



Seed Collection

Collecting seed focuses attention on the life cycle of plants through observation of their flowering, fruiting and dispersal. Watch out for trees and shrubs in flower so you can prepare to get the seed at a later date.

Seed selection

Follow these general guidelines when collecting native seeds:

- choose a species of tree which is native to the area and suits your particular needs
- refer to books and talk to people to assist in the selection - Greening Australia NT can give advice
- collect the seed from healthy specimens to ensure strong, vigorous offspring (get the permission of the landholder first)
- collect seeds from stands of trees rather than individuals, gathering similar quantities of seed from each tree, ensuring they are spaced well apart, this will allow for genetic diversity
- do not collect over 20% of the seed crop off any given plant.

Ripeness

There are two main types of fruit. Rainforest species often have fleshy fruits which are dispersed by birds or bats. Woodland species have dry woody fruits which may be spread by wind or water.

Fleshy fruit are ripe and can be collected when:

- they appear round and full
- they soften and change colour
- they are falling to the ground
- birds are feeding on the fruit.

Woody fruit are ripe and can be collected when:

- they appear dry, brown and woody
- they are still closed
- other fruit have started to drop or open.



If the fruit are not ripe the seed may not be fully developed and will not germinate.



Collection techniques

- Hand pick ripe fruit or pods off the plant or collect fallen berry fruits from ground under the trees (place a tarp underneath the tree while the fruit is removed from eucalypts/corymbias).
- Collect the fruit in a large material or paper bag or cardboard box.
- Keep seeds separate so you can keep track of different species and locations - label the seeds with the date, species, location and collector.

Seed extraction

To extract the seed of **fleshy fruits** the pulp must be removed as it can inhibit germination. Three methods are described:

- place fruit in a bucket of water, wearing gloves, gently squeeze the fruit removing the skins, drain off excess water and skins, repeat until seeds are clean
or
- place fruit on wire mesh and run water over fruit as they are gently rolled, removing the skins and pulp
or
- compost fleshy fruits by storing in a plastic bag for a short period to allow flesh to be easily washed from seed.

To extract the seed of **woody fruit**:

- place fruit in a paper bag or on a sheet or newspaper in a warm, dry place and leave the fruit until they have opened and shed their seeds, this could take a few days to several weeks
- sieve the opened fruit through a wire mesh catching seeds on a sheet placed underneath, or separate the seeds by hand.

Storage/Viability

Fleshy fruit seed - Sow immediately for best results. Store for a limited time in sphagnum moss or peat moss in the refrigerator.

Woody fruit seed - Check seeds are dry and free of insects. Store dry seeds in an air tight container in a cool location eg. refrigerator, away from direct sunlight. Seeds may keep for several years if stored correctly.

