

SEED SHARING GUIDELINES

Please follow these guidelines if you have seeds to share.

TYPES OF SEEDS: We share seeds of forbs, grasses, trees, shrubs and vines native to southern New England or to the eastern US (outside New England) that provide food and shelter for local wildlife, particularly native insects. Seeds should be from *open-pollinated* plants whose natural genetic variation allows them to better adapt to a changing environment. Do not bring seeds from cultivated vegetables, cultivars or non-native ornamentals. Dry seeds (aka orthodox seeds) that have been collected within the last 2 years are the best – they can remain viable for many years if stored cool and dry. Seeds that need to be sown fresh will lose viability if allowed to dry out. They should be from the most recent growing season and properly stored to retain moisture.

PROCESSING SEEDS: Separating seeds from their capsules, pods, fruiting stalks or seedheads makes it easier to assess seed ripeness and reduces the volume of seed material for storage. Cleaned or semi-cleaned seed material is nice but not absolutely necessary so long as you can easily see the ripe seeds. Chaff or seed appendages (e.g., pappas, samaras) do not interfere with sowing or germination. The exceptions are milkweed seeds, which should have their large fluffy parachutes (pappas) removed for easier handling.

Ripe (viable) seeds are typically dark-colored, plump, firm or hard, sometimes shiny. In contrast, unripe or aborted seeds (not viable) are usually pale, green, soft, thin, papery or shrunk. Prairie Moon Nursery has photos of ripe seeds for many species in their online catalog.

Seeds that need to stay moist, such as pawpaw, bloodroot or baneberries should be packaged in small ziplock bags with some damp potting mix, sphagnum, peat moss or vermiculite and stored refrigerated until ready to sow.

PACKAGING SEEDS: We prefer that you package seeds into individual portions (packets). Suggested quantities are given below. In the spirit of sharing, we encourage you to bring 5-10 portions of each seed type, but any quantity you can share will be appreciated. Pack dry seeds in small paper or glassine envelopes, wet seeds in small ziplock bags. For very small seeds, count or measure one portion, then try to match this volume to make additional portions. (Hint: the amount you can pick up on the end of an $\frac{3}{4}$ -in wide craft stick is a reasonable portion.) If you have plenty of seeds, be generous, since not all seeds may be viable.

Large tree and shrub seeds, (e.g., persimmon, pawpaw, beach plum): 5-10 per portion.

Large dry seeds (e.g., milkweeds, lupine, iris, senna, sunflowers) 25-30 per portion.

Most other seeds (e.g., coneflowers, goldenrods, asters, mountain mints, bee balms)
50-100 seeds per portion.

For tiny dust-like seeds (e.g., Lobelia, Penstemon, Spiraea), a portion typically contains several hundred seeds. A wooden craft stick, small spatula or folded piece of paper may be marked to define a portion and to transfer these seeds into small glassine or wax paper bags. (Avoid using plastic as tiny seeds are particularly susceptible to jump and cling to plastic.)

LABELING SEEDS: Label each seed portion with common and scientific names and the relevant germination code or codes as defined below, or write out the seed pretreatment protocol that produces good germination. Note the year (or month and year) that the seed was collected. The location of seed collection (town, ecoregion) and/or the provenance (original source of seed or plants) is optional since the latter information is often uncertain for garden-grown plants.

EXAMPLE 1: Blue Vervain
Verbena hastata
Cold strat 30 d, needs light (B,C)
Collected Nov 2025
Mystic (wild plants in my yard)

EXAMPLE 2: Nodding onion (non-ecotype)
Allium cernuum
Cold strat 60 d (B)
Collected Sept 2025
SE CT (Prairie Moon Nursery)

GERMINATION CODES: Indicate sowing instructions for the species. We use the Wild Seed Project letter codes for germination. More information may be found at <https://shop.wildseedproject.net/pages/germination-codes>

A — No pretreatment needed to germinate. Sow outdoors in pots from November through April.

B — Seeds need a winter or cold period to germinate (Cold strat). Sow outdoors in pots from November through February. (The duration of cold stratification varies by species, if unsure, try 60 days).

C — Seeds need light to germinate. Sow them on top of the soil surface and leave uncovered.

D — Seeds need an alternating warm-cold-warm cycle to germinate. We recommend sowing them outdoors in pots from May through June (warm period). They'll germinate the following year, after a winter (cold period) and then spring (warm period).

E — Seeds will lose viability if they dry out. Sow immediately (In a pinch, refrigerate in a sealed bag to retain moisture until ready to sow).

F — Seeds have a double dormancy and may take two winters to germinate. Sow outdoors in pots from November through February and look for germination in the second spring.

G — Large seeds that should be soaked overnight in water before sowing.

If you have tried a special protocol that produces reliably good germination for a given species, feel free to include/attach a copy to your seed packets.

Additional resources for how to propagate Northeast native plant species from seed:

- [Prairie Moon Nursery website](#) (Note that the code letters are different than those used by Wild Seed Project)
- [The New England Wild Flower Society Guide to Growing and Propagating Wildflowers](#) of the United States and Canada (Hardcover – April 15, 2000), by William Cullina. Out of print, but used copies can be found. Libraries may have reference copies for use or loan.
- [Native Plant Network's Plant Propagation Protocol Website](#)
- [Native Trees, Shrubs, & Vines: A Guide to Using, Growing, and Propagating North American Woody Plants](#) – June 2002, by William Cullina
- [The Reference Manual of Woody Plant Propagation : From Seed to Tissue Culture : A Practical Working Guide to the Propagation of Over 1100 species, Varieties, and Cultivars by Dirr, Michael](#)

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These seed sharing guidelines were developed by Lydia Pan and Jim Sirch. Feel free to reach out to either one of us if you have questions.

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Event Co-organizers

Wild Ones Mountain Laurel Chapter

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