

healthy HOME



Go Green To Grow Seeds: DIY Seedling pots made from recycled newspapers

I don't remember the last time I actually made something completely for free, but, I'll tell you, this workshop costs zero money– yep – not a penny.

Seedlings are so tiny and dainty and always require secure little planters to protect their budding roots and stems before they're transferred to pots, beds, or gardens. In working to provide the most nurturing cubbies for my seedlings, I developed simple, eco- friendly, and biodegradable pots made from nothing other than old newspapers. For you and your family, this means easy, free, and fun.

So, let's go ahead and move to the DIY “in's and out's” of newspaper seedling pots. You're going to love this workshop and, if you have kids, their going to love this one too.

First things first:

Gather your kiddos and gather your supplies. Given this is a basic project, all you really need to gather are newspapers, a glass bottle (like a wine bottle or jelly jar), seedling soil (just like what we made in our seedling soil workshop), scissors, and find yourself a large flat work surface.

I like to work in my kitchen, on a large marble slab that cleans up quickly – but, garage floors, outdoor patios, and other areas work too. If you prefer working on the floor, you might want to grab some old towels or gardener's kneepads. You'll be on your knees for a bit of time.

Once you're settled into your workspace, spread out a few layers of newspaper and cut long strips that are the same width as the bottle you're using. After you have many long strips with identical widths, wrap one strip around the bottle. When the strip is wrapped around the bottle, wiggle the bottle about two inches out of the paper and create a folded bottom area. This area will be the base of the pot and creates a seal to keep the paper from coming undone. After you've created a firmly folded bottom, remove the bottle completely and set the paper pot on the bottom and, from the inside of the pot, push down on the folded bottom to reinforce the base. Believe it or not, that's really all there is to it.

Now that you have one paper pot, repeat the steps and make as many as you need. Then, fill the pots with seedling soil, plant your delicate seedlings, and place all of your paper pots closely to one another on a tray large enough to house them all at once. You might want to put a piece of twine around the community of paper pots – or not. It's up to you.

After your seedlings start to grow and develop, all you have to do is place the entire paper pot, with the soil and growing seedlings, into the hole you've prepared. The paper pot will disintegrate as the seedlings grow.

If you find that your paper pots disintegrate before it's time to plant them into their next staged home, you can paint the newspaper pots with a mixture of flour and water and allow the mixture to dry on the folded pots for about 24 hours before you put the soil and seedlings into the pots.

After you've made your seedling pots, don't put away your newspapers or scissors too fast. Shredded newspaper can safely be added to your compost pile. Newspaper is naturally carbon rich and, when shredded, can actually balance the pH of your compost. Compost typically has higher nitrogen to carbon ratio, due to all the food scraps, but, with some newspaper shreds, you'll find a better balance. There is one caveat; newspapers degrade slower than other compostables – so keep that in mind as you apply compost around your garden.

Happy planting!