



Ashford Pollinator Pathway News

By Jennifer Sterling-Folker, December 2025

Season's Greetings Ashford!

The end of each year's growing season can be a time of melancholy & relief for gardeners - melancholy that our gardens no longer need tending & relief that we don't have to constantly tend our gardens! ☺



But inevitably our attentions turn to other gardening tasks during the winter months, like planning plant & garden designs for the next growing season & **Cold Stratifying Seedlings**. What does "cold stratification" mean? Many native plant seeds need temperature changes to trigger germination, which occurs naturally when seeds overwinter outdoors under snow & freezing temperatures. While gardeners can mimic this seasonal cycle by refrigerating seeds for several weeks or months, the easiest method to grow plants from seeds is the milk jug method pictured below. The method can be used to grow ANY seeds, including vegetables & annuals that don't need stratification.

We tried this method for the first-time last winter, placing soil-filled milk jugs sprinkled with native plant seeds outside in December, January and even as late as February. By May seedlings had sprouted in all the milk jugs & were carefully moved to individual pots after the first frost. Thanks to this easy-grow method, we were able to give away **over 200 FREE native plant seedlings** to interested gardeners over the summer, including White Snakeroot, Purple Coneflower, Wild Bergamot, & Mountain Mint. This method is incredibly simple, no refrigeration or tracking of weeks or months required, because you are letting nature do the work for you. The seeds are safe over winter in the jugs, which act like greenhouses to germinate them in Spring.

Give it a try & let us know how your seeds fared next Spring when Ashford PP's monthly news item will return to the Ashford Citizen. We are taking a break for the winter months, but will be back in 2026 with more tips, ideas & information on how all of us can save the planet with native plants, one garden at a time. Until then...

Happy Holidays!

WINTER SEED SOWING IN JUGS

