

Collecting Native Seeds



TYPES OF SEEDS

Annual

- Bears seeds the year they are planted
- Most likely will not overwinter
- Example: *Impatiens capensis* (orange jewelweed)

Biennial

- Bears edible fruit the first year they are planted, flowers and seeds in the 2nd year
- Example: *Oenothera biennis* (common primrose)

Perennial

- Grows year-after-year from established root system
- May grow more slowly in the first 1-2 years

BEFORE STARTING – THE ETHICS OF WILD COLLECTING

- Identify the species. Do your research in advance so that you know what the dried seed head looks like
- Take no more than 5-10% of a wild population
- You must have permission from landowner/entity
- Do not take seeds from rare, threatened, and endangered plants
- Do not collect seed from public parks, recreation areas, or other public regions
- Do not collect from small populations: larger populations are best for both ethics and genetics

WHEN TO COLLECT SEEDS

- Know when your species blooms. You want to let the seeds fully mature and dry on the plant. Dried seed heads typically appear about 6 to 8 weeks after bloom period.
 - o If you pick seed heads too soon (still green/moist), seeds may be immature, perform poorly, or mold. If you wait too long, seeds may have long since fallen to the ground, been eaten by critters, or been blown away by the wind.
- Seed heads often mature over the course of several days or weeks.
- Signs of mature seed:
 - o Seed head/pod is dry and beige or brown
 - o Seeds are beige, brown or black and are firm and dry (not green/moist)
 - o Seeds easily come out of the seed head or pod
- Collect seeds on a dry day. Afternoon is best (allows time for dew to dry).

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Pruners, loppers, or scissors
- Gloves for stripping
- Paper bags, pillow cases, wide buckets, tarp
- Labels or marker

HOW TO COLLECT SEED

- Use paper bags for collection.
- Snip mature, dry seed heads into the bags.
- Mark the species, where collected, and when collected on the outside of each bag
- Leave the seed heads/seeds in paper bags for 1 to 2 weeks to allow the seeds to dry further.

HOW TO CLEAN SEED

- After seeds are fully dry, remove as much of the chaff (plant material other than seed) as you can.
- How to clean your seed depends on the species. Helpful methods include:
 - o Shaking seed heads in a paper bag to release the seeds
 - o Rolling pins to crush bagged seed pods
 - o Using sieves (e.g., window screening) to sieving chaff from seeds.
 - o Salad spinners can be used to remove the fluff from seeds like milkweed that have fluff attached.

HOW TO STORE SEED

- Place in a clean, dry paper bag or a paper or glassine envelope
- LABEL the seed envelopes: what the plant is, where collected, when collected
- Store in a cool, dark, dry place.

SEED SHARING

Share your seeds with your friends, neighbors, and the Door County Seed Library!

Let's grow together, Door County!

The Door County Seed Library is a collaborative community program of the Door County Master Gardeners Association that offers free seeds and educational programs.

Find us at your local Door County Library branch and special events.

