

## Preparing Containers



Figure 1. *Sample Containers. Flats, milk jugs, juice bottles, and pots make great winter sowing containers. Even a Lego container with a modified lid (top right) works.*

### The Fun Begins

The great thing about winter sowing, as with gardening in general, is that there are a lot of right answers—that is, you can get positive results using many different kinds of tools and techniques. For example, if you enjoy shopping, you’ll have fun searching for the materials you’ll be using. On the other hand, if you enjoy creative problem solving and reusing existing materials<sup>1</sup>, you’ll have fun searching for the materials to reuse.

You can either purchase existing containers or create your own, or use any combination of new and reused materials you wish. Winter sowing is all about trying different things and finding out what works best for you. Go ahead and be creative!

### Container Overview

There are all sorts of containers, and combinations of containers, that can be used for winter seed sowing. The only requirements are that containers must:

- ♻ Be deep enough to hold *at least* two inches of settled soil mix
- ♻ Be able to let light in (either because they’re clear or translucent, or because clear lids can be made for them)
- ♻ Allow ventilation at the top and bottom (so water and air can get in and out)

If you enjoy finding new uses for old recyclables, winter sowing will soon start you thinking about household containers in a whole new way. Once empty, they become valuable resources instead of recyclables or trash.

Some containers can hold smaller subcontainers, while others stand on their own. Table 1 provides an overview of each kind of container. Specific containers and subcontainers are then described starting on page 6.

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<sup>1</sup> This is another way of saying a) finding other uses for recyclables, b) being frugal, or c) being cheap. I’m all of these and proud!

Table 1. *Container Characteristics for Winter Seed Sowing*

<b>Container</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Lid</b>	<b>Subcontainers</b>	<b>Modification</b>
<b>Seed Sowing Flats</b>	Any	Clear plastic dome	Cell packs Cardboard rolls Peat/newspaper pots	Create holes in dome lid Create holes in tray bottom
<b>Milk &amp; Water Jugs</b>	Gallon, Half-gallon	Remove	Peat/newspaper pots Cardboard rolls Small cups None (direct sow)	Remove lid from jug Create holes in bottom Cut 3/4 of way around jug Tape closed over winter
<b>Juice &amp; Pop Bottles</b>	60+ oz., 2-liter and up	Remove	Peat/newspaper pots Cardboard rolls Small cups None (direct sow)	Remove lid from jug Create holes in bottom Cut 3/4 of way around jug Tape closed over winter
<b>Tubs with Lids</b>	16+ oz., At least 2" deep	Modified original lid	None (direct sow)	Create holes in bottom Cut out center of lid Replace with clear plastic
<b>Foil Pans, Plastic Containers</b>	At least 2" deep	Clear snap-on	None (direct sow)	Create holes in lid Create holes in bottom Tape over any excess slits
<b>Pots</b>	Any	Piece of plastic	None (direct sow)	Must have drainage Create clear plastic cover Tie or rubberband lid in place
<b>Large Cups</b>	32+ oz.	Piece of plastic	None (go inside main container)	Create holes in bottom Create clear plastic cover Tie or rubberband cover in place
<b>Cell Packs</b>	Any	None	None (go inside main container)	None (plastic or peat)
<b>Peat &amp; Newspaper Pots</b>	At least 2" deep	None	None (go inside main container)	None Soak before using
<b>Cardboard Rolls</b>	At least 2" deep	None, open both ends	None (go inside main container)	Cut to at least 2" tall Soak before using
<b>Small Cups</b>	6 oz. or less, At least 2" tall	None	None (go inside main container)	Create holes in bottom

## Cleaning Containers

Containers used for winter sowing should be clean and sterile, to help ensure that seedlings will be healthy. If you are using household containers, or any container that previously held soil, you need to clean and sterilize the containers. First wash them, scrubbing gently, with dish soap and water. Rinse thoroughly and allow to dry. Next, soak them overnight in a solution of one part bleach to nine parts water. Rinse and allow them to dry. Containers are now ready for the next step, creating ventilation holes.

The only containers you don't need to clean are new cell packs and seed sowing flats.