

Seed Balls

Looking for a gardening activity that's fun for the whole family? How about making wildflower seed balls? All you need is compost (or organic soil), dry clay, native wildflower seeds and water — oh yes, and a willingness to get your hands dirty!

Seed balls consist of different types of seeds rolled into a marble-sized ball with clay and soil. They date back to ancient times when they were used to help repair farms after annual floods. In the 1930s, a Japanese scientist rediscovered the technique in an effort to increase food production. Today, they are used to help reseed areas where native flora has been disturbed or destroyed.

Making seed balls is fun, easy and is a great activity for kids of all ages. Here's what you need:

- 3 parts compost or organic soil
- 5 parts dry red clay (or other natural, air-dry clay)
- 1-2 parts water
- 1-2 parts native wildflower seeds of your choice*
- Large bowl or tub to mix ingredients
- Large box to dry and store seed balls

**Be sure to select seeds that are native to your area and that are suitable for the conditions in which they will be used.*

Mix the compost, clay and seeds in bowl. Add 1 part water and knead until mixed well. Take small bits of the mixture and roll into balls about 1 inch in diameter. The balls should hold together; if they crumble easily, add more water to the mixture.

Allow the seed balls to dry on a flat surface and in a sunny location for 24-48 hours.

Once the seed balls dry, they can be placed (or gently tossed, which is a lot more fun!) into a garden plot or pile of dirt. Do not bury them, but allow them to remain exposed to Mother Nature. The clay will protect the seeds from animal disturbance, and will eventually break apart and wash away with rain. The compost will provide nutrients for the seeds to grow.

If you choose to store the seed balls for a little while, be sure to put them in a dry location as exposure to moisture may result in them sprouting!



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