5 Cheap Substitutes for Seedling Trays



Seed trays offer a great way to start off your planting season. However, you don't need to purchase actual trays from the gardening supply store. Instead, you can upcycle/recycle/DIY many terrific substitutes for seedling trays. Here are five good ideas:

What Are Seedling Trays?

Seed trays provide a great opportunity to begin growing multiple plants from seed at once. You germinate a bunch of them together in the trays. Then, when they're ready to go into pots or the ground, you transplant them. This allows you to start your planting season early, beginning plant growing inside until it's warm enough for outdoor planting.

Cheap Substitutes for Seedling Trays

You can easily purchase seedling trays. There are many different varieties, made of different materials, and in the come in a huge range of sizes. However, there's really no need to purchase these when it's so easy to make substitutes for seedling trays yourself.

1. Egg Cartons

Egg cartons provide one of the best substitutes for seedling trays. First of all, you probably already have some. If not, ask your neighbors for theirs. Therefore, this doesn't cost anything.

Second, as Treehugger explains, these are biodegradable. Therefore, when you're ready to move the seeds from the tray to the ground, all that you need to do is cut apart the egg carton and bury each section in the soil. In other words, you don't have to take the seed out of the tray at all.

Furthermore, if you still have your egg shells, then you can include those as part of the planting process. Leave half an eggshell in each cup of the egg carton. Plant the seeds inside of those. You get great nutrients and don't waste those eggshells.

2. DIY Newspaper Pots

Treehugger also notes that you can do the same thing with DIY newspaper pots. Make them yourself with recycled newspaper glued together with wheat paste. Plant the seeds in the pots. Then, when it's time, plant the pots into the soil. You can put each pot next to another inside of a cardboard box while the seeds are germinating.

3. Cardboard Coffee Cups

If you regularly purchase coffee to go, then you might be able to quickly accrue a bunch of cardboard coffee cups. Ask your friends if you need extras. Fill them with soil, poke some holes in the bottom for good drainage, put them into an upcycled box, and you have a seedling tray.

Country Living points out that you can use empty K-cups in the same manner.

4. Toilet Paper Roll Tubes

Basically, any cardboard or paper that you can fashion into a pot-like vessel can work. Therefore, both Country Living and Treehugger mention the common hack of using paper towel or toilet paper tubes. You fold one end to keep the soil inside, fill it with soil and the seed, and place into an empty box. Note: there are several alternatives for folding over the one end. For example, wrap the whole thing in brown paper bags.

5. Halved Citrus Rinds

Here is the most interesting suggestion from Country Living. Take a lemon, lime, orange, or grapefruit and cut it in half. Juice it and enjoy the juice. Poke a few holes in the bottom for drainage. Then fill the center with soil and plant your seed in there. When it's time to plant, just bury the whole thing in the soil in your garden.

Read More:

- Seed Starting on a Budget: DIY Containers
- Don't Throw Those Pots Away
- Buying Seedlings: Getting Your Money's Worth