

Academy Garden Club Thymes

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ACADEMY GARDEN CLUB OF LENOX

JANUARY 2020

Dear Members,

May we all look forward to a year in which our loved ones stay strong and healthy, our gardens thrive, and we find new ways to protect and sustain our environment!

We have opted to not have a meeting in January, that month in which weather is most iffy, but we can look back on the lovely holiday party we had in December. There were 24 of us, despite a heavy snow squall just as we were gathering, and we talked and laughed, and shared so many delicious dishes including a plum pudding with whipped cream - absolutely to die for!

Looking ahead, our next meeting will be at 6:00 pm on Tuesday, February 11, 2020. Kathy DeVlyder, one of our members, and a Master Gardener, will give us a presentation on plant propagation.

I look forward to seeing you all in February.

Harriet Wetstone
President

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HORTICULTURAL COLUMN

By Harriet Wetstone

Today, as I was wondering what to share with you this month, I received the Massachusetts Master Gardener Association Newsletter. Many of you must receive this, but to anyone who doesn't and would like it, I would be happy to forward it.

In it was a seed sowing method I have never run across, and I am absolutely going to try it. It is called winter sowing, and it involves creating a mini greenhouse from gallon milk containers. Here's how it works: You simply make slits in the bottom for drainage. Next you slice or scissor them in three quarters of the way around leaving the label area intact to serve as a hinge. You fill the bottom half with good moistened garden soil, sow your seeds, and duct tape the container back together.



The containers are left outside to freeze and thaw, be snowed and rained on, and the seeds will germinate in the spring when they are ready. No setting out under lights, no scarifying, no hardening off. It sounds too good to be true!



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Here is an explanation of how it works from Rick Charnes who wrote the article:

"Planting in winter enables us to take advantage of a natural process that is rarely considered: When the seeds of perennial plants fall to the ground in late summer or autumn, a chemical or physical mechanism often comes into play that puts them into a state of dormancy so that they will germinate only when environmental conditions are right, i.e., when spring arrives. Dormancy prevents seeds from germinating in the still warm fall soil, which would deprive new plants of the time they need to put down an adequate root system before winter.

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Through a wonderful synchronicity of nature, the cold and wet of winter will reliably degrade this germination inhibitor through a process called "stratification." By the time spring rolls around the inhibitor is no longer in play, and increasing warmth can stimulate seeds to germinate.

Virtually any perennial seed that you would normally plant outdoors in the spring can be winter sown; natives are especially good for this. Winter sowing is also excellent for biennials like foxglove (*Digitalis*) and hollyhocks (*Alcea*), whose seeds benefit from stratification. It also works for many annuals -- just not the tender ones whose seeds you would normally wait to plant until after the last spring frost."

While this lovely idea was new to me, there is lots of information to be had: e.g.

<https://www.agardenforthehouse.com/2012/11/winter-sowing-1016/>

http://www.wintersown.org/Milk_Jug.html or

<https://ginghamgardens.com/winter-sowing-yes-you-can-garden-in-winter/>.

I am going to sow kales and cabbages and broccoli rabe!

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