

Growing Native Plants From Seeds

—Klamath-Siskiyou Native Seeds—



Oregon sunshine (*Eriophyllum lanatum*) seedlings



Showy milkweed seeds
(*Asclepias speciosa*)



Hound's tongue seeds
(*Cynoglossum grande*)

The seeds of native plants germinate at different rates, depending on many factors. Observation of seed germination in the wild will give you clues into how to mimic nature and help your native seeds germinate. Some seeds germinate without any pretreatment, but many require some kind of pretreatment to trigger germination. This can include cold stratification, heat treatment, scarification, alternate freezing and thawing etc. Annuals generally sprout without treatment and can be planted by direct seeding where wanted in the garden or wildland setting. Best results come from planting in autumn or early winter during the rainy season, similar to natural cycles.

Native seeds, including the seeds you purchased from Klamath-Siskiyou Native Seeds, have internal dormancy that can often be overcome by a cold, moist period called "cold stratification." Please contact Klamath-Siskiyou Native Seeds for particular germination procedures for the seed you are planting. Please be aware that many native seeds, if they don't germinate the first year planted, may germinate the second or third year. Patience is a virtue when it comes to native seeds!



Horsemint (Agastache urticifolia) seedlings

General guidelines for cold stratification

You can plant seeds in the fall or winter, either outside or in an unheated greenhouse, so that they will undergo natural stratification and germinate the following spring.

Alternately, if you miss the natural cycle, you can mimic the cycle by

mixing the seeds with moist sand, peat moss, or sphagnum moss. Place the mix in plastic bags, close and date, and place in the refrigerator.

Another method, for small amounts of seed, includes the use of a moistened (but not wet) paper towel. Place the seeds one layer deep on a quarter of the paper towel; fold the moist towel over the seeds, place into a plastic zip-lock bag, and then place into the refrigerator.

Check the stratifying seeds every week or so to ensure the seeds are moist and are not molding, as well as for swelling of the seed, which indicates that it is ready to germinate. Typically seeds will need to remain in the refrigerator for one to four months, depending on the species. Once germination occurs, plant immediately in flats or pots. Smaller seeds will only need to be pressed lightly into the potting soil, whereas larger seed benefits from coarse sand, perlite, or grit as a covering because it can decrease the chance of fungus, algae, or moss growth.

When seedlings have a second or third pair of leaves they are ready to be transplanted into individual pots or flats, or for shrubs and trees, into gallon pots. Have the containers and soil ready and transplant young seedlings quickly, removing only a few at a time to prevent drying of tender rootlets. Water thoroughly after transplanting and keep shaded for a few days, until the danger of wilt has passed. Perennial seedlings are typically ready to be planted out within eight to ten months. Most woody trees and shrubs will be ready for planting out within one to two years from germination.



Deltoid balsamroot (Balsamorhiza deltoidea) seedlings

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