

Winter Seed Sowing Party

A project from Homegrown National Park®

Duration: 1 - 2'

Prep Time: 3 - 4'

Engage your: Community

A Winter Sowing Party is a fun, hands-on community activity where participants create simple “mini-greenhouses” from recycled containers and plant native seeds that will sprout naturally in spring. Many native seeds require a period of cold stratification to germinate, making winter the perfect time to start them. It’s low-cost, beginner-friendly, and a great way to help people bring nature home during the colder months.

Directions:

1. Choose the Date & Time

Winter sowing relies on natural cold periods to prepare seeds for spring. Winter sowing parties work best anytime from late December through February, depending on your local climate. Choose a weekend or weeknight time that’s accessible to your community.

2. Secure a Location & Consider a Sponsor

Some location options include a community center, library room, nature center, school or church hall, or garden club building.

Consider asking whether a local group can co-host or **sponsor** the event, such as a horticultural society, native plant society, park, garden, coffee shop, or bookstore. Sponsors may help with space, promotion, or materials.

If you don’t have a sponsor, consider a **suggested donation** to help cover material costs (seeds and soil are typically the biggest expense). See full materials list below.

3. Determine Group Size & Registration

Decide how many people you can support based on your space and materials cost. Set up a simple sign-up form, Eventbrite, or Facebook Event.

4. Prepare Your Seeds

A key part of planning is choosing what seeds to offer. It’s best to offer a range of bloom times (spring, summer, fall) to support wildlife throughout the season. You can:

A. Use collected local native seeds: Great if you’ve saved seeds from your yard or community.

B. Purchase or source seeds via:

- Your Favorite Native Seed Provider - Seed packets are typically \$3-\$5

- Native Flora Seeds - *All proceeds support Homegrown National Park.*
<https://nativefloraseeds.org/>

You can learn the most ecologically productive plants for your ecoregion by using the HNP Keystone Plant Tool:

<https://homegrownnationalpark.org/keystone-plants/>

5. Promote the Event

Some methods for advertising (examples at the end of this doc):

- An email announcement
- A Facebook Event
- A flyer for local sharing

Optional: Encourage participants to bring a friend.

Here is a general description to help you begin your advertising:

Winter Sowing Native Plants

Join us for a hands-on workshop where you'll learn the simple and effective method of winter sowing—an easy way to start native plants outdoors during the colder months. We'll watch a short video introduction from entomologist Doug Tallamy, then plant several containers using regionally appropriate native seeds. Each participant will leave with multiple planted jugs ready to place outside all winter and transplant in spring. All materials are provided, and beginners are welcome!

6. Set Up the Space

Arrange tables in a circle or a U shape so everyone can see the demonstration.

Prepare a seed table with clearly marked categories, such as:

- Spring Bloom
- Summer Bloom
- Fall Bloom

Set out a pre-planted jug to show the finished example.

Optional: Offer simple snacks or drinks.

Optional: Play Doug Tallamy's short video "[What's the Rush?](#)" before planting. (You'll need to set up audio and video ahead of time)

7. Demonstrate the Winter Sowing Steps

Show participants how to prepare their first jug:

1. Poke 6 drainage holes in the bottom.
2. Cut around the jug horizontally, leaving a hinge at the handle.
3. Add 3–4 inches of moist potting soil.
4. Label the plant on a wooden stake and place it inside.
5. Sprinkle a pinch of seeds and press gently.
6. Spray lightly with water.
7. Tape the jug closed.
8. Label the outside clearly.

Guide everyone through their first jug together, then let participants continue at their own pace.

8. Wrap Up & Send Participants Home with Their Jugs

Remind people to:

- Place jugs outside immediately (snow and rain help) in a sunny, protected location (a southeast-facing spot is perfect).
- Water only if the soil looks dry.
- Open jugs after the last frost.
- Transplant seedlings when they develop 2–3 real leaves—not counting the first small baby leaves (cotyledons).

Encourage participants to add their new native plants on the [HNP Biodiversity Map](#) in spring.

9. Report Back and Help Us Improve!

Sharing your attendance numbers and event details is crucial. Your input directly helps us measure our collective impact and improve our resources. Did you do something special? We would love to see your marketing materials, photos, and hear about unique details to feature and incorporate for future events! [Contribute Your Feedback Here](#)

Optional: Create a Follow-Up Facebook Group

A simple group helps participants:

- Share photos and progress
- Ask questions
- Swap seeds or plants in the future
- Stay connected for future native-plant events

Things to Keep in Mind

- Keep instructions simple—this is ideal for beginners.
- Clearly label seeds and planted jugs.
- Take photos if participants are comfortable.
- Keep the atmosphere relaxed and social.

Materials

(Complete supply checklist)

- Name tags
- Spray bottles
- Potting soil
- Wooden labels
- Scoopers or cups for soil
- Native seeds (see recommended resources above)
- Books/printed references
- Scissors
- Box cutters
- Duck/duct tape
- Clean gallon jugs (4–5 per person)
- Pre-planted demo jug
- Seasonal signage (spring/summer/fall)
- Apron (optional)
- Pad of paper or phone for referencing species
- [HNP flyers/brochures](#)
- A handout with some of your favorite resources: Homegrown National Park links, local native seed & plant sellers, your closest Wild Ones chapter, state/local Native Plant Society, conservation groups, books you've found useful, any co-hosting organizations

Related HNP Activities

- Seed/Plant Giveaway or Swap
- Tabling Event

Examples





This project was contributed by Liz Myers-Chamberlin