



Molly Moore

All the Dirt on Winter Sowing Native Plants

Molly Moore

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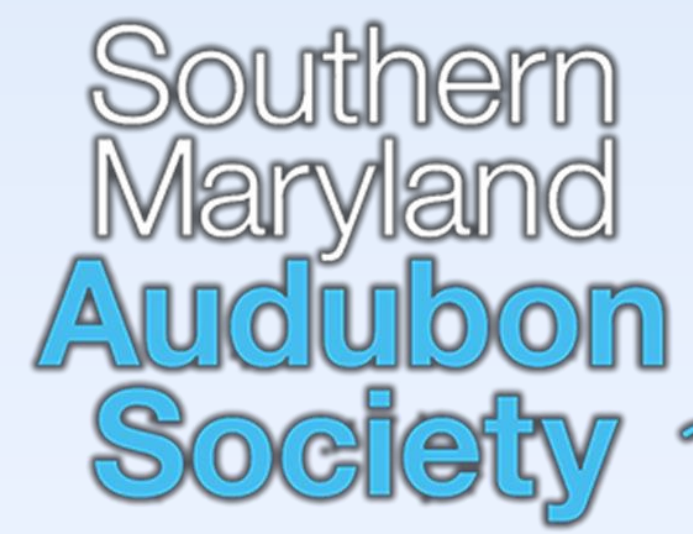


NATIVE PLANTS

A MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Southern
Maryland
Audubon
Society





Wm Smith, St. Mary's MG

Molly Moore

President, Southern MD Audubon
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Maryland Master Naturalist/
Nanjemoy Creek Environmental
Education Center

Marlene Smith

Treasurer, Charles County
Master Gardeners
Bay-Wise Master Gardener
Maryland Tree Steward
Member, So MD Audubon

What is Winter Sowing?

- An incredibly easy way to grow seedlings
- In the middle of winter, scoop planting medium into a plastic container with a hole in the top for ventilation & holes in the bottom for drainage
- Plant seeds and wait for them to sprout
- Winter sowing introduced by **Trudi Davidoff** in 2000 & has since been recognized officially by the USDA



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• Why Winter Sow?

- Inexpensive!
- Environmentally friendly
- Easy
- Fun!
- No hard and fast rules



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Horticultural advantages

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- Protects seeds
- Eliminates competition from weeds
- Produces strong, healthy plants
- Eliminates need for "hardening off"
- Reduces need for watering
- Provides cold moist stratification



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Cold moist stratification — Many native plants need the freeze



60 days
Orange
Coneflower



30 days
Butterfly Weed



30 days
Common
Milkweed



30 days
Joe-Pye

What is a native plant?

- A plant that is part of the balance of nature and co-evolved with our native birds, insects and other wildlife.
- It has developed over hundreds or thousands of years in a particular region or ecosystem
- Only plants found in this country before European settlement are considered to be native to the US



Why grow natives?

- Better suited for our climate
- Require less water once established
- Do not need fertilizer
- Tolerate a variety of soil & light conditions
- Add year-round beauty & interest to the garden
- Healthier for you & environment
- Provide essential food & shelter for local birds, pollinators and other wildlife



How many insects does it take this Carolina Chickadee to raise one family?



Douglas
Tallamy/U of
Delaware

Easy Natives to Winter Sow



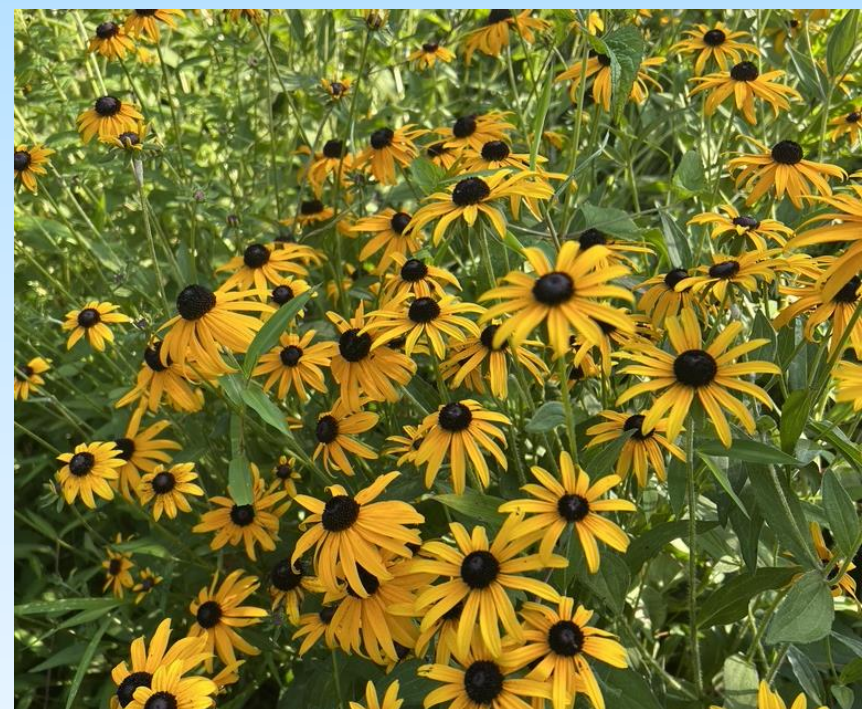
Joe-Pye
*Eutrochium
purpureum*



**New England
Aster**
*Symphyotrichum
novae-angliae*



**Foxglove
Beardtongue**
*Penstemon
digitalis*



**Orange
Coneflower**
*Rudbeckia
fulgida*



**Common
Milkweed**
*Asclepias
syriaca*



**Gray
Goldenrod**
*Solidago
nemoralis*



**Common
Evening
Primrose**
*Oenothera
biennis*



**Blue Wood
Aster**
*Symphyotrichum
cordifolium*



**Partridge
Pea**
*Chamaecrista
fasciculata*

Let's get started!



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When to Sow

December 21 - March 20

- All native plants—but especially ones that require cold moist stratification
- Native grasses, vines & trees
- Most perennials, biennials & annuals



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Tools of the trade: What you need

- Containers
- Soilless potting mix or seed starting mix
- Bucket for mixing
- Water
- Trowel
- Scissors or sharp knife
- Wood-burning pen, drill, etc
- Tape for sealing/labelling
- Marker for labelling
- Seeds



Collect and wash containers

- Milk jugs (gallon or quart), 2-liter bottles, plastic food tubs, ice cream tubes, baggies, aluminum pans, deli/take out containers, plastic drink cups
- Wash and rinse containers to remove any milk or food residue. Allow to dry completely.
- Need minimum of 3-4 inches of potting mix for natives to allow root development.



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Making the Cuts

- Using knife, scissors, drill, hot glue gun, or soldering iron, make 4-6 holes in bottom of container
- For jugs, cut in half, leaving a 4" bottom and a hinge under the handle. Discard cap.



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A word about containers: Use your imagination!



Photos by Marlene Smith



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Prepare labels

- Use UV-resistant markers, pens, paints on outside
- As a backup in case labelling on the outside comes off or fades, use a popsicle stick or plant marker inside the jug
- Label the bottom with duct tape and waterproof marker



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Prepare potting mix

- Use a large container such as a wheelbarrow, cement mixing tray or bucket
- Add water to potting mix until thoroughly wet but not sopping wet



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Add potting mix

- Optional: Add a water-permeable barrier (coffee filter, landscape fabric, or newspaper) to the bottom before adding potting mix to keep slugs out
- Add approx 3-4 inches of mix to the container
- Tap container to settle the mix and remove air pockets



Wm Smith, St. Mary's MG

Planting the seeds

- Plant only one type of seed at a time
- Mix tiny seeds with coarse sand or vermiculite and sprinkle on top of mixture
- Larger seeds—follow instructions on packet for depth



Wm Smith, St. Mary's MG

Methods of Planting

Space seeds so they can be easily cut or torn apart



Hunk o' seeds—plant in a mass that can be cut brownie-style



Seal the containers



Wm Smith, St. Mary's MG

Care of jugs & containers

- Do not put caps on jugs
- Place in protected area safe from pets, wild animals, young children and clumsy spouses
- Place in part shade/part sun



The Wait

- Have patience
- Seeds will sprout when nature tells them to
- You can't hurry the seeds
- But you can—and should—peek



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Monitor your babies

Condensation—good

Green algae—bad



My seeds have germinated. Now what?

- Wait for at least 1-2 sets of true leaves to appear
- Or until seedlings are 2 inches tall



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Cotyledons—Not Ready



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Ready

Transplanting seedlings

- Transplant after seeds sprout at least two true leaves or seedlings are 2 inches tall
- Open containers to acclimate 2-3 days before transplanting.



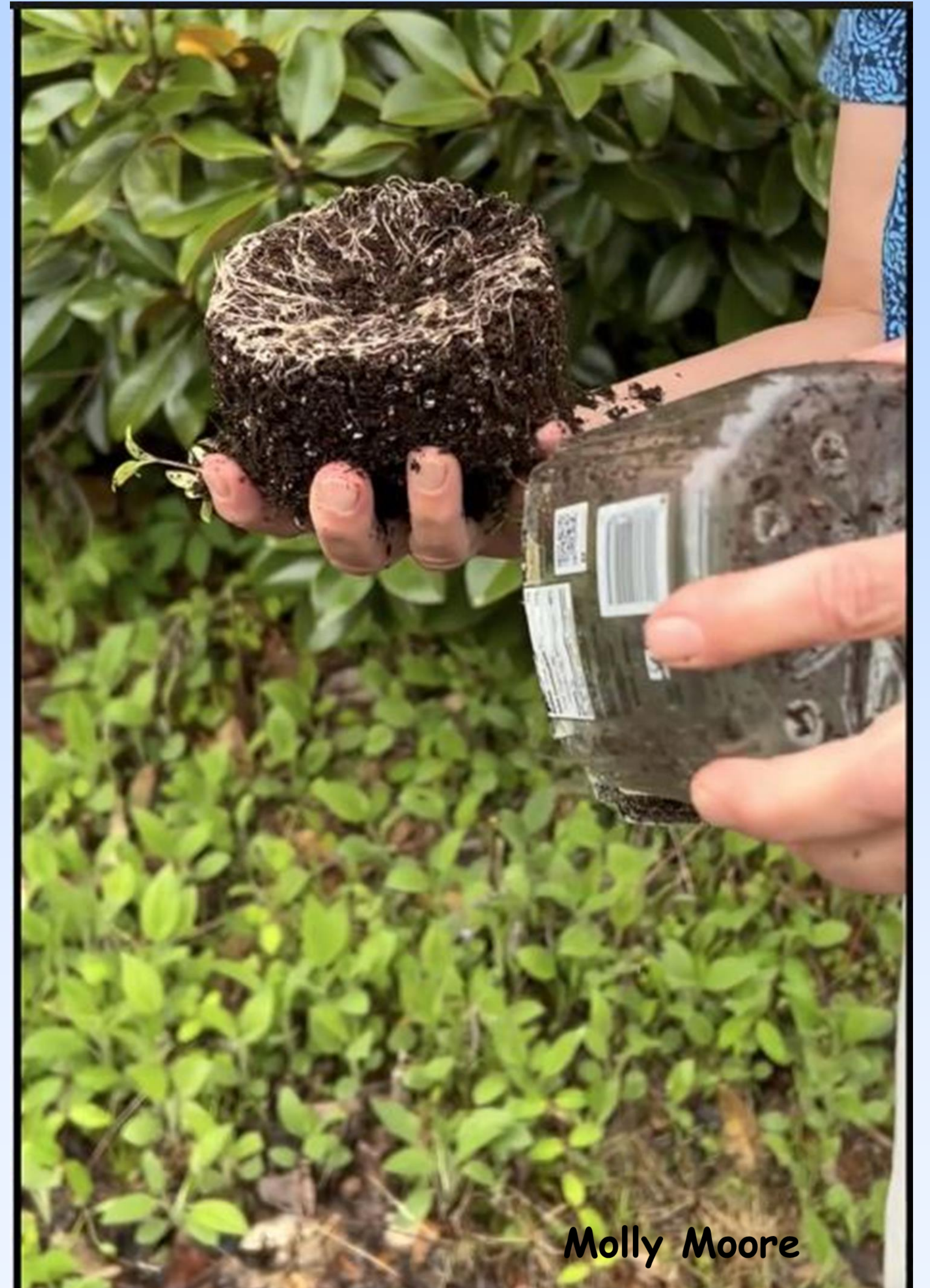
Winter sowing's secret to success



Strong roots!



How to get the plants out!



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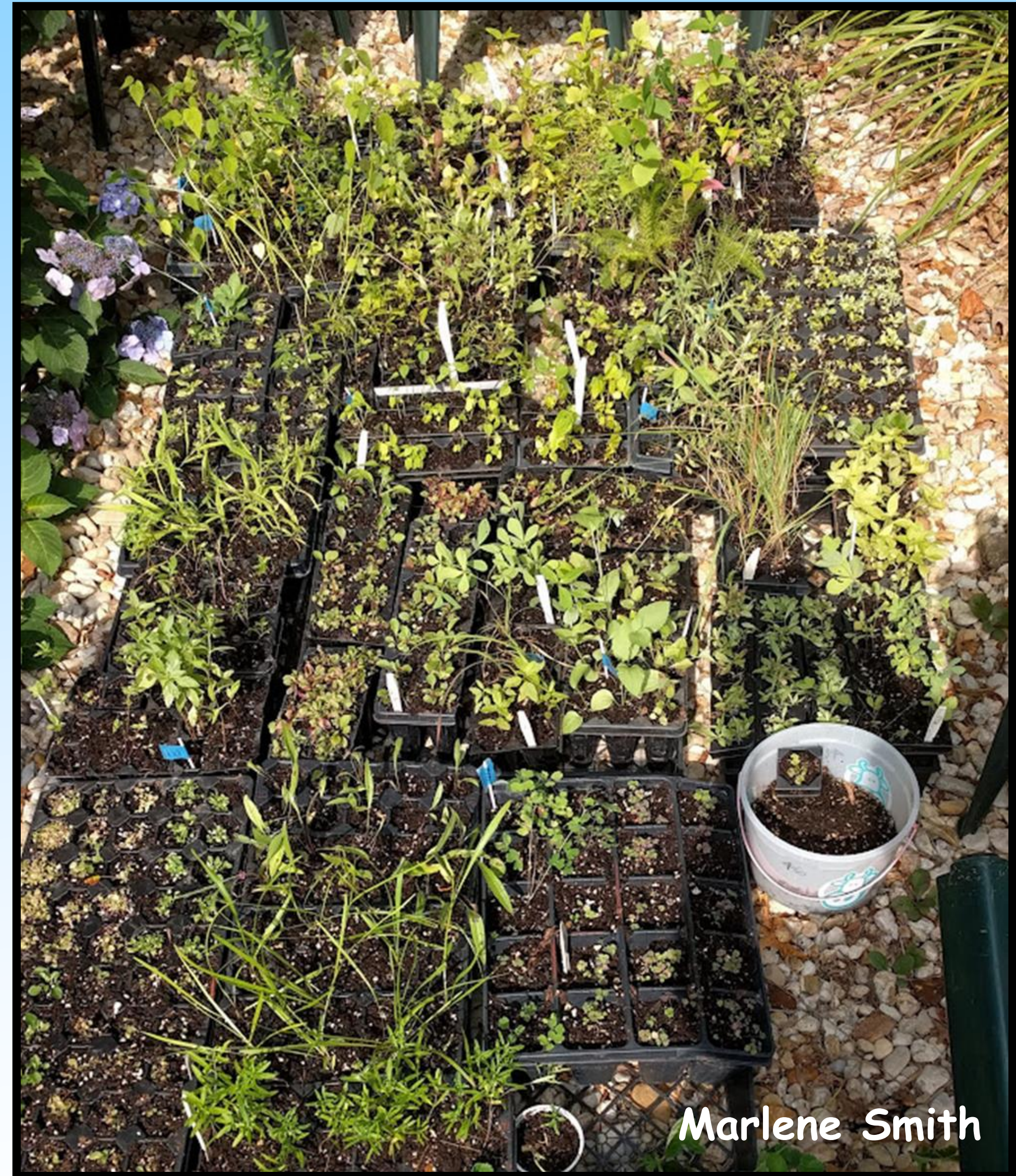
**Pull
individual
plants
apart. . .**

Gently!



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Pot seedlings for fall planting, neighbors, plant sales



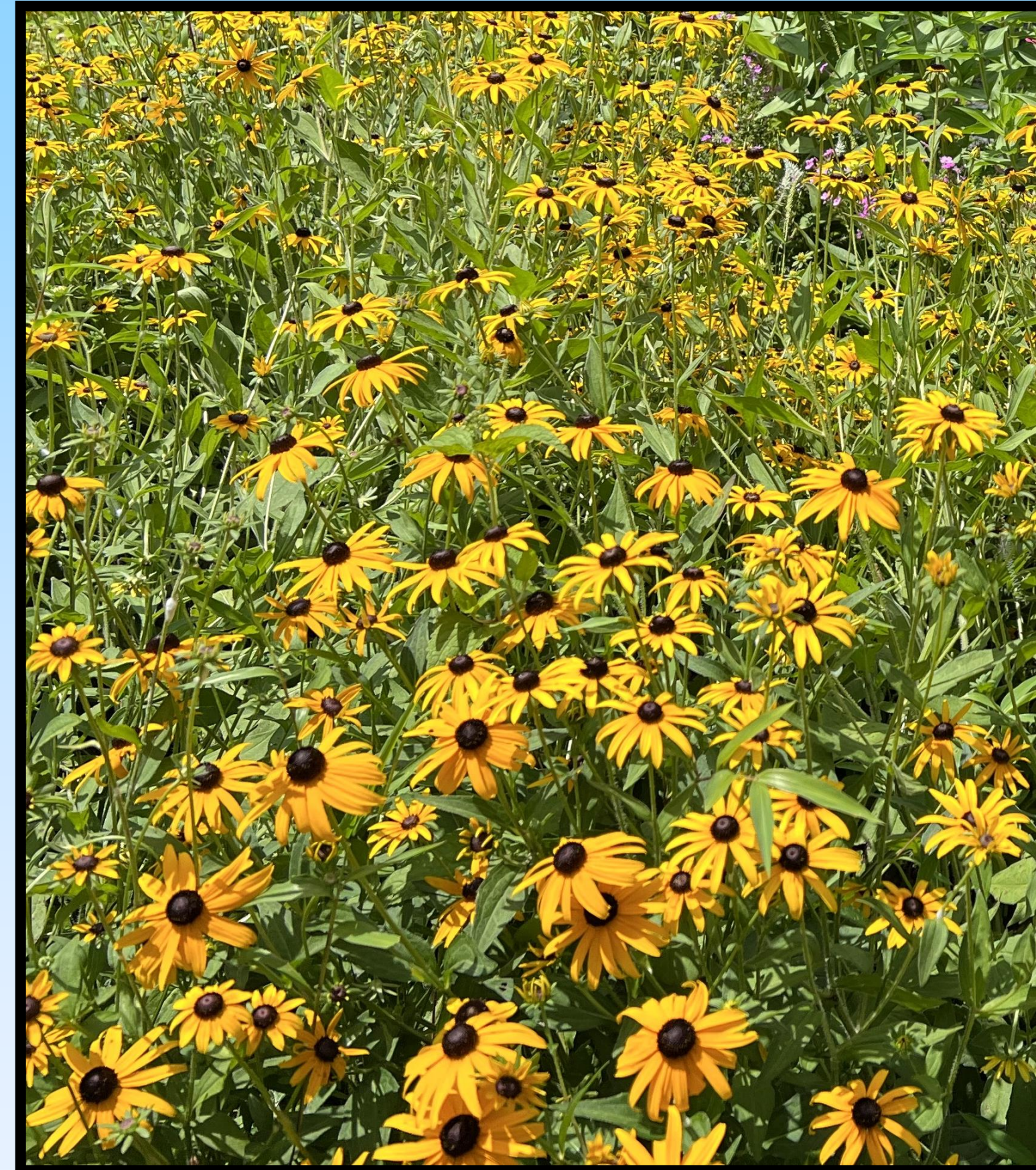
Sleep... Creep. Leap!



Season 1



Season 2



Season 3

Natives that reliably bloom in their first year



Spotted Beebalm
Monarda punctata



Purple-headed Sneezeweed
Helenium flexuosum



Butterfly weed
Asclepias tuberosa



Blue Mistflower
Conoclinium coelestinum



Seedbox
Ludwigia alternifolia



Wrinkle Leaf Goldenrod
Solidago rugosa

One year in a winter sown bird & pollinator garden

Aug. 8, 2021



August 8, 2022



One year later in another winter sown garden

October 2021

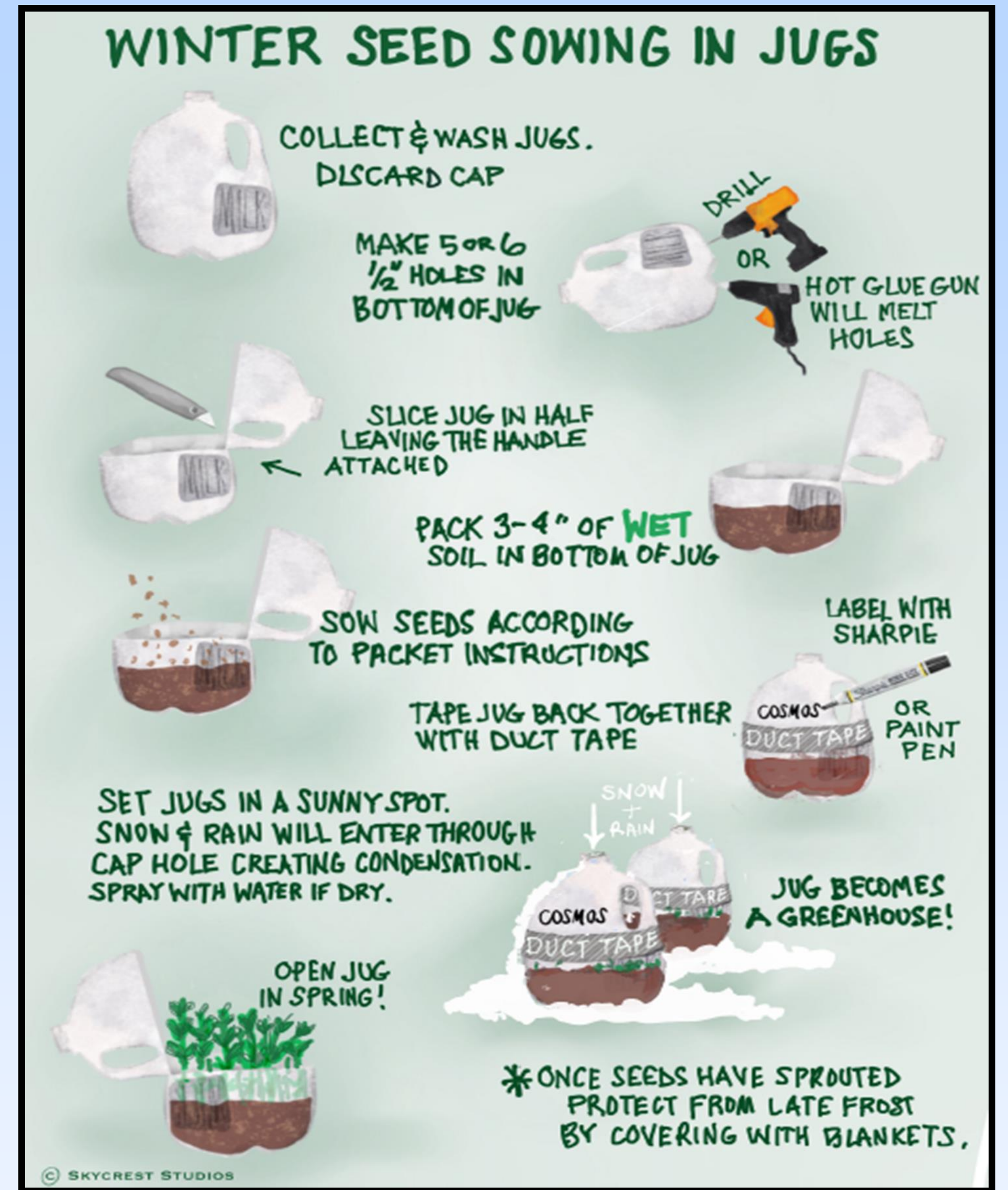


October 2022

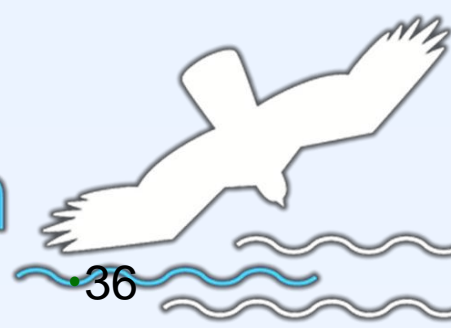


Winter Sowing in 10 Simple Steps




1. Collect and wash containers
2. Cut drain holes in bottom
3. Additional container prep
4. Prepare labels
5. Add potting mix and water thoroughly
6. Plant seeds
7. Seal container...and wait
8. Care for jugs and containers
9. Open in spring on warm days
10. Transplant seedlings



Graphic courtesy of Skycrest Studios



Resources

-  "All the Dirt on Winter Sowing" recorded presentation by Charles County Master Gardeners. <https://youtu.be/mhqT1kUVSk0>
-  "All the Dirt on Winter Sowing" PowerPoint presentation by Charles County Master Gardeners.
<https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2021-12/All%20the%20Dirt%20on%20Winter%20Sowing%20Power%20Point.pdf>
-  "Winter Sowing - How to Grow Your Own Natives for Birds and Beauty" recorded presentation by Southern Maryland Audubon Society.
<https://youtu.be/K9Ov1HXzhmw>



Resources

 Charles County Master Gardeners Native Plants webpage.
<https://extension.umd.edu/locations/charles-county/master-gardener/native-plants>

 Audubon "Plants for Birds" webpage. <https://www.audubon.org/plantsforbirds>

 Winter Sowers Facebook group "Guides".
https://www.facebook.com/groups/wintersown/learning_content

 Charles County Master Gardeners Resources webpage.
<https://extension.umd.edu/locations/charles-county/master-gardener/resources>



UME Resources

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go.umd.edu/hgic



go.umd.edu/askextension marylandgrows.umd.edu

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go.umd.edu/mg



go.umd.edu/mglocalprograms go.umd.edu/mghandbook

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go.umd.edu/mgnativeplants

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Questions?



• Joe-Pye Weed

• Orange Cone Flower

• Molly Moore