

Signs of Spring

Episode 5: Greenhouses, High Tunnels, and Gardens Beds!



Make Your Own “Greenhouse” Activity

Did you know you can make your own portable mini greenhouse to help your plants grow in the spring and fall? This is also known as a garden cloche. It goes on top of individual plants in order to protect them from the cold and control the temperature, just like a big greenhouse or high tunnel!

What You Will Need

- 1-gallon milk jug with cap
- Permanent marker
- Utility knife or a pair of scissors
- A place in the ground to plant seeds
- Seeds
- A journal to record your observations

Tip

- Use plastic 2-liter soda bottles instead of gallon milk jugs to cover smaller plants.

Instructions

1. Clean the milk jug thoroughly and allow it to dry.
2. Mark a line around the base of the milk jug, 1 inch from the bottom.
3. Cut along the line with a utility knife or scissors to remove the base of the milk jug. Have a parent or guardian help you with this step.
4. Place a milk-jug cloche over a small plant or your planted seed in the soil.
5. Remove the cap from the milk jug during the daylight hours to prevent the plant from overheating.
6. Place the cap on top of the jug when the sun sets to seal the warmth inside the cloche to protect the plant.
7. Pile mulch or soil up the sides of the cloche to add more insulation to prevent the temperature inside the cloche from dropping too quickly as outdoor temperatures fall
8. Remove the cloche once temperatures warm in the morning.
9. As an experiment, plant a seed next to your homemade greenhouse and compare how the seeds change and grow over time. Be sure to monitor the temperature and plant growth over the next few weeks. You can even try recording your observations in a journal with the dates to see how things change over time.

Warnings

- Wear protective eyewear and use extreme caution when cutting the plastic milk jug.
- Do not use milk-jug cloches if the temperature will remain below 40 degrees for longer than 24 hours because they will not offer adequate protection.

Project GROWS | www.projectgrows.org | Mailing address: P.O. Box 781, Staunton, VA 24402
Farm address: 608 Berry Farm Road, Verona, VA 24482