

Native Plant Propagation (Seeds)



Syzygium oleosum "Blue Lilli Pilli"



One of the most rewarding things you can do is to collect and grow your own native seeds.

There are many different types of seeds and each has a special way it needs to be prepared before it will grow. We are going to look at 4 different types of seed.



Syzygium australe "Brush Cherry"

1. Some seeds are found in crisp or **fleshy fruit**, where there can be a single seed or multiple seeds. Some examples of plants with fleshy fruit are *Syzygium* (Lilli Pilli's).

To prepare a *Lilli Pilli* seed for planting, you need to break open the fruit to find the seed and remove the flesh. Once you have collected your seeds, they need to be soaked for 48 hours. This helps the seed swell so it can germinate, and it also kills any bugs that are in the fruit. We don't want them eating our seeds! After you have soaked them, rinse the seed using a sieve.

Some other plants with fleshy fruit are **Plum Pine, Black Apple, Rose Myrtle and Dianella.**

2. Other seeds are found in **hard capsules**, like those of a *Banksia*. These capsules are closed tight and in their natural environment they only open after there has been a bush fire. But we can get the capsules to open by putting them in the oven at about 100 degrees for about 20 mins or until the little 'beaks' open. Once the capsules have opened the seed easily falls out.

Some other species with seeds in hard capsules are **Red Cedar, Cudgerie, Hakea,** and **Port Jackson Pine,** although these will open without intense heat. Just place them in a warm sunny position for a few days or until they open.



Banksia

Gahnia asperra "Saw sedge"



3. Some seeds, such as *Gahnia*, have a very **hard outer coating** that needs to be scratched or nicked with a blade (by an adult!) or soaked in boiling water like **Wattle Seed**. All seeds need moisture to germinate, and scratching/nicking the hard coating, or soaking them, allows moisture to penetrate into the centre of the seed.

A quick and easy way to scratch the surface of many seeds at once is to rub them between two pieces of sandpaper over a bowl.

Alternatively, you could place the seeds in a blender with a little water and pulse for a few seconds.



Callistemon viminalis
"Weeping bottlebrush"

4. Some native plants have many *small seeds* in each capsule, such as *Eucalypts*, *Bottlebrush*, *Casuarina* and *Tea Tree*. These seeds need to be collected from the tree before they open. Place the capsules in a paper bag and leave it in a sheltered sunny position. When the seed capsules open, the seeds will fall out into the bag. To separate the seed from the capsules, pass it through a fine sieve.

As the seed is very small, and a tiny pinch of it will grow into many, many trees, it needs to be sown evenly so that each seedling has enough space. Mix the seed with a little soil or sand and then sprinkle sparingly over the seed raising mix. (For one seed tray, mix one pinch of seed with about 2 tbsp of soil/sand).

Sowing your seeds

Put some seed raising mix in a seed tray and sprinkle the seeds on top of the soil. Then lightly sprinkle some more soil over the seeds until they are covered.

Write a label including the date and the name of the plant.

Water the seed tray using a watering can or hose that has a fine nozzle as large, heavy droplets can wash the soil out of the tray.

Try not to let the soil dry out – warmth and moisture are important if your seeds are to germinate successfully.



WHERE TO COLLECT SEED?

From your school grounds, reserves (contact Council), or a friend's place. *Always make sure you have permission from the landowner.* Contact your local Landcare or Council for a list of plants that grow in your local area.

RESOURCES YOU WILL NEED:

Seed trays, seed raising mix, seed, water, an area to store seedlings (generally well watered, protected and warm place), gloves, paddle pop sticks/plant tags, pots and trays for potting up, fertiliser and somewhere to plant them when they are ready!



Potting up

When the seeds have germinated and have developed their 2nd set of leaves, it's time to move them into bigger pots.

- Prepare the pots with 'native plant' potting mix and create a hole big enough to fit the root system of the seedling.
- Gently ease out the individual plants using a blade of some sort (a plastic plant label works well). Be mindful not to damage the fragile roots.
- Place gently into the prepared hole in the pot and cover the roots with soil, pressing lightly so the plant sits in the pot firmly. (If the root system is very big and does not fit easily in the hole, an alternative method is to half or quarter fill the pots with potting mix, then place the seedling on top and fill around the roots with more potting mix.)
- Water the plants soon after potting up to settle them into their new home and keep well watered during hot weather.

A fortnightly application of liquid seaweed will keep your plants strong and healthy, which will in turn make them more resistant to pests and disease. When they have developed strong roots and tops, they are ready for planting!



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