



STARTING PERENNIAL SEEDS OUTDOORS USING PLASTIC JUGS

Steve Pearl, Hendricks Co Master Gardener President

This is a simple process that relies on sun, snow and rain to break down the seed coat and get seeds to sprout. The plastic container acts like a mini greenhouse keeping seeds warm and moist. You can use almost any plastic container, but milk jugs are easy to find. Using this method, you don't have to worry about hardening plants off or deal with stringy plants reaching for light. **Planters can be started as early as February (Zone 5b)**

Prepare Container: Using a clean milk jug, cut the jug at least 4 inches up from bottom, cut nearly all the way around leaving a couple inches near handle to form a hinge. Poke 6 to 10 holes in bottom for drainage using an awl or screwdriver. **Throw cap away, it is not needed and should not be used.**

Make Labels: Make labels for inside container, important because many plants look similar when young. You can also label the outside of container.

Make Dividers (optional): If desired, make cardboard dividers for inside bottom of container, dividing contain into 2 or 4 sections. This will allow planting different types of seeds in one container or separating so roots do not intertwine. Steve uses paper towel / t paper rolls for this.



Soil & Seeds: Fill bottom of container with pre-moistened soil within an inch of top. Pre-moistened soil avoids watering after planting. Plant seeds using a pencil point to make hole the depth as specified on package. As an option for planting, leave a little soil out, sow seeds and finish adding soil.

Tape It Up: Tape the container top and bottom together using clear plastic packaging tape or clear duct tape.

Place Outside: Place outside where they will get light, rain or snow. Secure container with mulch or rocks so they will not blow over or away, snuggling together also helps. Avoid the north side of buildings. **MAKE SURE YOU LEAVE CONTAINER TOPS OFF!** Keep an eye on soil, during dry periods you may need to mist to moisten soil.

Open Containers: As the weather warms, flip back the tops on nice days and close at night. **When temperatures remain above freezing the tops can be removed permanently.** Keep an eye on soil so it doesn't dry out.