



## Growing native plants at home

Not ready to say goodbye to your garden just yet? Consider becoming a Seed Sitter! It is an inexpensive, simple and fun way to continue connecting with native plants in the fall and winter.

Listed below are steps to take from fall to early summer to grow native wildflowers and grasses in your yard or on your balcony. This [Project Swallowtail webinar](#) by Pollinator Partnership Canada provides detailed instructions with images, as do the [Cliffcrest Butterflyway website](#), [The Underhill Seedsitters Group](#) and the [Wild Seed Project website](#). The two websites also provide guidance on different seed-starting methods.

You can modify the steps below in many ways to suit your location, available time, space and supplies, and the species you are trying to grow.

So, get started, let us know how it goes, and have fun!

### Fall and early winter:

- Collect your supplies for this step: plastic plant tray with holes in the bottom, enough potting soil to fill the tray, hardware cloth to cover your tray, native seed (ideally locally collected), spray bottle and dry leaves.
- Add soil to the tray, up to a centimeter from the top, and pat it down lightly.
- Carefully distribute seed across soil, as evenly as possible. We recommend adding one species of seed to each tray, so seedlings come up at about the same time. We also recommend a conservative use of seed, so you are not overwhelmed with hundreds of seedlings in the spring.
- Lightly cover seed with no more than two millimeters of soil.
- Mist the soil with a spray bottle.
- Cut the hardware cloth to fit the tray. Wear gloves to protect your hands. Flatten the hardware cloth over the tray, using weights if necessary, and cut it at the corners so you can bend it at the edges.
- Place the tray outside where it will receive rain and snow, but is safe from foot traffic. Place a thick layer of dried leaves on top. If your site is windy, place the leaves under the hardware cloth so they do not blow away.

### Winter:

- Collect and store for future use about 50 plastic pots, or containers that can be used as pots. Old yogurt or sour cream containers work well if you drill holes in their bottoms.
- Give some consideration to where your baby plants will go once they are big enough. Neighbours, community gardens and schools would likely be thrilled to receive them.



### Early spring:

- Gently remove leaves from the top of the tray.
- Make sure tray gets some sun.
- Spritz soil regularly to keep it moist, but do not over-water.
- Monitor soil for sprouts. Sprouts will appear at different times depending on the species you planted and where you are located.

### Spring and summer:

- Spritz soil regularly to keep it moist, but do not over-water.
- Purchase or seek donations of potting soil for transplanting.
- Thin and transplant seedlings once they are 5 to 8 centimeters tall. Again, this will happen at different times for different species and in different locations.
- Place seedlings in 4-inch pots (or reused containers with holes) and continue to water gently.
- If necessary, protect small plants (with weak roots) from squirrels.
- Once plants are ready, begin distributing them.

### Notes:

SEEDS: If you require native seed, reach out to local native plant societies, garden and naturalists clubs and nearby Rangers. They may have seed to share. In addition, North American Native Plant Society runs a [Seed Exchange](#) for members.

TRANSPLANTING: It is helpful to plan for the storage and care of transplanted plants well in advance. Although step one in the fall can take place on a balcony, transplanting and plant storage requires more space than what is typically found on a balcony.

DISTRIBUTION: One tray may produce 100 or more plants, so plan early for plant distribution. Consider advertising your plants on social media channels for neighbours as well as local garden and naturalist clubs.