

Making Paper Pots

Students can make their own mini paper pots and these can be transplanted directly into the garden. The basic idea is to wrap a newspaper strip around a mold, squish the bottom, fill it with soil and use it to plant a seed in.

Materials

- Potmaker: You can either purchase a two-part wooden mold or use a V-8 juice can. Commercial molds are available from Lee Valley tools <http://www.leevalley.com> (\$12.50 each) or <http://www.kidsgardening.com>.
- Newspaper
- Scissors
- Bag of seed starting mix
- Watering can
- Nursery tray or container to hold and support paper pots.

Instructions

1. Cut strips of newspaper 3 inches wide by 10 inches long.
2. Students place the strip of newspaper lengthwise in front of them and then place the mold at the end of the newspaper strip closest to their own body in such a way as to be able to roll the mold along the paper strip. Position the mold so as to leave about 1 inch of the newspaper hanging over the bottom of the mold.
3. Roll the mold along the strip, rolling the paper around it (not too tight, not too loose). When the newspaper is entirely around the mold, twist and fold the extra 1" of paper at the bottom over onto itself.
4. The commercial wooden mold has a matching bottom piece. If using it, take the top, place it on the bottom, and turn it while pressing down. "Push and turn, push and turn" we say to the children. If using a V8 juice can, do the same on a flat table surface.
5. Gently ease the newspaper "pot" off its mold. Fill with soil to the top of pot. Plant a seed by poking a hole in the dirt with the index finger, sticking the seed in and covering. (Optional: write student's name on newspaper pot.)
6. Place pots in a tray right up against each other so that they support each other. Water pots after you have placed them in a supportive tray. If students plan to take them home, put them in a small container. Milk cartons cut long-ways with drainage holes make a great "4-pack."

You can also make pots that are more durable from normal office paper. Have kids decorate the strip of paper with rubber stamps and garden wishes before rolling into a pot. Tape the bottom of the pot if necessary.

Transplanting paper pots

When the plant is about 3-5" tall, transplant it into garden. It is possible to transplant the newspaper pot directly into the ground. The newspaper will eventually decompose. With younger kids, this is an easier method—to have them transplant the whole pot in the garden. However, it is better for the plant's root system to take the seedling out of the paper pot to transplant it, as the roots will have an easier time establishing themselves in the ground. If students plant their whole paper pot in the ground, make sure that no part of the paper is exposed above the soil. Paper exposed to air can wick the moisture from the soil leaving a dried out little plant.