

Propagation of Ornamentals From Seed

Propagation from seed can be an easy and economical means of increasing your inventory of ornamental plantings. There are some advantages and disadvantages, according to the Florida Nurserymen and Growers Association.

Almost anyone has the necessary containers for planting and a small spot in which to grow them. The seed can be collected easily from trees and shrubs in any accessible place. Fresh seeds are easy to germinate, but variations may occur in seed-produced plants. However, many plants can be grown and only the best retained.

The disadvantages of seed propagation are: extreme variation in some species, hard seed coats that must be scarified before planting, variable growth habits, progeny not true to type and low viability.

Collecting seed should be done with great care. Choose seed from the best type of plant for propagation and check for maturity. Many seeds have an after-ripening period even though they are mature when collected from the tree. The viability of some seeds is very short and they must be planted rather quickly. A few seeds must be cold treated before germination can occur.

Some of the seeds collected may have a fleshy pulp around the seed which must be removed. It can be done by washing in water and draining before planting.

Good seed can be checked by the flotation method. Place seeds in a bucket of water. Those that float to the surface should be thrown away. Good seed will sink to the bottom of the container. If the seeds are to be stored, they should be air-dried before placing in storage containers. Remember, seeds contain a living plant and should be handled with care.

Seeds that are to be stored should be fully ripe. Immature seed will not keep as well in storage as those that are mature. Hard coated seeds store much better than those with soft seed coats. Temperature fluctuations can cause low viability, especially if the moisture is high. The temperature most desirable for seed storage is 40°F. Use airtight containers for best results.

A number of excellent trees can be grown from seed. The redbud, magnolia, Acacia and Jerusalem thorn, however, need treatment for more rapid germination. Magnolia seeds need to be stored in an ordinary refrigerator for five or six months. The seeds can be placed in a plastic bag and stored. Check once-in-awhile for proper moisture in the bag. A light sprinkling may be necessary. Hard-coated seeds like Jerusalem thorn and redbud can be soaked overnight in water. When first placed in water, it should be 190°F. Dump in the seed, let the water cool then plant the next day.

Try growing ornamentals from seed. It is easy, but takes a little longer to get a tree for shade. Shrubs will grow more rapidly. Propagation of plants from seed is interesting and something anyone can do.

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816/333-8000

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Houston, Texas 77002
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Division of Todd Farm Equipment, Inc.
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804/543-2071

Swift Agricultural Chemicals Corp.
Vancouver, Washington 98660
206/696-3321

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