

Mini Greenhouse for Seed Starting

By Kris Babcock

Supplies:

Clear plastic container with lid

Piece of fabric that wicks water well

1" thick piece of foam insulation or other water-proof, flat material 1" thick

Thumb tacks (optional)

Plant light bulb with cheap light fixture (optional)

Paper seedling pots (see instructions under Making Your own Seedling Pots on the web site)

Potting mix (I use Wonder Soil bricks)

Seeds

String

Instructions:

This demo uses a large Sterilite container from Target and a piece of Styrofoam from a larger sheet, cut to a size smaller than the bottom of the container.



In these pictures, I show red wool. The wool wicked well, but the red dye leaked and turned everything red, so I replaced it with a white microfiber towel. The fabric should be slightly LARGER than the bottom of the container so it will drape down over the Styrofoam and still cover the bottom of the container.

If using tacks, attach the fabric to the styrofoam board and put both into the container. This is the “self-watering capillary mat”.



I have been very happy with Wonder Soil bricks. They are the size and shape of a brick until you add water, then expand to 2.5 gallons. The primary ingredient is coconut coir, and they polymer crystals to hold water, and other nutrients.

Fill the paper seed pots with moist planting mix, plant 2-3 seeds per pot.



Place the seed pots on the container touching each other. Tie them together with string. Water everything well including the fabric on the sides and ends. You should have standing water on the ends, but not above the Styrofoam. The fabric should be wet all over.



Now put the container in front of a window that gets sun, and put the lid on. The heat of the sun and the house interior are plenty to heat of the mini greenhouse and the seeds should sprout. The evaporation and wick of the water will keep everything moist with no need to water.

Once the seeds have sprouted, you should check the container on hot, sunny days to make sure the plants don't get too hot. You can slide the lid over a few inches. If the plants are not getting enough light, you can buy a cheap plant bulb at Home Depot for about \$5 and use any lamp you have that will put the light close to the baby plants. I do this from sunset until about 10pm to supplement the natural light.

