

Wicking box self watering garden

Materials:

- 1 white polystyrene box (broccoli box from fruit and veg shop, no holes)
- 4 x 2 litre or 2 x 3 plus 2 x 2 litre plastic milk bottles (4 x 2 litre best)
- builder's plastic to line box (optional)
- 30cm x 50mm pipe or 1 litre bottle for filling the water
- tennis ball or lid or made up ball for pipe cover
- small pipe for water overflow – 13 mm garden pipe x 10cm
- Geo-Textile or builders fabric 600mm x 800mm
- Good quality potting mix
- Fertiliser or compost
- Seeds or seedlings – spring onions, chives, coriander, small plants with spreading roots.

Method:

1. Cut holes in bottles, small hole close to top edge for air movement, slightly larger hole close to bottom edge for water movement
2. If lining box with builder's strong plastic, do so now.
3. Lay bottles on base of box to make water reserve structure
4. Stand filling pipe of bottle in one corner with some space at bottom for water to move in and out, hint, cut holes in bottle, cut pipe on an angle
5. Mark level of the top of bottles on box and push hole through side of polystyrene box with a pencil or similar, at other end from filling pipe for overflow pipe
6. Cover bottles and sides of the box with geo-textile pushing it down between the bottle to touch base along the centre. Geo-textile separates water from soil but soil inside cloth does need to touch base of water reserve to "wick" the water up from the reserve to all soil.
7. Mix some compost or fertiliser into potting mix.
8. Fill in box with potting mix, making sure to push some down to base between bottles. Best to make box as full as possible with potting mix so that plants have 30cm depth of soil.
9. Plant up with seeds or seedlings. Best if the plants have spreading roots rather than tap roots.
10. Encourage seedlings with seasol and worm juice
11. Water plants in then fill reserve with water through the filling pipe until water overflows through overflow pipe.
12. Place tennis ball or other lid over inlet pipe to prevent mosquitoes breeding.

As polystyrene isn't strong, move carefully, even with a board below to stop cracks forming, and then water reserve leaking. Also possible to line box with builders plastic.

Place box in sunny position in winter and part sun part sun in summer for productive garden.

