



SSAFE CASE STUDY REPORT

Seabury Winter Sowing Project

Chapter: Seabury Active Life Community

Location: Bloomfield CT

Recorder: Davida Foy Crabtree

Date Submitted: 08/18/26

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Keywords: Biodiversity, landscaping, native plants, pollinators, indoor winter activity

Summary: Seeking to increase native plants and pollinator pathways, we used the winter sowing method to turn a plethora of seeds into 550 seedlings now thriving (mostly) on our campus.

Objective: To engage residents in diversifying and nativizing the plant life on campus while increasing pollinator friendly plantings and teaching a new skill.

Project Description:

With this project, about 45 different residents engaged in activities related to winter sowing of CT native plant seeds to increase our pollinator friendly areas on campus. With winter sowing, water jugs are planted with seeds in early winter and set outdoors on the ground/snow. The seeds are subject to natural conditions but protected in their mini-greenhouses so germination rate is improved and resulting seedlings in Spring are stronger.

Seabury is a community of about 400 residents in all levels of care, with about 450 staff. Located just north of Hartford CT, we reside on a former dairy farm property in a suburban community of diversity and a rural feel. Largely apartments, supplemented by about 30 cottages and villas, we are surrounded by government owned lands for which we have permission to maintain 4.5 miles of trails. Seabury is an intentional community related to the Episcopal Diocese of CT and proud of its nonprofit status. Our Residents' Association is robust and deeply engaged in all aspects of life, including two representatives on the facility's Board of Directors. We have nine solar canopies, a solar array, and 36 geothermal wells that are each 900 feet deep.

This winter sowing project can work in any community with garden space available or potentially available. It does not require a great deal of expertise (it's gardening – always



an experiment!), and is spread over a few months. It might be difficult with a high proportion of less able-bodied residents.

Methodology (Activities, Steps):

Steps involved:

1. Collect translucent gallon jugs, drill drainage holes and cut for access. *See photos at the end of the case study for examples.*
2. Hold a workshop to fill jugs with soil, add seeds, label and seal jugs
3. Distribute completed jugs to resident “adopters” with direct access outdoors (Adopters set the jugs outside their units, water as needed, protect from hot sun in late spring, and if interested, participate in transplanting the seedlings.
4. Provide timely updates and reminders over next 3 months to “adopters.” *See note below for updated examples.*
5. When sprouted and 2.5” tall, collect jugs for planting day or days
6. Recruit residents to plant in designated spots
7. Celebrate! (And, check on plants periodically for the first few months.)

****Note:** The updates and reminders to adopters consist usually of something like, "Potential frost tonight so check your jugs for seedlings - if any sprouted, cover the jugs with a big towel or similar heavy cloth." Or, "No precipitation in five days - better check and be sure the jugs are moist. To check, lift the jug and if it's light, probably needs water; or see if there's condensation on the inside and if not, they need watering!"

Funding Needed (Amount, Sources):

The only expense we incurred was the purchase of three bags of top quality potting soil (Ocean Forest or Happy Frog recommended.) The cost was covered by Seabury Charitable Foundation.

Involvement or Support of Community Administration:

Other than occasional checking in about timing of planting, none.

Key Challenges:

We intended this to contribute to a long pollinator pathway garden slated to be installed in midspring of 2025, but it was delayed and thus our planting had to be delayed for 2-3 months. Keeping the mini-greenhouse jugs moist and viable wasn't easy. But we did it!

Outcome (Results):



Senior Stewards Acting for the Environment

The first year, we raised 350 seedlings and planted most of them in the new pollinator pathway garden. We didn't have enough help and so a few of us were exhausted. Second year we raised about 250 seedlings and it went much more smoothly.

Lessons Learned:

It helps to lay it all out ahead of time and have a plan. Start recruiting people for the jug-sowing, jug-adopting and later for the planting ahead of time so you know you have enough people for each. We set up a listserv of the adopters for ease of communication.

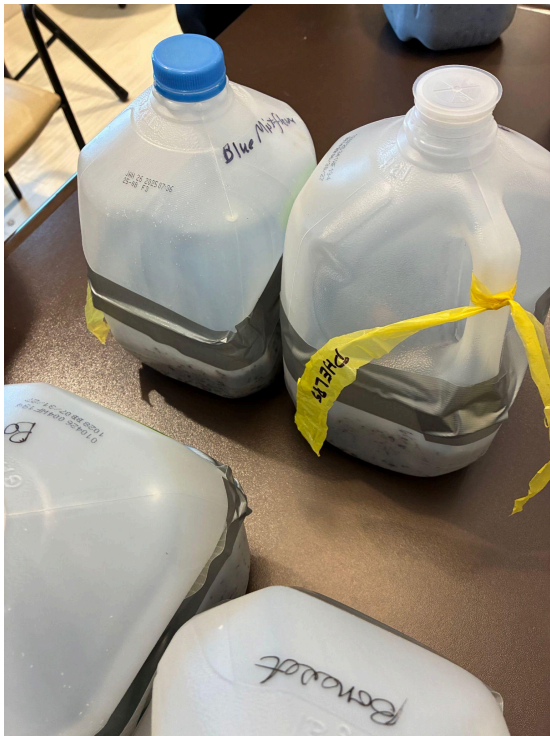
Next Steps or Follow Up:

We'll likely continue since we now have our own sources of seeds from all those seedlings as they've matured!

Resources:

References, online resources etc.: There are numerous videos and narratives online about winter sowing, as well as Facebook groups on the topic.

Photos:



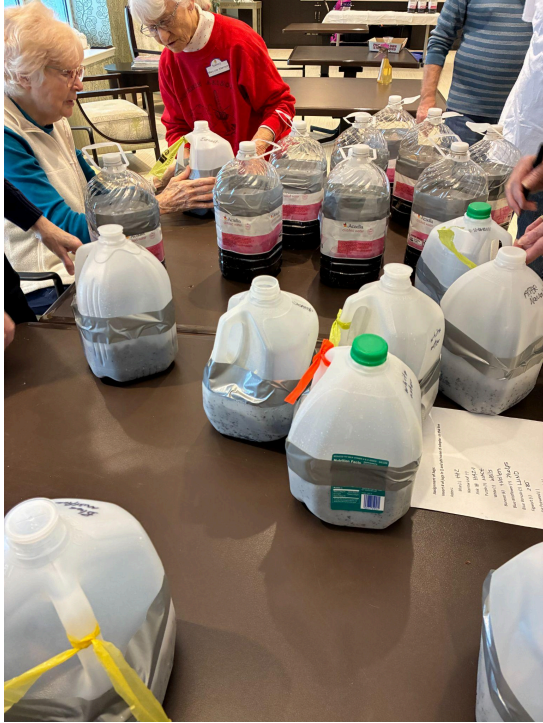
Jugs with labels



Jug taping



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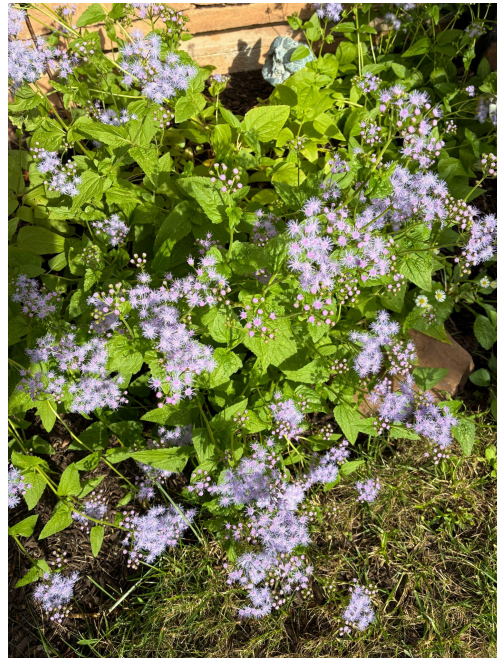
Jugs with tape & labels



Label on bottom of a jug



Seedlings 🌱



Blue Mistflower





Native Plantings



Figwort



Hillside Planting

