

# Winter Sowing: Snail Roll Method in Milk Jugs

Start 50-100+ seeds per jug outdoors in winter using recycled materials

## Materials

- Gallon milk jugs
- Potting mix
- Rubber bands
- Seeds
- Feed bags
- Duct tape
- Marker
- Knife/scissors

## Step-by-Step Instructions

- 1. Prepare Jug:** Cut 5-6" from bottom. Add 4-6 drainage holes. Keep both halves.
- 2. Cut Feed Bags:** Cut strips 10" tall x 12-24" long. Longer = more seeds per roll.
- 3. Moisten Mix:** Add water until it holds shape when squeezed but doesn't drip.
- 4A. Fold Bag:** Fold strip in half lengthwise (10" becomes 5" tall). This creates a pocket.
- 4B. Fill Pocket:** Fill folded pocket with moist potting mix. Fill to about 1" from top edge.
- 4C. Add Seeds:** Place seeds in line about 1/2" from top fold edge. Space per seed size.
- 4D. Roll It Up:** Starting from one end, roll the filled pocket into a spiral. Seeds stay at top.
- 4E. Secure:** Wrap 1-2 rubber bands around middle. Snug but not crushing the roll.
- 5. Arrange:** Stand rolls upright in jug bottom, seeds UP. Add 1/4-1/2" water to bottom.
- 6. Seal & Label:** Top over bottom. Duct tape seal. Cap off/loose. Label variety & date.
- 7. Place Outside:** South-facing, wind-protected, elevated. Avoid shade/low spots.
- Weekly Care:** Check moisture, add water if dry. Remove cap on warm days (60F+).
- 8. Transplant:** When 2-3" tall with 2-4 true leaves. Unroll, separate, plant. No hardening off!
- Seed Spacing:** Fine seeds (lettuce) 1/4", Medium (flowers) 1/2", Large (sunflower) 1"

## Visual Guide

<p>FEED BAG FOLDING:</p> <p>1. Cut strip 10" tall</p> <pre>+-----+               10"               tall +-----+ 12-24" long</pre> <p>2. Fold in HALF</p> <pre>+-----+  #####  5" tall  #####  (folded) +-----+ Pocket created</pre> <p>ROLLING:</p> <p>5. Roll from one end</p> <pre>OOOOOOO &lt;- Seeds up /#####\  #####  4-5"  #####  tall \#####/ Feed bag wraps around</pre> <p>6. Secure with bands</p>	<p>FILLING &amp; SEEDING:</p> <p>3. Fill pocket with moist potting mix</p> <pre>+-----+  #####  &lt;- 1" gap  #####  &lt;- Seeds here  #####  &lt;- Mix  #####  +-----+</pre> <p>4. Seeds 1/2" from top fold edge</p> <p>IN JUG:</p> <pre>_____  / O \ Top (dome)  /   \ Cap off  ===== Duct tape    O O O   Rolls   /# #\  Seeds UP   ~water~  1/4-1/2"  +---O-O-+ Holes</pre> <p>3-6 rolls fit</p>
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## Quick Reference

### Best Seeds

Annuals	Snapdragons, Alyssum, Larkspur, Calendula, Poppies
Perennials	Coneflowers, Black-eyed Susans, Columbine, Milkweed
Vegetables	Lettuce, Spinach, Kale, Arugula, Onions, Leeks
Herbs	Parsley, Chives, Cilantro, Oregano, Chamomile
AVOID	Tomatoes, Peppers, Basil, Cucumbers, Squash

### Timing by Zone

Zone	Start	Transplant
3-4	Late Feb-Mar	May-Jun
5-6	Mid Jan-Feb	Apr-May
7-8	Late Dec-Jan	Mar-Apr
9-10	Nov-Dec	Feb-Mar

### Troubleshooting

Problem	Solution
Drying out	Add water to bottom
Too wet/moldy	Increase ventilation
Mix falling out	Fold tighter, drier mix
No germination	Wait 8-12 weeks
Bands breaking	Replace monthly
Spindly	More sun/ventilation
Unrolling	Use 2 bands/roll

### Key Measurements

**Feed Bag Strip:** 10" tall x 12-24" long (longer = more seeds) • **After Folding:** 4-5" tall pocket • **Mix:** Fill to 1" from top • **Seeds:** 1/2" from top fold edge, spaced 1/4-1" apart • **Finished Roll:** 4-5" tall, 2-3" diameter • **Water in Jug:** 1/4-1/2" • **Jug Cut:** 5-6" from bottom

### Pro Tips

Label everything clearly (you'll forget!) • Take photos of labeled setups • Group jugs for wind protection • Start with easy seeds like lettuce • Make new rolls every 1-2 weeks for continuous harvest • Use different colored rubber bands to ID varieties • Keep a garden journal with dates • Be patient - some seeds take 8-12 weeks to germinate • The fold creates a pocket that holds soil and keeps it contained when rolling

### Why This Works

Seeds naturally need cold stratification (freeze-thaw cycles) to break dormancy. Winter sowing provides this naturally while protecting seeds in mini-greenhouses. The snail roll method with folded feed bags maximizes space - one jug can start 50-100+ seedlings. The fold creates a secure pocket that holds potting mix as you roll. Seedlings are already hardened off since they grow outdoors from the start. No indoor space, grow lights, or hardening off required!