

Helpful Hint For Germinating Gourd Seeds

By Ron Bair

Date: Unknown

A common everyday plastic gallon milk jug can be utilized as a miniature greenhouse to help germinate gourd seeds. This works extremely well with the hardshell gourd seeds. Germination time can be cut in half versus natural germination conditions. With proper moisture and warmth, some of the large gourd seeds have been known to germinate in 3 to 5 days.

To make the miniature greenhouse, cut approximately 1 and 1/2" from the bottom of the jug, keeping both pieces (See Figure 1). Plant 3 seeds in an area that the jug will cover.

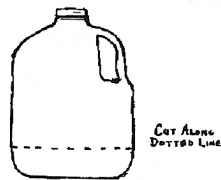


Figure 1



Figure 2

Place the top portion of the jug over your seed bed after it has been watered well (See Figure 2). Rake loose soil and pat in place approximately 1/3 to 1/2 way up on outside of Figure 2 jug. This will help keep the jug from blowing away, plus help retain heat inside the greenhouse. After sprouting, thin out to the healthiest plant, or keep all 3 if you have fairly fertile soil. The young sprouts will need to be hardened off for a suggested minimum of 3 days.

The 1st day after sprouting, loosen the jug up slightly by gently pulling the jug upwards about 1/2". On the 2nd day, raise the jug up and above the small mound you created around the jug, by twisting it about a 1/4 of a turn and setting it back on top of the mound. This will enable fresh air to circulate around the young plant. On the 3rd day, the jug can be removed for a portion of the day, and set it back before nightfall. Or if windy conditions exist (Note-Strong winds can kill young unstable plants.), shove a stake into the soil nearby, and tie the handle of the jug to the stake to keep it in place.

On the 4th day, the jug may be removed for the largest portion of the day, and suggested to set the jug back over the plant(s) prior to nightfall (See Figure 3). If the 5th day is a nice sunny day, the jug may be removed for good.



Figure 3

Figure 4

The bottom portion of the jug can be used in basically the same manner (See Figure 4). Plant the seeds the same way. Place the bottom portion of the jug upside down over the seed bed and pat the soil down the same way. These will need to be hardened off more quickly, due to the plant touching the plastic and possibly burning the leaves.

For cooler days and nights, the jugs can be placed over the young plants to help protect them. The caps can be removed on warmer days and also watering can be accomplished this way. These jugs work quite well on other young plants too, to help protect them.

Good Luck Gourdening this coming year!