GROWING NATIVE PLANTS FROM SEED

STORING
- Store seeds in an airtight jar in the refrigerator until you are ready to sow.

SOWING

*Germination codes 1, 3, and 4*

*Many species on our list germinate in 15 to 45 days*

- Sow as early as March or April, or anytime during the growing season, in plastic pots filled with a commercial seed-starting mix.
- Place pot of sown seeds in a well-ventilated, warm spot with bright, indirect light.
- Protect pot from rain.

WATERING

*Always water seeds by this method!*

- Place entire pot in a shallow tray of water. When the soil mix surface is moist, remove pot from water and allow it to drain.
- Check pots daily to see if they need watering. They should not dry out or be kept soggy.
- Monitor seeds regularly; this early stage is important to survival.

TRANSPLANTING

- Transplant seedlings into separate pots when they are large enough to handle (usually after two or three pairs of true leaves emerge).
- Plant seedlings in their permanent garden locations after roots are established but before they are potbound.

FERTILIZING

- For more vigorous seedlings, fertilize with routine applications of an organic, water-soluble fertilizer such as fish emulsion at 1/4 to 1/3 the recommended strength during the active growing season.

STRATIFYING

*Germination codes 2 and 6*

Some seeds from temperate regions must be stratified—that is, exposed to the equivalent of winter conditions through a moist, cold period that provides the required pre-germination treatment. Many stratified seeds germinate in about 30 days. Here’s how it works:

- Sow seeds in a plastic pot on slightly moist commercial seed-starting mix.
- Place pot in a sealed plastic bag and store in the refrigerator for 6 to 12 weeks. Time refrigeration period so pots can be removed during the growing season.
- Take pots out of refrigerator, remove plastic bag, water as described above, and place them in a warm, bright spot. Alternatively, you may sow any seeds needing stratification in a pot in late fall or winter and leave the pot outside. These are the very conditions that we seek to recreate in the refrigerator!

In a pinch it is good to remember that many seeds will germinate at a low percentage even if you ignore each and every one of the rules (except the one about keeping them moist). Best of luck!

Germination Codes

1 - No pre-treatment necessary
2 - Stratification required
3 - Soak seeds 8 hours in warm water before sowing
4 - Do not cover these very fine seeds when sowing
5 - Sow seeds directly in garden
6 - Seeds require 1 to 3 months of warm stratification followed by 1 to 3 months of cold stratification
7 - Sow uncovered on moist milled sphagnum, wrap pot in saran wrap and place in bright light
SEED GERMINATION & PERENNIAL GARDENING REFERENCES

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John Randall and Janet Marinelli, eds. 1996. Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn, NY.

The Living Landscape: Designing for Beauty and Biodiversity in the Home Garden,
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Seed Germination Theory and Practice,

Seeds of Wildland Plants,
James and Cheryl Young. 1986. Timber Press, Portland, OR.

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