



Winter Sowing Native Plants

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In Partnership with:

Rutgers Master Gardeners of Union County
Union Public Library
Native Plant Society of New Jersey



Photo: Izzy Julio
Livingston Elementary School Garden



Welcome to Winter Sowing!

What we'll cover today:

- How seeds grow naturally in winter
- Creating mini greenhouses from recycled containers
- Choosing the right plants for our area
- Our library's native garden
- Providing resources



Photo: Izzy Julio
Blazing Star at Casa Julio



Why Try Winter Sowing?

For Your Garden

- Creates stronger, hardier plants
- Saves money on plants
- Works with nature's timing
- No need for grow lights or indoor space

For Our Community

- Support local pollinators
- Create wildlife corridors
- Share native plants
- Build biodiversity
- Connect with nature



What is Cold Stratification?

Cold stratification is the process of exposing seeds to cold and moist conditions to encourage germination. The seed sheds its hard seed coat, beginning the germination process. You can mimic this process in the refrigerator or through winter sowing.

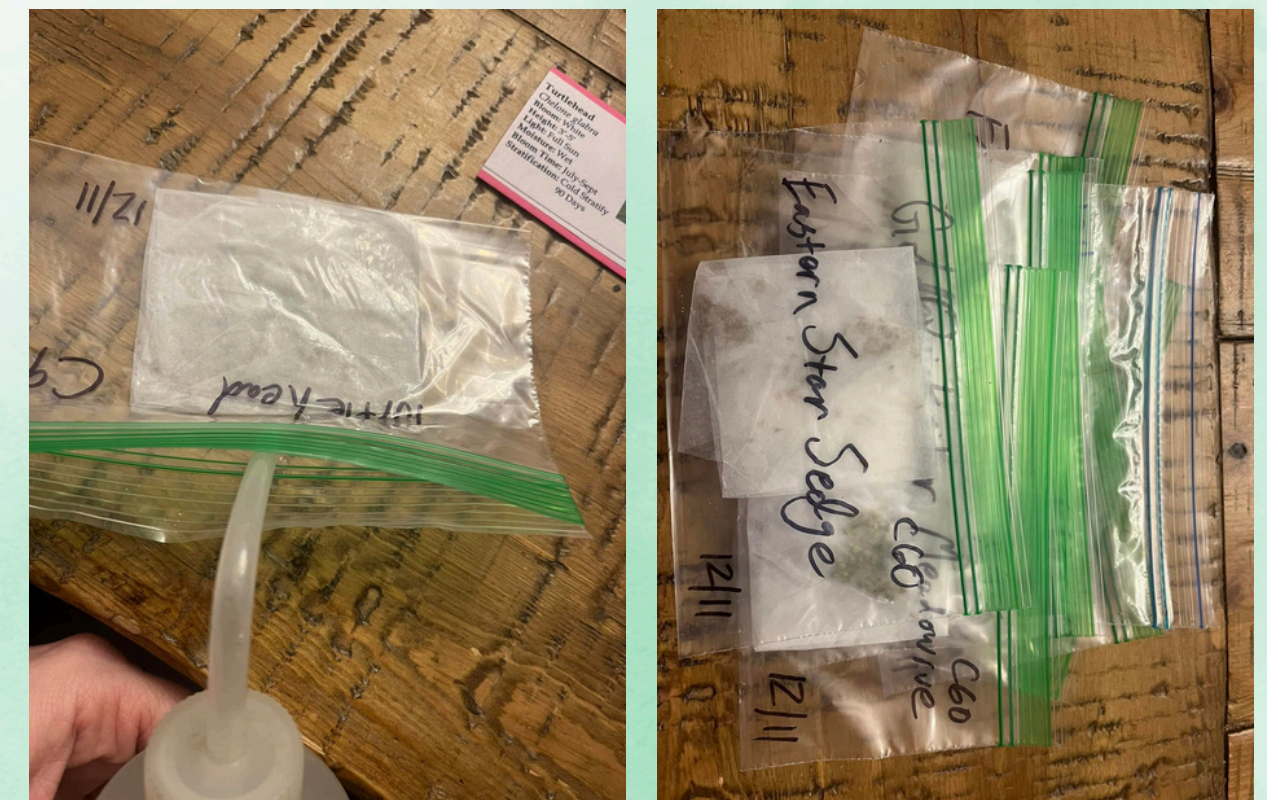
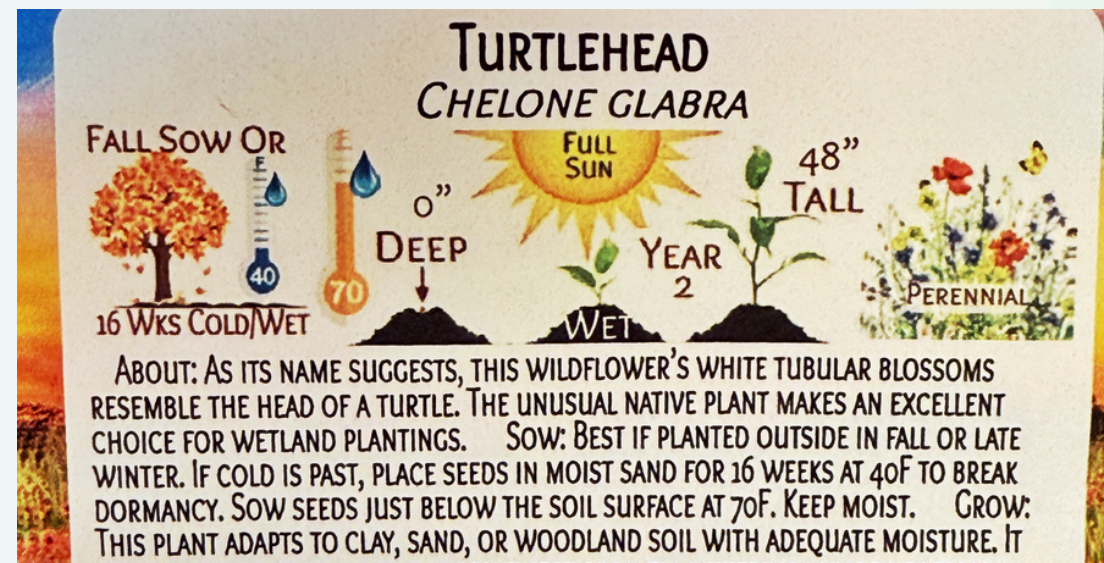
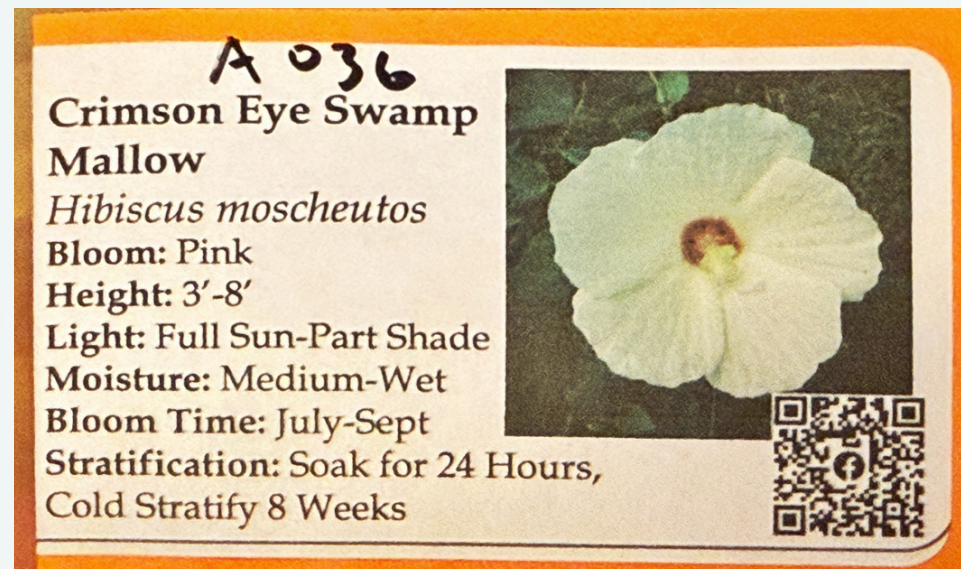


Photo: Izzy Julio

Seed packets with stratification instructions

Photos: Flagship Native Seed Library-South Orange, NJ

What to sow Dec – Feb

(Winter Sowing)

Natives that require ≥ 45 days of cold stratification:

- Milkweed
- Purple Coneflower
- New Jersey Tea (shrub)
- New England Aster
- Swamp Rose Mallow

Tender Annuals

- Hollyhock, Poppy

Herbs:

- Chives
- Thyme
- Oregano

Vegetables:

- Kale
- Spinach
- Lettuce
- Radish



Photo: Izzy Julio
Swamp Rose Mallow at the Master Gardeners of
Union County Demonstration Garden

What to sow Mar - Apr

(Early Spring Sowing)

Natives that require ≤ 30 days of cold stratification:

- Lanceleaf coreopsis
- Black Eyed Susan
- Foxglove Beardtongue
- Lyreleaf Sage
- Anise Hyssop

Tender Annuals

- Cosmos, Chamomile, Zinnia

Herbs:

- Parsley
- Basil
- Cilantro
- Dill

Vegetables:

- Peas
- Beets
- Swiss Chard



Photo: Izzy Julio
Anise Hyssop at Casa Julio

What to sow Apr - May

(Late Spring Sowing)

Natives that require 0 days of cold stratification:

- Mountain Mint
- Sneezeweed
- Larkspur
- Partidge Pea

Tender Annuals

- Sweet Alyssum,
Sunflower, Marigold

Herbs:

- Sage
- Chamomile
- Lemon Balm

Vegetables:

- Beans
- Cucumbers
- Squash
- Peppers
- Tomato/Tomatillo



Photo: Izzy Julio
Tomatillo at Casa Julio

What are we growing?

Milkweed!

This Swamp Milkweed was purchased from "The Farm at Green Village." It was planted on July 5, 2023 at less than a foot tall.



By July 24, 2023 the Swamp Milkweed was thigh height



Harvested Swamp Milkweed seeds on Oct 30, 2023



Winter sowed my own milkweed seeds in 2024



July 26, 2024 the original milkweed is taller than me!

Photo: Izzy Julio
Swamp Milkweed progression at Casa Julio

Vauxhall Library

Native Sensory Garden

Native sensory garden features a Touch-Safe Zone, Fragrance Section, Sound & Movement Areas, and Pollinator Sections

Community volunteers can:

- Help prepare seeds
- Prepare garden bed
- Transplant seedlings into the garden

Join us in creating a beautiful and educational garden for everyone!



Photo: Izzy Julio
Vauxhall Library Green Team measuring
the new native garden space

Vauxhall Library

Native Sensory Garden

Touch-Safe Zone (Parking Lot)

- Pussy Toes
- Pearly Everlasting

Fragrance Garden (Center)

- **Wild Bergamot**
- **Anise Hyssop**
- **Mountain Mint**
- **Hairy Mountain Mint**

Sound & Movement (L/R Sides)

- **Little Bluestem**
- Northern Sea Oats

Pollinator Section (Building Side)

- Cardinal Flower
- **Purple Coneflower**
- **Wild Columbine**

Late-Season Pollinators (Building Side)

- **Smooth Aster**
- Blue Wood Aster
- Wreath Goldenrod
- Zigzag Goldenrod

Let's Get Started!

What you'll need:

Materials:

- Clean milk/water jugs or clear containers
- Potting soil
- Painter's tape or twist ties
- Garden marker and plant labels
- Ruler
- Seeds & Water

Tools:

- *For cutting:* Scissors, utility knife, and/or hole punch
- *For piercing:* Drill, scratch awl, soldering iron, glue gun, or hammer and nail



Photo: Izzy Julio
Gathering supplies for winter sowing

Container Preparation

For Milk/Water Jugs

- Clean containers thoroughly
- Make drainage holes (min 6-8)
- Cut around middle (leave hinge)
- Fill with 3-4" of moist soil
- Label both top and inside container w/ label
- Remove cap for ventilation



Photos: Facebook Winter Sowing by Sheryl Mann

Container Preparation

Tips!

- Place containers in a milk crate for secure hole punching
- Use ventilation and wear a mask when using hot glue gun or soldering iron
- Mix soil and water in a bucket or container
- Place coffee filter or newspaper at bottom to prevent slug damage
- Cover larger pots with clear shower caps

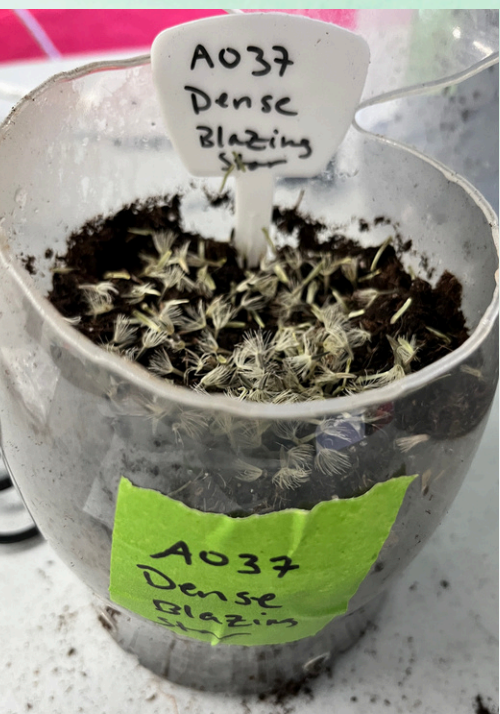


Photo: Izzy Julio

Winter sown containers at Casa Julio

Container Options

Photos: Izzy Julio &
Facebook Winter Sowing by Sheryl Mann



Planting Your Seeds

Steps

- Plant seeds according to packet depth
- Mist gently with water
- Close container and seal with tape
- Label with plant name and date

Quick Tips

- Tiny seeds: Barely cover with soil
- Larger seeds: Plant twice as deep as seed width
- Soil should feel like a wrung-out sponge
- Space seeds so seedlings won't crowd



Photo: Izzy Julio
Various seeds at Casa Julio

Let's sow
seeds!



Caring for Your Seeds

Winter Care

- Place in a sunny spot
- Don't worry about snow - it's insulation!
- Check moisture occasionally
- Look for condensation inside



Spring Care

- Watch for sprouts & pests
- Add ventilation slowly
- Protect from frost & wind
- Keep soil moist



Photo: Izzy Julio
Various winter sown containers during snowfall and spring at Casa Julio

Wind & Critter Protection

For Wind:

Keep containers on the ground to protect from wind. If needed, secure with netting and garden staples, fencing, milk crates, or wooden stakes through handles.



For Critters:

Protect plants at any time with wire mesh or netting. Wire trash bins can also be used to protect transplanted seedlings.



Be Patient

Jan 6th, 2024 vs March 8th, 2024

"These seeds have gone through snow, cold, flooding rain and wind. Most of my native perennials are taking their time. Meanwhile poppies and hollyhocks that were sowed less than a week ago have sprouted." -Izzy's Journal



Photo: Izzy Julio

Various winter sown containers in January & March at Casa Julio

Have Fun!

April 19, 2024

"Lily received a pumpkin from her school in October. I collected the seeds and sowed them in January. They sprouted March 18th and have been growing like crazy ever since." -Izzy's Journal



10/27/23



01/12/24



04/10/24



04/19/24

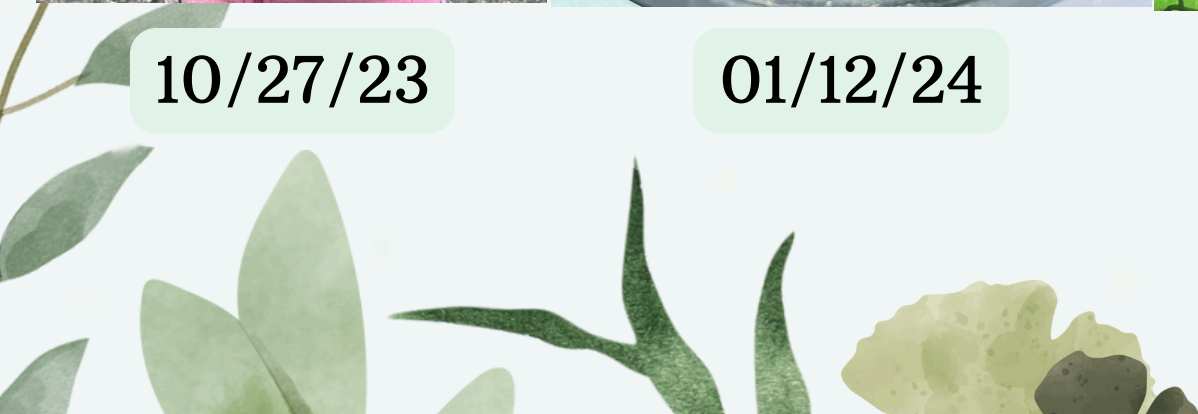


04/29/24



06/21/24

Photo: Izzy Julio
Progress of daughter's winter sown pumpkin



Springtime Care

When daytime temperatures consistently reach 50°F, start opening your milk jugs during the day for a few hours. Close and cover the containers if frost is predicted (below 32°F), especially once seedlings have emerged, to protect your young plants.



Photo: Izzy Julio

April 21, 2024 - Seedlings ready for separation & transplant
Summer Carnival Hollyhock, Nigra Hollyhock, Yarrow, Giant Hyssop, Borage, Chamomile, Columbine
Huckleberry, Golden Alexander, Anisse hyssop, Lanceleaf coreopsis, California poppy, Violets

Right photo: Facebook Winter Sowing by
Sheryl Mann

Transplanting Your Seedlings

When to Transplant

- After ground has thawed
- When seedlings have 2-3 sets of true leaves
- After danger of hard frost has passed (May)

Basic Steps

- Open containers on warm days to “harden” plants
- Choose a cloudy day for transplanting
- Water seedlings before & after transplanting
- Gently separate seedlings
- Plant at same depth as in container



Photo: Izzy Julio
Seedlings separated for Earth Day event at
Livingston Elementary School

Recap

1. Collect and wash containers
2. Cut drain holes in bottom
3. Make hinges
4. Prepare labels
5. Add potting mix and water thoroughly
6. Plant seeds according to instructions
7. Seal container.... and wait
8. Water containers if needed
9. Open in spring on warm days
10. Transplant seedlings



Photo:
Skycrest
Studios
Visual guide
to winter
sowing



Resources



Finding Seeds Locally

Free Seed Libraries

- Union Public Library Main Branch
- Vauxhall Library (*Coming soon!*)
- Cranford Library & Glen Ridge Library
- Flagship Native Seed Library-South Orange, NJ

Organizations

- Native Plant Society of New Jersey
- Wild Seed Project
- Rutgers Master Gardeners
- Buy Nothing Union Township, NJ
- Local garden clubs & friends
- Prairie Moon Nursery (Minnesota)



Photo: Izzy Julio

Seeds provided by: Flagship Native Seed Library-South Orange, NJ
& Master Gardeners of Union County Demonstration Garden



How to Harvest Milkweed Seeds



Step 1: Open milkweed seed pod

Choose pods that have started to spilt open. The pods are usually brown but can also be green.

Gently open the pod at the spilt seam and sever the silk strand that connects it all to the pod at the stem end.



Step 2: Carefully remove the milkweed seed cluster

Gently remove the seed follicle from the pod by holding onto the top of the follicle and gently pulling it out of the pod.

Use a bowl or paper towel to catch the seeds.



Step 3: Separate seeds from milkweed floss

Grip tightly the floss end of the follicle with one hand and gently remove the seeds from the floss with the other hand by scraping with your finger nail along the seed follicle, going with the grain of the seeds. The seeds should pop right out.



Photo: Butterfly Lady
Guide to harvest Milkweed seeds





Recommended Reading

Native Plants & Gardening

- "Native Plants of the Northeast: A Guide for Gardening & Conservation" - Donald J. Leopold
- "Garden Revolution: How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change" - Larry Weaner
- "Rain Gardens" - Lynn M. Steiner
- "Nature's Best Hope" - Douglas W. Tallamy (Adult or Youth Ed.)
- "The Living Landscape" - Rick Darke & Douglas Tallamy
- "A Northern Gardener's Guide to Native Plants and Pollinators" - Lorraine Johnson

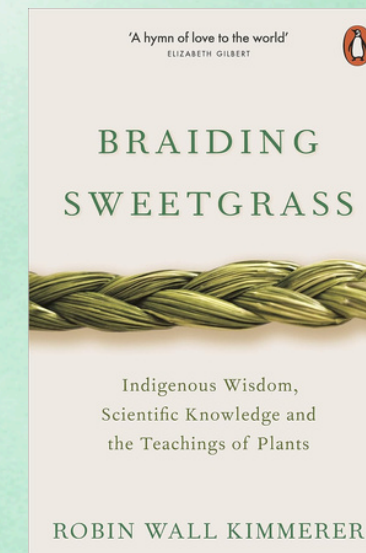
Sustainable Gardening

- "The Year-Round Vegetable Gardener" - Niki Jabbour
- "Braiding Sweetgrass" - Robin Wall Kimmerer (Adult or Youth Ed.)

Wildlife & Field Guides

- "National Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Wildflowers, Eastern Region" - John W. Thieret
- "What It's Like to Be a Bird" - David Sibley
- "The Sibley Guide to Birds" - David Sibley
- "NJ Wildlife Viewing Guide" - Laurie Pettigrew

All available at the Union Public Library!



Online Resources

Native Gardening & Winter Sowing

- The Native Plant Society of New Jersey - [Website](#)
- Rutgers Master Gardeners - [Guide to Winter Sowing](#)
- Jersey-Friendly Yards - [Website](#)
- Wild Seed Project - [YouTube](#) & [Website](#)
- Flagship Native Seed Library-South Orange, NJ - [Facebook Group](#)
- Winter Sowing by Sheryl Mann - [Facebook Group](#) & [YouTube](#)

Online nurseries located in New Jersey:

- [Pinelands Direct](#)
- [Toadshade Wildflower Farm](#)
- [Great Swamp Watershed](#)





Thank you!



Scan me for resources

<https://izzyjulio.com/uplnj-native-gardening/>

