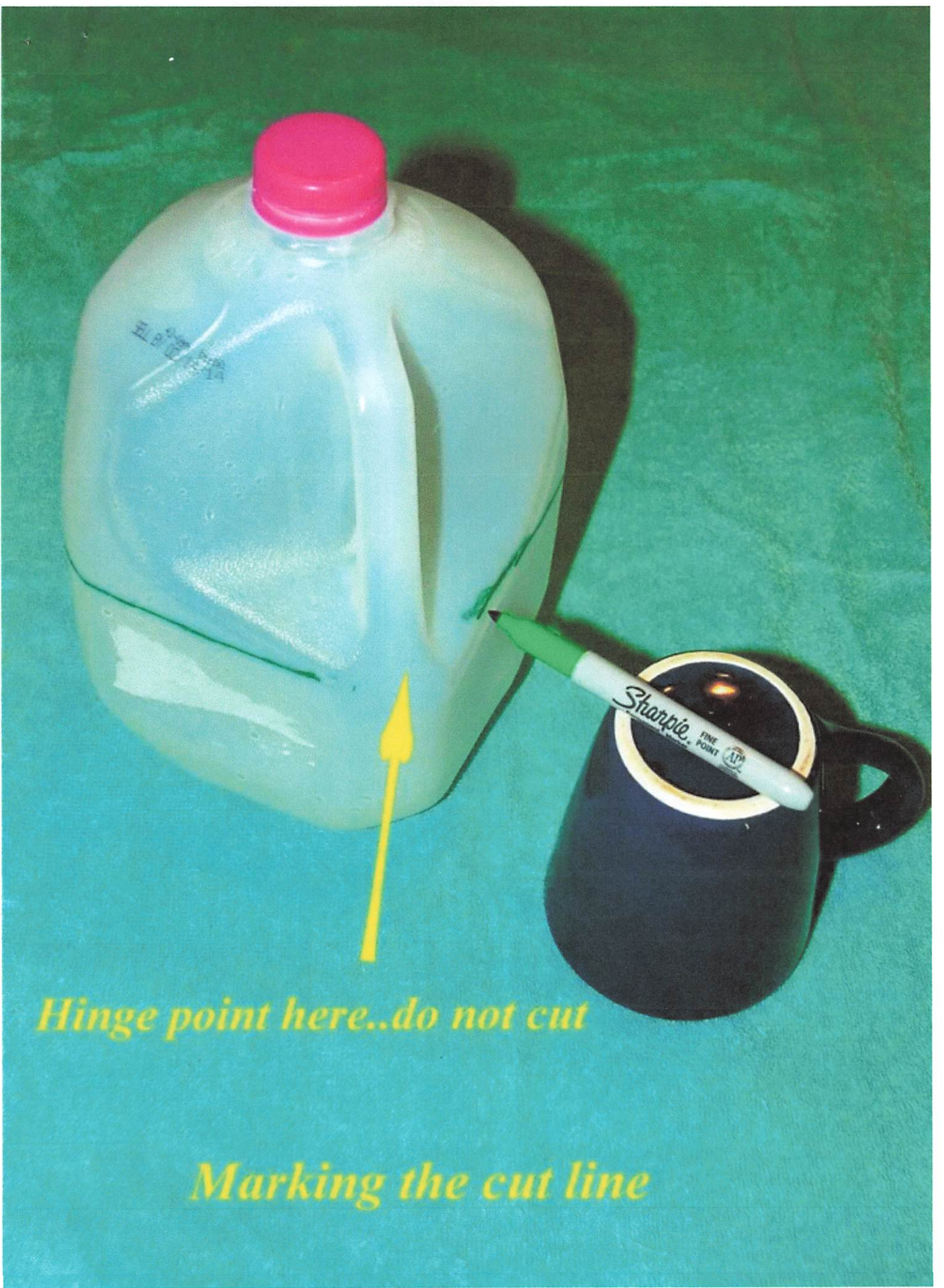


TrueLeaf
market.
com



See you on February 12th!

Virginia



Hinge point here..do not cut

Marking the cut line



Be sure to add sufficient holes in all containers to allow for drainage and air circulation. Heating the tip of a phillips-head screwdriver makes easy work of this important step. I heated the tip of a 12-inch galvanized spike to make these holes.



Once winter-sown seeds begin to reach the top of their containers, it's time to pull back the covers and acclimate them fully to the environment. These seedlings are ready for transplanting.